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New Race

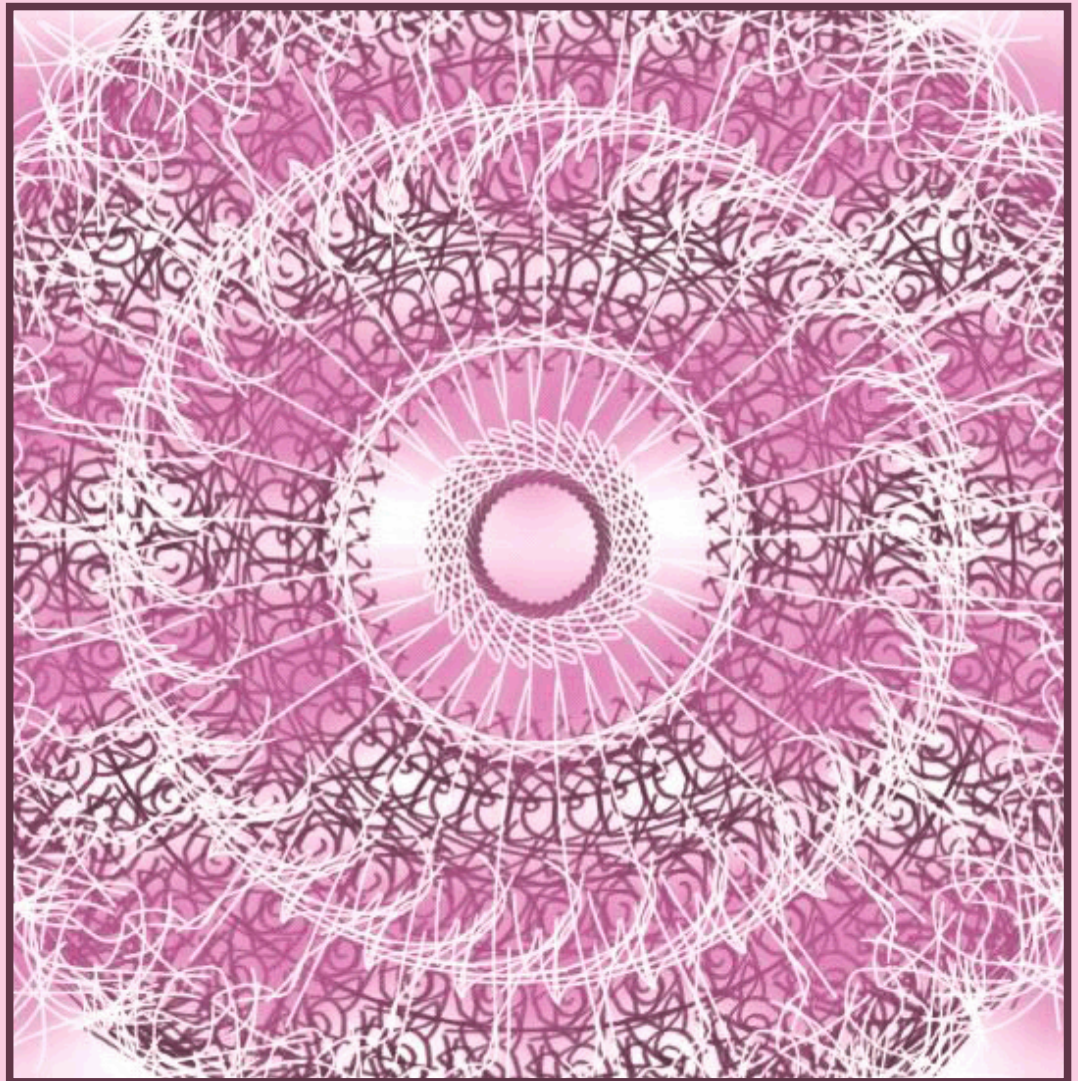
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Destiny and the Divine Grace



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From the Editor's Desk...

Destiny is a term which has invited innumerable debates and discussions all over the world. Great philosophies and Scriptures and spiritual masters have spoken about it. It had been rather a controversial topic for some say that destiny cannot be altered and others say that there is a free will which can help change the destiny. The debate on this still continues.

Sri Aurobindo says: “Destiny is not an absolute, it is a relative. One can alter it for the better or the worse.” In *Savitri* he has exemplified that fate can be changed. In the epic Aswapati invokes the Divine Mother to descend on earth and change her fate. The Divine Mother grants the boon to Aswapati “One shall descend and break the iron law... Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will”... As a result of the boon Savitri is born and is given the charge of changing the earth’s destiny. However, she cannot do this until she finds her soul. Once she finds it she is able to alter the course of her destiny. Sri Aurobindo, one who has *trikaladrishti*, does not over-rule the laws of nature. That is why when Savitri declares “Let fate do with me what she will or can” — it literally becomes true. As is fated Satyavan dies at the destined day and hour but then Savitri who declares in the beginning “I am stronger than death and greater than my fate” is able to retrieve Satyavan from Death, this time in a transformed body.

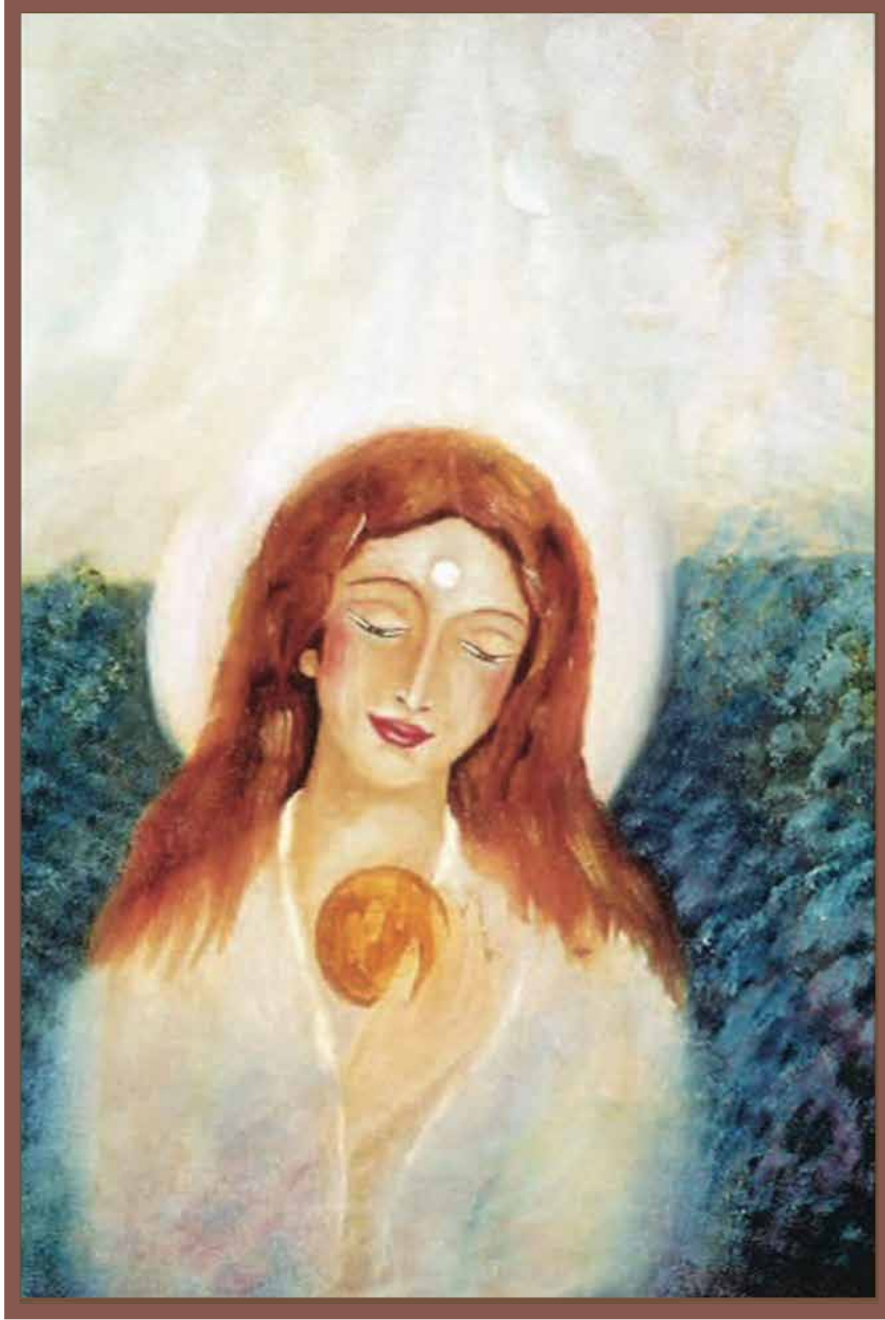
Through this epic Sri Aurobindo has conveyed to the humanity that destiny is not absolute, it can be changed by Divine Love which is Savitri herself. He has given us the way and the power to change our destiny. The path is difficult and demands efforts as is undertaken by Savitri, but it is only the one who makes such efforts as she, can change the destiny.

This issue of *New Race* has been dedicated to “Know your Destiny” theme dealt by various writers in the light of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. We dedicate this issue to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on the occasion of her birthday.

Shruti



TRUTH



(Source: Internet)

It is the coward and the fool who says, “This is fate” – so says the Sanskrit proverb. But it is the strong man who stands up and says, “I will make my fate”.

Swami Vivekananda

Destiny

Sri Aurobindo

Each follows in the world his own line of destiny which is determined by his own nature and actions—the meaning and necessity of what happens in a particular life cannot be understood except in the light of the whole course of many lives. (CWSA 28:509)

*

Destiny in the rigid sense applies only to the outer being so long as it lives in the Ignorance. What we call destiny is only in fact the result of the present condition of the being and the nature and energies it has accumulated in the past acting on each other and determining the present attempts and their future results. But as soon as one enters the path of spiritual life, this old predetermined destiny begins to recede. There comes in a new factor, the Divine Grace, the help of a higher Divine Force other than the force of Karma which can lift the sadhak beyond the present possibilities of his nature. One's spiritual destiny is then the divine election which ensures the future. (CWSA 28:509)

THE WORD OF FATE

O loss, if death into its elements
Of which his gracious envelope was built,
Shatter this vase before it breathes its sweets,
As if earth could not keep too long from heaven
A treasure thus unique loaned by the gods,
A being so rare, of so divine a make!
In one brief year when this bright hour flies back
And perches careless on a branch of Time,
This sovereign glory ends heaven lent to earth,
This splendour vanishes from the mortal's sky:
Heaven's greatness came, but was too great to stay.
Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her;
This day returning Satyavan must die.

(Lines from Savitri Book VI, Canto I)

Mother's New Body

The Mother

The other day you spoke of the vision of your body, this body in transition...

Yes, but I was like that. It was myself. I did not see myself in a mirror: I saw myself like that (*Mother bends her head to look at her body*). I was... I was like that.

It was for the first time. It was at four o'clock in the morning, I believe. It was quite natural—I did not look in a mirror, I was quite natural. I remember only what I saw (*gesture from the chest to the waist*). I had only a veil on me, so I saw only... it was the trunk that was quite different from the chest down to the waist: neither man nor woman.

And it was pretty. I had a form very very slim, very slender —very slender but not thin. And the skin was very white; the skin was like my skin. A very pretty form. But no sex, you could not say—neither man nor woman; sex had disappeared. Also there (*Mother points to the chest*), all that: nothing. I do not know how to say it. It was like a semblance, but had no form at all (*Mother touches her chest*), not even as much as men have. A very white skin, all very even. No belly, so to say. The stomach—no stomach. All that was slim.

Well, I did not pay any special attention because I was like that and I found it quite natural. It was the first time and it was in the night, the day before yesterday. And last night I saw nothing—that was the first and only time till now.

But it was so in the subtle physical?

It must have been so in the subtle physical.

But how will that pass into the physical?

There! I do not know... I do not know. I do not know.

Also, it was clear that there should not be any complicated process of digestion nor of elimination as now. It was not like that.

But how?... Evidently the food is already very different and becoming more and more different (as for example glucose, things that do not need a complicated digestion). But how is the body itself going to change? I do not know. I do not know. I did not look to see how it was, because it was quite natural, so I cannot give a detailed description. Simply, it was neither the body of a woman nor the body of a man—that is clear. And the “outline”, the silhouette, was almost the same as that of a very very young person. There was a sort of semblance to human forms (*Mother sketches it in the air*), there was a shoulder and a figure. As though the semblance of a form.

I see it, but... I saw it as one sees oneself. And there was a kind of veil that I had put on just to cover myself. It was a mode of being, not surprising to me, it was a natural mode of being.

It must be like that in the subtle physical. (CWM 11: 302-303)

The Ultimate Destiny – Preparing for a New Birth in Consciousness

Soumitra Basu

The Individual Destiny

Buddhists consider that it is a great waste of resources if in this life we do not work on ourselves for a future birth that would be more meaningful and ennobling.

Who can tell us about our future births? Not the astrologer, the soothsayer, the fortune-teller or the past-life therapist! We can ourselves prepare for a more beautiful future life for we are empowered to do that.

The most powerful way to achieve that state would be to live as many moments in life most consciously as possible. It is a tall task to live every moment in the most conscious and perfect way possible at that instant. In fact it is the most intensely lived moments that are carried in the soul-memory of the psychic being which then outlive the life-span and remain as transcripts in the cosmic consciousness to influence future lives. It is like – while describing a particular football match somebody has witnessed, one can only recall the key moments while the rest of the description is unconsciously made from one's experience and memory of football matches witnessed. Similarly, only the most intensely lived key moments in life are registered in the psychic being, the rest commonplace moments are delegated to the cosmic trash bin.

If one's repertoire of conscious moments could be increased, the psychic being or soul-personality would be much enriched and its memory traces would remain in the cosmic consciousness that could influence future lives in many ways. A particular constellation of such memory traces could influence a particular future birth and guide that being's destiny in that future life. It can also happen that a constellation of universalized moments like the musical notes of a gifted musician like Beethoven could influence the music of receptive musicians spread over future spaces and times. Truly, Beethoven is reported to have uttered his last words while departing, 'I shall hear in Heaven'.

That is one destiny worth working out and immensely interesting making this life the field of a divine experiment.

In the integral perspective, there is yet a greater destiny to be worked out.

The Collective Destiny

So far, we are considering the destiny of the individual. What about the destiny of the human race!

Every creation is accompanied by a phase of dissolution. Every cycle of humanity has been traditionally described to be finally chaotic and apocalyptic. The Hindus have their Kali Yuga, the Christians have their Anti-Christ while the Muslims believe that they are standing at the end of Time.

The Mother confirmed that there were indeed prior cycles which had to undergo dissolution as each time some or other element was missing. In fact we have always given more credence to Brahma – the creative-principle and Shiva – the destructive -principle than Vishnu – the sustainer.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother took an unique position in working out how the present cycle of creation could be made endless, how Vishnu could be specially activated.

In fact, the reclining pose of Vishnu in his *anantasajya* as a cosmic godhead, actually represents the preservation of all bygone cycles of creation as dormant memory traces that are activated every time a fresh creation follows an era of dissolution. Can Vishnu be made a repository of conscious experiences that would always remain dynamic? Sri Aurobindo attempts to work on Vishnu's strides.

The immortality of the human race cannot be ensured with the present form that is burdened by old age, disease and death from whom there seemed no escape and thus it was a return to the formless Void or the Absolute that was always eulogized in spiritual tradition.

There can be a game-changer if the human form could be made perfect, luminous, flexible and immortal. This can only happen if the present form undergoes a mutant transformational change through an evolutionary trajectory of consciousness. The present human form would be surpassed by progressively higher forms till the Supramental being manifested that expressed the creative Idea in the most perfect way. Beyond that, there would be no cessation but a continuous progress decided by the Supramental being.

A preparation for this New Consciousness seems to be our ultimate destiny.

Preparing for a New birth in Consciousness

There are three basic steps for initiating the preparation for a new birth in consciousness.

The first step is to go deep within the ranges of one's being to the soul-essence or psychic being and integrate the discordant parts of the being around this centre of harmony and joy.

The personality integrated around the psychic being is now ready to ascend the hierarchy of supra-cognitive matrices that surpass our ordinary cognitive field. It is a life-time task but a beginning can be made by silencing the mind and then lifting the zone of conscious cognition above the thinking mind.

The third step is to develop the body consciousness but it has a unique aim. The Mother, in her spiritual odyssey, worked upon a new alignment of consciousness which she named as the cellular mind. The last great step in evolution was the appearance of the cerebrum with great frontal lobes for the ape-brain has almost no cerebrum and no frontal lobes.

The Mother initiated the next evolutionary step in the domain of the inner being by attempting to change the conscious base of all the cells. There would be a sort of transfer of authority. Instead of obeying the habitual laws, the cells would directly be under the influence of the Divine Consciousness.

She silenced the mind (the cognitive matrix) and the vital (the repertoire of our emotions,

passions and dynamism) so that the consciousness that had been infused in the body could emerge. It was very difficult to do so but what she achieved in her own body became a potentiality that could be shared by other bodies.

In doing this work, the Mother discovered that the cells themselves could aspire for transformation in a state of receptive contemplation. Indeed, she found the cells aspiring for immortality. They did not want to disappear with the death of the body.

That can only be done if the body-consciousness is developed so that the transcripts of the cells that have been consciously worked upon can remain in the subtle physical that can survive the life-span.

Is that an outrageous suggestion? May be not.

It is acknowledged that great ideas and acts of great vitality survive the life-span, influencing receptive individuals. We are still overawed by the ideas of Leonardo Da Vinci and aroused by the valor of Shivaji or Napoleon.

If enlightened ideas and ennobled feats survive the vicissitudes of time, why won't illumined cells have the same trajectory!

In fact, the more such illumined cells accumulate in the subtle physical zone of the cosmic consciousness, it would facilitate the work of transformation by the Supramental consciousness initiated by the Mother's work.

We have therefore not only to offer our heart and mind to the Divine but also our body. We have to offer our cells to the Mother so that her great work of transformation for the birth of the New Consciousness is facilitated. We have to pool our resources so that an increasing number of cells are illumined to the extent that they leave their imprints in the subtle physical.

That is our ultimate destiny – to offer ourselves wholly so that even beyond the life-span, the transcripts of our cellular consciousness are available for the Mother's transformative work so as to facilitate the appearance of the New Consciousness.

A harmonious present life, a nobler future life or a more spiritually exalted future birth can be a desired goal but our destiny is beyond that. We only aspire to offer and sacrifice our whole being down to our very cells for the emergence of the New Consciousness that would support the future Supramental Race – the Gnostic Community.



Yoga and Our Destiny

James Anderson

Sri Aurobindo calls yoga “the art of conscious self-finding” so it is deeply connected with the making of our destiny. But before we create anything true with our lives, we have to know ourselves first. Destiny is not so much a matter of what we do; it is what we are. We have to know who we are. The doing is a consequence of the being. So yoga too itself is not really something that we do but rather it is something that we become. The aim is to change the state of our existence. Finding our *svadharma* is a purpose of yoga but that is not enough for Integral Yoga. We have to live and express this Truth in every aspect of our life.

Yoga is not only a means of manifesting our destiny. It is our destiny and an end in itself. There can be no greater destiny than to join with the Divine. There can be no greater destiny than collaborating in the Divine Work of opening to the Truth-Consciousness in every aspect of our existence. There can be no greater destiny than becoming a pioneer of the transformation that is still to come.

So how does the journey begin? How do we start to fulfil our *svadharma*? Every great endeavour begins with grinding *personal effort*. There is always an initial phase of blood, sweat and tears. Constantly we have to push through resistance. Everyone has to go through it. Everything that shuns the Light of Truth must go. However, as long as ego is present, effort will always be there. Every part of our nature wants its own piece of the cake. The will is fragmented. As the different sides of our nature squabble, we pray for guidance and sometimes have to fumble helplessly in the dark. We have to latch onto the noblest part of our nature to get anywhere near the Truth. There is a ‘divine possibility’ in all of us that generally moves us in the right direction. There is always a Higher Force which acts. By surrendering increasingly to this Force, our effort gradually abates.

Yoga also teaches us first to be awake. When we are conscious and awake, we notice for the first time the layers of conditioning that comprise our ‘personality’. When we are able to look candidly at ourselves, what we see amounts to very little that is authentic and true. Everything seems very superficial. The personality is a front and appears to us almost as an illusion! What is real and what is false? We have to go deeper to find out. We have to access something much more authentic inside of ourselves. So we look below the surface and *interiorise our consciousness*. There is little truth on the surface and if we live there we amount to little more than a toy for all kinds of different forces. As soon as the orientation changes the quality of our life starts to expand and deepen. We come closer to our life purpose. We begin to develop a greater immunity to forces outside. We start to rely more and more on our inner resources.

As our consciousness changes direction we seek more guidance within. We dispense with the props and belief-systems that have up till now supported us in life. When we enquire inside we become aware at first of something that watches and stands back from the play of our nature. There is a Witness who merely looks and does not intervene. We try to follow its example. We strive to detach from the outside play of shocks and circumstances. It is

a source of solidity and strength but the function of the observer only changes when our awareness changes into *consciousness*. Sri Aurobindo defines consciousness as the "...faculty of being aware of anything through identification. The Divine Consciousness is not only aware but knows and effects. To be aware of a vibration, for instance, does not mean that you know everything about it (1)." Consciousness is aligned always to Force. With consciousness, full knowledge of the self and everything emerges. This knowledge has a dynamic action. As Sri Aurobindo says, "Consciousness is *cit* but also *cit sakti* (2)."

From Witness to Teacher

So as soon as we identify with this observer and seek to become it, the function of this Witness starts changing. Very gradually, it starts to take on an executive action itself. The relationship becomes more dynamic and intimate. Gradually the Witness becomes our *Inner Teacher*. This entity is, in a sense, our true individuality, the Divine Person who has accompanied us through countless previous lives. As soon as we wholly identify with it we start to realise our true identity which is also divine in essence. Our *svadharma* is to express the divinity that lies buried inside our nature.

At first the instructions of this Teacher are barely audible. It never imposes its will on our nature. It only invites our collaboration and it is this Truth inside that we have to bring out in our yoga. It comes forward by being attentive to its presence. When we follow her command the connection inside is strengthened and we start to radiate it more and more in every part of our being. We don't toss away the scriptures and other external helps, but we come to rely more and more on the Inner Teacher that lies deeper inside.

To manifest our Truth we have to raise and convert the level of our nature. We have to clear away a lot of inner debris. At the beginning what the observer witnesses is a mess of conflicting wills. Our nature is hopelessly divided and its different sides jar and compete with one another. These discords need to be annulled but we have to rely upon a higher determinism than the mind. As soon as we become truly *conscious* of these conflicts inside, the nature starts to *harmonise* and change. It is the Divine Person, our Psychic Being that orchestrates this change. One of its functions is to transform our dispersed nature into a state of oneness. It works through harmony and changes the nature into true instruments for the Divine Work. This harmony radiates outwards in our contacts with the outside world. It is a long and arduous process but by sincere surrender to the Inner Teacher our whole being becomes more of what it is in essence, Divine. Our mode of expression becomes more one of the Truth.

The conversion of our nature can only be achieved through inner work: there is no other way. We come back to effort again but gradually the momentum moves into one of a more seamless surrender. We have to learn to align our entire nature in the light of our Truth and soul. A key tool is the practice of self-observation. Self-observation is something which progresses only by continual practice. It is not work that we can afford to do part-time. When we observe a part of ourselves with consciousness, that part changes and aligns to the Truth. The change will happen automatically if one is connected to the psychic truth inside. This is

the true agent of change and the true individual that is present in all of us. At the point from where we first surrender to it, to constantly referring to it in all our inner movements and outer actions, our speech and our silence, when we rise and when we sleep, it gradually steps forward and our being becomes increasingly more harmonised. Our nature starts to merge more into it. The spirit through the outer form starts to truly shine. One becomes more vast and free; there is a greater feeling of health, abundance and well-being. One must learn to live exclusively there: surely this is the only way to become the true individual that can shape his own destiny.

Working through the body

It is possible to work on the arena of the *body* to convert our nature. This is a very intricate work. The body provides a unique and detailed look into our inner psychology. Everything surfaces there. The body has an affinity with the soul which facilitates this work. Through this inner work, every inner vibration, whether good or bad, comes to the light through the body. Every disharmony inside erodes our individual sense of oneness. We merely observe with our consciousness from top to bottom all that appears.

When we observe ourselves with true consciousness, the effect is alchemy. The creases of our nature that rise up to the physical get instantaneously ironed out. It is the Force which accompanies our consciousness that produces the necessary change. We look at ourselves disinterestedly and without judgement and open to the transforming Force from above. We go inside what we see and fully experience the vibration but we maintain our station above. We don't identify with what we see; our consciousness is joined with the Truth inside. It just looks and when it looks, there is a spontaneous action. Truth takes the place of distortion. It is marvellous! We let that Light saturate everything we see. There is a descending Force and the Truth from above resonates with our own Truth inside; everything is connected.

This practice turns every wrong movement to right. It harmonises the nature and instils a dynamic peace. It works at every level of our being. Ultimately, it is the only way to transform pain into its true identity, Bliss. Most of all, it installs the Truth into every facet of our being, which is our *svadharma*.

We should aim to extend this practice into our everyday lives. The consciousness needs to be always in an alert and attentive state. Above all we must be present, which means to be present in both time and space. We need to be living in the moment and not craving for future favours or dragged downwards by the oppressions of the past. We need to be present and grounded in our very own body because the body is a crucible for change and transformation. Most important, there must always be some link to our Truth inside. Wrong movements will surface throughout the day, but if our consciousness is awake, its light can change them into right.

The reality is though, nature plays hide and seek with the soul. The nature is repeatedly blindfolded by falsehood and ignorance. When that happens we live in shadow and lose touch with our Truth. When this happens, there is such a feeling of lack. How can one stop this perpetual game? This is a major aim of *sadhana* and Yoga. Yogic discipline strengthens

this sense of vigilance because attentiveness is the key. Yogic practice reinforces our identity with the Truth.

But the poise must be one of complete surrender. We have to consecrate our life to the Truth.

There are no shortcuts but if one is blessed with a *mantra*, the Divine Name, which vibrates harmoniously and truly inside, the game will desist more rapidly. Through sincerity and repetition, the mantra can vibrate of its own accord inside. It can take over our being and fill in these gaps of consciousness.

Individuality and destiny

This entire process of self-finding towards our true destiny runs parallel to the building of our unique individuality. To make our destiny, we have first to become an authentic human being. By definition, this is a conscious process. Through yoga, our individuality becomes more focused and discrete. This conscious individuality is essential in the making of our destiny. I have found that the work of erecting a true individuality takes two forms. In a sense, one is preparatory to the other but both seem to run simultaneously side by side. The first task is to dismantle whatever conceals the truth of our being and the second is to open the gates to our divine potential.

It is by a progressive harmony that the true individual is created. Individuality needs to be cemented and it is harmony which is the glue that holds it all together. Harmony is a principal attribute of the psychic being. Starting from a narrow base this harmony will, with attention, expand and grow. As the harmony becomes more perfect, a true integer gradually evolves. It takes considerable time and patience.

When our individuality consciously develops, we become more able to shape our unique destiny. As our will aligns closer and closer to that of the Supreme, we move along a path of joyful synchronicity. We manifest. At the end, when our individuality becomes a complete integer our destiny is no longer in our hands. There is no sense of separation; every vestige of ego is effaced. That is because everything that we are is surrendered to the Supreme. The individuality constructed by will and effort is offered at Her feet. The Truth consumes and transforms us. This is the supreme destiny of the Integral Yoga.

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2. Ibid.



“There is a freedom in each face of Fate”

Falguni Jani

The moment we start thinking and reflecting on our life, the fundamental questions of life, death, aim of existence on earth bother us in some way or another. The first thing that hits us hard is that we have no control over our circumstances. We feel a pressure from all sides, family, peer group and society. At the same time we have our own questions and dilemmas. There are situations when it is difficult to make the right choice; whether it is about career or marriage. Sometimes, simple issues of day to day living like shopping, managing time for various activities and responsibilities take a toll on our physical and mental health. We do have moments of Peace and stability, but a lasting harmony within ourselves and with the outside world eludes us. With every comfort around us we feel empty, a vacuum which is indefinable. There is a need for clear knowledge, unfailing strength and deep joy which is nowhere to be found. As a matter of fact each one of us is born with this aspiration to search for something eternal, infinite and permanent in this constantly changing and temporary world. We wish to have,

A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,
A Will expressive of soul's deity,
A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,
A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade. (CWSA 33-34; 51-52)

Only some make an effort to pursue this quest. Majority are satisfied with the common routine of human life and its fixed path of progress along the lines of convention and material requirements. This attitude reflects the present stage of evolution of human beings. Sri Aurobindo mentions this state of consciousness in *Savitri*.

Inheritor of the brief animal mind,
Man, still a child in Nature's mighty hands,
In the succession of the moments lives;
To a changing present is his narrow right;
His memory stares back at a phantom past,
The future flees before him as he moves;
He sees imagined garments, not a face.
Armed with a limited precarious strength,
He saves his fruits of work from adverse chance.
He is ignorant of the meaning of his life,
He is ignorant of his high and splendid fate. (CWSA 33-34; 53)

This passage aptly sums up the condition of human beings, who feel helpless when circumstances become difficult, especially when death takes away a young person or when one is born crippled. An individual who labours all his life to keep his/her family happy and secure is not always sure of the consequences of life. The effort to do good, proper and righteous does not always result in happiness and success. There always lurks a doubt, uncertainty and anxiety about future at every instant. Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo reassures us that this is only due to man's ignorance about the true meaning and purpose of life. The present condition is only a stage in the long march of evolution. A higher destiny awaits the human species.

A blind god is not destiny's architect;
A conscious power has drawn the plan of life,
There is a meaning in each curve and line (CWSA 33-34: 460)

The question is how to understand this meaning? We cannot interpret let alone understand the puzzle of life or what secret message lies hidden in the depths. Surely there must be way to understand why we are born in this world, in a particular family and country. If an intelligent and conscious power has manifested this apparently chaotic world, we must make an effort to understand its purpose and aim. The following lines not only give us an indication to solve the mystery, but reassures that the life that we live at present does not disclose our destiny. We are only looking on the surface with a partial vision and take it for the whole. At present our mind interprets the data given by the senses, which is insufficient and incomplete. Besides, our little self, the ego is not capable of knowing, feeling and acting beyond its own needs. To understand our own complex being as well of the other individuals around is not easy for the human personality in its present state of development. We know that each one of us are unique and have taken birth for a task which we alone must do, otherwise we will be part of the huge mechanical machinery of the world and move blindly like a herd of sheep without knowing the purpose or destination. Let us ponder on this question,

How long will you tread the circling tracks of mind
Around your little self and petty things?
But not for a changeless littleness were you meant,
Not for vain repetition were you built;
Out of the Immortal's substance you were made;
Your actions can be swift revealing steps,
Your life a changeful mould for growing gods.
A Seer, a strong Creator, is within,
The immaculate Grandeur broods upon your days,
Almighty powers are shut in Nature's cells.
A greater destiny waits you in your front:
This transient earthly being if he wills
Can fit his acts to a transcendent scheme. (CWSA 33-34:370)

One has to decide consciously to make an effort to connect with the deeper self, the soul, a portion of the divine within us. Its light can lead our journey on the path and reveal the true mission of our life on earth. Another important aspect is that human beings on earth are subject to different determinisms. On each plane of existence we are governed by universal forces which influence our lives. For instance there is a hierarchy of determinism starting from physical towards the vital, mental and psychic. Although we do not possess a free will, there is a way to go up towards the higher determinisms. If our consciousness is stationed at the physical level, we are subject to physical determinism. By a conscious decision we can move to the vital, mental and psychic determinisms which are definitely higher and subtler planes. In this way we can alter the consequences of karma. As we go towards the psychic, we enter the realm of the divine, where His Grace protects us from inner and outer dangers. The law of Grace cancels the harsh and rigid law of karmic consequences. This freedom is given to us when we take charge of ourselves and choose to free ourselves from the mechanical circle of life.

Perhaps, that is why the Mother says,

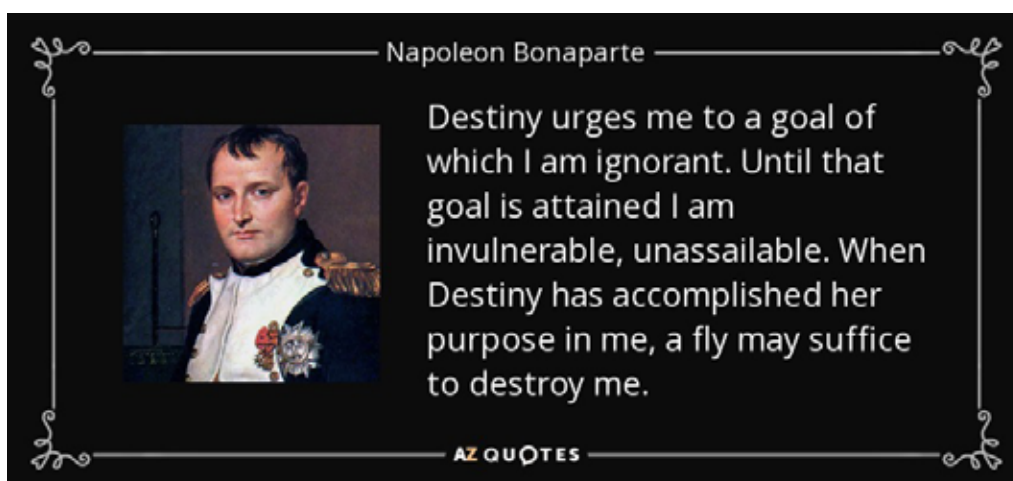
One thing you can be sure -- your Future is in your hands. You will become the man you want to be and the higher your ideal and your aspiration, the higher will be your realisation, but you must keep a firm resolution and never forget your true Aim in life. (CWM 12: 122)

This gives us a hope that everything is not lost, only hidden from our view. By making an effort, rather an inner discipline of maintaining silence in the mind and concentrating in the heart, we can listen to the voice of wisdom. The knowledge from our divine centre can liberate us from the bonds of our limited self, shed light on the next step forward. It has been the experience of many people who have sought the inner guide. Their lives have changed in a decisive way. They have found their true calling and have embarked on the mission joyfully. It is a fact that human beings feel a deeper joy when they are creative. This creativity blossoms in all who can connect themselves with the divine principle. As one goes a little beyond the mind and its circling thoughts, an inspiration from above trickles down. On our part we need to establish a contact with our soul.

But if you are consciously organised, unified around the divine centre, ruled and directed by it, you are master of your destiny. (CWM 5: 138-9)

This is the master key. We are fortunate to get this guidance from the divine Mother. Now, it is our responsibility to shape our lives. We are not sent on this earth without help or support. The guide within has to be awakened. There is a process and method of practice. All thoughts, feelings and action have to be offered to the inner presence, and to pay attention to its guidance.

The difficulties may come to the body or the mind, but one can feel peace and joy within. The knowledge that one can go higher in consciousness is liberating. One feels empowered due to the strength within. The presence of the divine consciousness within each of us is not bound by fate. Its upward journey can go on uninterrupted despite outer circumstances and difficulties. All we have to do is to learn to fly on the wings of the soul in the sky of eternity.



Cultivate our Creativity

For Expanding our Intuitive-Sensitive Consciousness

Veronik Menanteau

Something there is in us or something has to be developed, perhaps a central and still occult part of our being containing forces whose powers in our actual and present make-up are only a fraction of what could be. - Sri Aurobindo

How we allowed ourselves to trigger the creative impulse ?

In the complexity of our world, many people are struggling with their own minds. Influenced by their conditionings and overwhelmed by the pressures of day-to-day living in today's increasingly stressful society they are full of mental tensions which manifest as anxiety, nervousness, guilt, and lack of self-confidence, loneliness, fear, obsessions, and phobias. Many are looking for some form of change in their destiny, a little relief from the inner conflicts and turmoil, wanting to feel at ease with themselves, or even to experience, if not bliss, just a modicum of peace and joy. One way to develop this joy is to awaken the creative process.

The creative process is based on: aspiration, intuition, imagination, and discovery. Those four major aspects, that are part of the deep Self, are freely at work during the first seven years of childhood. A baby creates words, babble, and sing with no fear at all because all those actions are totally part of his/her life, such as standing up, wanting to walk, wanting to play. For babies this is life. They are intensely themselves, feeling joy in the now, affirming something that they are not yet articulate with vocabulary. *The young child IS, but not conscious of precisely what it IS.*

After the age of seven slowly awareness of the unconscious evolutionary process weakens more and more and the mind develops habits. It sets up mechanisms that will become the adult mind print. We mainly use our mind with rational, logical, conceptual memories, patterns, and processes. Slowly those mechanisms take over and format the mind to such an extent that daily life involves unvaried repetition. Rarely do people invent or come in contact with a transcendent creative idea. The result is loss of interest in things we do not know, no curiosity anymore, lack of awareness, lack of empathy and imagination.

People hear by force of habit, which means they do not hear anymore. They feel by force of habit, so they do not feel anything from themselves or others. They do not touch, do not really explore or savor (to savor is to enter into discovery of joy); they eat to satisfy hunger. They do not know how to listen and identify new sounds. They are trapped in their mindset. And yet it is through those fundamental capacities that people could learn how to function, how to get to understand themselves on a deeper level and even to identify emotions that constantly bombard them. Instead, the mind (which is the sixth sense) put their cognitions factors more or less to the side. Then, the mind captures only information and data that constantly bombards it in a continuing flux. It is this narrow experience that people constantly use and substitute for the actual functions of their five sense cognitions. Instead

of feeling any phenomenon by a living experience, human adults simply and repetitively pursue information acquisition. It is how most people resolve problems and make choices.

Our five senses are channel sensors which receive infinite signals that the brain decodes and combines to allow us to identify what we see, hear, touch, feel and taste. All those infinite signals build in us meaning to relate more effectively into the world we live in and to understand the way we interact with each other. Actually, to deeply become aware of the reality we live in, our mental acuity needs constantly to be stimulating by our five senses setting free the dynamics of the imaginary, stimulating our ideas, and creating perfect balance for an harmonious understanding of ourselves and others. If those channel sensors are not well maintained it becomes difficult to regulate our balance, to pay attention, and to feel harmony in every action. All our activities become monotonous routines and cause the loss of motivation, of receptivity, and even loss of hearing and listening. Consequently, we experience the loss of meaning in what we do, loss of self confidence and most important of all loss of joy.

In our hyper connected world using phone and computers, we have a tendency to put the mind always in the front, and let it be the “master of the house”. How can we learn to listen deeply to ourselves, to observe and identify what is happening, what is changing and most importantly how we connect with our soul. This is not a simple idea; it is the content of an experience that has not only an empirical value but first and foremost a profound resonance of the will to discover our deep self, our eternal Soul. We cannot go there with our mind, we have to quieten the mind and let our five senses be active channels to allow the intuition to become conscious and Self-Intuitive. It is our mission to develop plasticity in the mind for exploring and climbing above the thinking mind. We need to clear the path in order to work for reaching higher Consciousness. For that we have to create the best conditions to allow our Intuition to be freely at work.

By the Self-Intuitive, I mean the Intuitive Being, this part of the being that belongs to the Intuitive plane or is in deep relation with it. Intuition is one of the superior planes of the Consciousness, between the thinking mind (the thinking mental) of the man and the supramental plane. The intuitive mental does not get in direct contact with the supramental. Above it stands the overmental where the intuition is much higher and much bigger, above come the supramental zones. In the Intuition, the ‘Knowledge’ is a truth which is not by nature global or total, it is a Truth that emerges in as many as points as possible, from outline, from flash that is right behind the Knowledge, and supply its direct perceptions.

By being mindful of all our five senses: Sight, Sound, Touch, Smell, and Taste we can activate an intuitive leap from sensory experiences and let the direct perception be fully at work. By doing so, we allow ourselves to trigger the creative impulse; we live the experience of manifesting in the form a pure creative act coming directly from the intuition. Then, whatever is manifest in a form takes us to a state of joy.

In *Record of Yoga*, January 13th 1912, Sri Aurobindo describes the experience of Ananda in the field of the five senses :

Ananda has very fully established itself in the field of the indriyas (Five Senses). All sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, movements, actions, are now pleasurable or give pleasure ; all carry with them the appreciation of the beauty of the gunas which they are in expression, the joy of the vijnana (the full Consciousness that embrace All) in them, the joy of the heart in them (the basis of premananda) the joy of the body in them (the basis of kamananda), the joy of the mind as indrya in them. All this joy is of the nature of bhoga from which the ananda is beginning to emerge....

The key to constant creativity lies in the awareness of deliberately arranging the best conditions to let our five senses be fully receptive. In this practice what we call “Intuitive-Sensitive Consciousness” we develop our ability to gain from direct experience and build connections to generate new energy and ideas. For that we have to dig into our intuition as it is our intuition that guides the creative flow. The more we use our senses, and become aware of them, the more creative we will be, and the more we will be able to resolve situations, to make the right choice in order to change in our destiny.

How do we develop the Intuitive-Sensitive Consciousness? How we get deeper into it? How do we learn to decipher the effect and inventory of our feelings? How do we bring our inner self to the front and attune with our eternal self, the psychic being ?

First we have to prepare ourselves to be in a state of creating. Before all else we must bring **peace** into the mind, in the solitude of one’s self. Our inner peace carries with it a sense of settled and harmonious rest. Once we are there, we switch off our experience of Time. I would even say we enter “Beyond Time”. Through our conscious breathing we slowly penetrate in quietness. This state of deep quietude is our door because the quality of any of our creative manifestations relies on it. Once there, in complete awareness and complete sincerity (the first quality given by the Mother) we focus on our Intention. By intention, we mean the quality of sincerity in our Good Will because what we discover about ourselves is based on that Quality of Intention that we awaken. The result of sincerity will help us to welcome whatever is created, with no interpretation, simply welcoming. Let it be what our intuition wishes to express. We have to hold onto our aspiration to really put all the conditions on our side. In other words, these are the essential conditions necessary to really Be, and not to pretend. These conditions to really Be Aware trigger creativity are essential to the process.

At that moment it is this beautiful quality of intention that will support all our being and help us to welcome what will take form. Because the most important practice is to humbly welcome whatever is manifest with no judgment, no psychological interpretation, no self pity, only welcoming our creative action in a complete goodwill and indulgence. That is why keeping Intention full of aspiration instead of expectation is the key. Once again, there is no expectation; only the quest to be totally absorbed in the process of creating. Thus, there is no thinking, no planning, no strategizing; simply welcoming whatever comes to us spontaneously. In full humility we remember when we were very little children we enjoyed being totally absorbed in the act of playing.

With perseverance we learn how to “Be in the Now”. With a great deal of benevolence

towards ourselves, we let our senses be at work, allowing them to be in a higher receptivity. Taking our time, we withdraw and listen to what is inside us. This is key to developing more and more of our senses. By doing so, our eyesight for example expands and develops faculties to attain a much clearer perception of the world around and within. At a certain moment we reach a level of resonance; we enter in total harmony. It is a state of fulfillment. This particular state unifies ourselves with the world and vibrates all around us. This is the most appropriate creative state because at this moment (in this state) all is possible. We let our imagination take over. We freely express whatever comes out; we give shape to whatever springs forth. By doing so, we improve our Intuitive-sensitive Consciousness and we feel gratitude and compassion.

Slowly we learn to linger in what we discover; we enter deeply into what we are observing, slowly unifying with what we look at, at what we are gazing upon. Little by little we enter into a silent contemplation. Slowly we let the subjective being manifest and learn to break the wall of objectivity. Then we feel equanimity between them.

The more we practice and enter in this very specific state the more we enter into the eternal silence. The silence makes us tune in with both worlds – outside and within. At that moment the intuition overtops and admits us to a more direct and luminous power of truth. Suddenly we touch the sound of silence, the cosmic sound. In that state of emptiness, we let the creative impulse sparkle. The more we stay in the act of creating, the more we are aligned with all the parts of the being. In the heart of the dynamic creative process the more creating one does, the more creative one becomes.

Balance, strength, serenity, and harmony flow in us like a river. (A channel of universal harmony...Held by intuitive heart and secret sense. *Savitri*- Book One, Canto 3- Page 29) Magnifying consciousness, we enter into oneness because while we are creating, we are living in the form that we are creating, and existing outside of it. With that power we become the witness. The more we are there, the more we are vibrating joy. At that moment we can change our destiny.



Living your Truth

Debabrata Sahani

If one has to live his truth, he has to start by asking himself what was he living for till now. Was it a life of falsehood or was it a life of someone else's truth. The answer is not simple or clear as there are only a handful of individuals who question their own life. However, this is the task in hand and we must try and find out how to live our truth. In this context, we find three words to explore, first "living", second "your" and third is "truth".

What exactly do we mean by living? When we say living, we essentially refer to all those phenomenon which differentiates us from non-living entities. We can summarize them into three activities – thinking, speaking and doing. Besides these three, the living phenomenon in human beings also includes feeling and being, a nascent existential state without any thought, feeling and action.

The next word to be explored in this sentence is "your". To understand this we have to consider what is referred as "you". This you comprises of body, mind (which includes thoughts and emotions), and energy which animates body and mind. Besides these three, there is a fourth dimension of our existence which supports all three of them.

The last and most difficult word given to us is "truth". In practice, truth is that which is available to our experience or understanding, both complementing and contradicting each other. For example, to our eyes, the truth is that the sun goes round the earth, however, the truth is the other way round – both contradicting each other. But when our eyes see a flower as red, our understanding is that the petals are absorbing all the other colours except red, thus both complement each other.

When we plan to live our truth we have to try and complement our experience and understanding to the maximum possible extent at each level of our existence, so that we are a bit closer to our truth. Let us start with our body. The truth of our body manifests as the need of the body as far as our physical life is concerned; these truths are simple and straightforward. The most common truth of our body are that it needs food, water, air, rest and movement. If we deprive any of these to our body, there is a spontaneous demand. If we recognize these truths and live them accordingly, the result will be physical wellbeing. To elaborate the practical steps, we should not eat till we are really hungry. By following this rule, we can easily eliminate over-eating and its consequences which result from greed for food. A truth in understanding about food is that if the food is not properly mixed with saliva, the body finds it very difficult to digest. Hence, living this truth will be to chew the food well, and this habit will prevent the ill effects of fast-food. About the quality of food, the truth of human system is that it is closer to herbivores than carnivores, and food which can be digested with no or minimal cooking is best for the human body. Once we start living these truths by eating more fruits, salads, sprouts and nuts instead of spicy and junk food, our physical wellbeing reaches new heights. Another truth is that three fourths of our physical body is water. It should remain hydrated in all situations. However, most of us ignore this truth and drink far less water than what is necessary and create an environment conducive

for illness inside our body. The next truth of our body is it needs sleep, however after industrialization of society, the sleeping patterns have become erratic, late night activities are common in many communities. Adequate sleep is absolutely essential for all individuals to maintain their health and energy. If we give priority to other activities and compromise our sleep, we are not living the truth of our body. Another truth of our body is movement, which keeps happening unconsciously. If we can make our posture and movements conscious, we can experience an enhanced state of lightness, agility and strength. This we can learn by practicing *yogasana* daily. The last truth of our body is it needs to throw away whatever is unnecessary from our body, which happens daily through urination, defecation sweating and coughing. Any abnormal change in these should be vigilantly observed and taken care of, so that toxins do not accumulate in our body. In summary, if we live the truth of our body, truth will manifest in our body in form of health and strength.

The next dimension of our being is mind which is too complex to explore. However, to start our practice we need something simple. The mind is essentially thoughts and emotions, though emotions are closely linked to our vital energy too. As far as thoughts are concerned, the truth is only the present. But our thoughts mostly go back to past or move forward to future. We cannot keep past and future as the basis of our experience as we are moving away from the living truth that is the present. To train our mind to dwell on the present the only way is to concentrate on the present activity. In routine life we do most of the actions mechanically which does not need any concentration. While doing so thoughts enter which are not about the present moment. Hence, to live the truth of our mind, we have to put our mind into the work of that moment. This job becomes easy if we can convince ourselves to all our work – even our daily routine work with perfection and beauty. Once this starts the truth starts bearing result – each work gives you contentment and peace.

Another dimension in our mind is emotion. All our emotions arise from relations, mostly with persons, at times with objects and situations. Let us try to live the truth of our personal relation. Every relation gives us something, our mind looks forward to it and asks for more. We end up being dissatisfied with most of our relations because of our expectations. The truth of these relations is that each one of them needs something from us, but our truth is we can only give that which we have. Similarly, that person can give us what he or she has. Nobody can fulfill all our expectations. Hence, in a relationship, expectations takes us away from truth and giving back takes us closer to truth. If we can concentrate on only giving what we have, instead of trying to fulfilling their demands and at the same time try to nullify all our expectations, personal relationship will also be a fulfillment like never before.

Let us examine our truth from another perspective. Now also we are living our truth, but truth of our surface personality. This brings fulfillment of our immediate impulses and reactions to the external stimulus from outside. Most of these activities are prototype, repetitive and mechanical and determined by our past habits. Behind the surface of our personality, we have an inner life. The truth of this inner life is very different from our outer life. We become aware of this dimension only when we withdraw from impulses, reactions and start reflecting and introspecting. Our understanding becomes different which shows

that the truth of our response is very different from our surface personality. The more we start living this truth, the better becomes the experience of life.

Still behind this is an inmost dimension of life. Only in moments of silence and calm we become aware of this part of our being deep within us. If we can contact that even for a few moments, the entire perspective of life changes. The truth of our life becomes very different from our routine life. If we can listen to that voice of silence, learn to obey its instructions, we experience our own existence and the entire creation in a very different way. It defies all description. That is only for those who dare to enter the deepest cave in the heart and search for the light within, then and then only we live the ultimate truth of our being.

NOSTRADAMUS AS A FORETELLER

By 1554, Nostradamus' visions had become an integral part of his works in the almanacs, and he decided to channel all his energies into a massive opus he entitled Centuries. He planned to write 10 volumes, which would contain 100 predictions forecasting the next 2,000 years. In 1555 he published Les Prophetes, a collection of his major, long-term predictions. Possibly feeling vulnerable to religious persecution, he devised a method of obscuring the prophecies' meanings by using quatrains—rhymed four-line verses—and a mixture of other languages such as Greek, Italian, Latin, and Provençal, a dialect of Southern France. Oddly enough, Nostradamus enjoyed a good relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. It is believed he never faced prosecution for heresy by the Inquisition because he didn't extend his writings to the practice of magic.

Nostradamus ran into some controversy with his predictions, as some thought he was a servant of the devil, and others said he was a fake or insane. However, many more believed the prophecies were spiritually inspired. He became famous and in demand by many of Europe's elite. Catherine de Medici, the wife of King Henri II of France, was one of Nostradamus' greatest admirers. After reading his almanac of 1555, where he hinted at unnamed threats to her family, she summoned him to Paris to explain and draw up horoscopes for her children. A few years later, she made him Counselor and Physician-in-Ordinary to King Henri's court. In 1556, while serving in this capacity Nostradamus also explained another prophecy from Centuries I, which was assumed to refer to King Henri. The prophecy told of a "young lion" who would overcome an older one on the field of battle. The young lion would pierce the eye of the older one and he would die a cruel death. Nostradamus warned the king he should avoid ceremonial jousting. Three years later, when King Henri was 41 years old, he died in a jousting match when a lance from this opponent pierced the king's visor and entered his head behind the eye deep into his brain. He held on to life for 10 agonizing days before finally dying of infection.

Nostradamus claimed to base his published predictions on judicial astrology—the art of forecasting future events by calculation of the planets and stellar bodies in relationship to the earth. His sources include passages from classical historians like Plutarch as well as medieval chroniclers from whom he seems to have borrowed liberally. In fact, many scholars believe he paraphrased ancient end-of-the-world prophecies (mainly from the Bible) and then through astrological readings of the past, projected these events into the future. There's also evidence not everyone was enamored with Nostradamus' predictions. He was criticized by professional astrologers of the day for incompetence and assuming that comparative horoscopy (the comparison of future planetary configurations with those accompanying known past events) could predict the future.

(<https://www.biography.com/people/nostradamus-9425407>)

Make Your Destiny

Aadil Palkhivala

If mankind could but see through in a glimpse of fleeting experience what infinite enjoyments, what perfect forces, what luminous reaches of spontaneous knowledge, what wide claims of our being lie waiting for us in the tracts which our animal evolution has not yet conquered, they would leave all and never rest till they had gained these treasures. But the way is narrow, the doors are hard to force, and fear, distrust and skepticism are there, sentinels of Nature, to forbid the turning away of our feet from her ordinary pastures.

—Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*

Is destiny immutable or do we live with licentious free will?

I posit that the effect we have on our destiny is based on what we choose to control. We can control our thoughts, our words, our emotions, and our actions. As a corollary to that, we can control our aspirations, our desires, and our receptivity.

In Purna Yoga[®], we teach that, in all of life, there are five requirements that must exist for any progress to be made, for destiny to be potentially altered. This is the foundation of our teaching. The first is:

The urge to grow

As Savitri (my meditation teacher) has explained, our fate (our destiny) is actually the “default” that is built into us. If we merely do what is comfortable, and if we continue doing what we’ve always done, then the universe defaults to giving us our fate. *Que sera sera*.

Without any inner calling for something more, without an aspiration for something higher, there is no place to begin. It all begins with an urge. This can be spontaneous and joyous or something inside that pleads to avoid pain and suffering. So, there is the positive motivation and the positive motivation that arises from the negative.

As an example of a positive motivation, we may desire more genuine love in our lives. After all, we have a built-in desire for true love—not superficial love—but a true connection with other human beings and a unification with our spirit. There is a program built into our DNA which, if we aspire to access, can entrain with our urge to grow.

Our DNA (destiny, fate) is like a two-dimensional universe. When we start to aspire mentally, physical, emotionally, spiritually, then we rise above this boring flat surface and begin to build a rising vantage point from which our vision broadens. We then see potential—both for our own growth and the upliftment of humankind.

I don’t know of any master, from the ancient time of Zoroaster to the advent of Sri Aurobindo, who has not risen above the common-thinking herd and seen further. I’m reminded of the quote of Newton who said, “If I have seen further than others, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” Therefore, the company we keep must be elevated so that we, too, are elevated. We cannot surround ourselves with people who persist in mediocre

thinking. Our mindset has to shift. We must surround ourselves with giants so that we can see further. That is why we read Sri Aurobindo, and why I study with Savitri.

When we wrench ourselves out of the mire of mediocrity, and rise above our comfortable commonality, we see further, aspire more assiduously, and inspire ourselves with a vision of what can be.

“Souls that do not aspire are God’s failures. But Nature is pleased and loves to multiply them because they assure her of stability and prolong her empire.” (*Thoughts and Glimpses*, Sri Aurobindo)

The willingness to change

We may want more, but without a willingness to grow and change, it will not come. It cannot come. Nothing changes until we do. Comfort is stagnation.

I have had students come to me and tell me they want to attain a specific result in their lives. When I tell them what to do, they say, “Oh but... I cannot do that because ...” Such an answer fulfills the Chinese definition of madness: expecting a different result from doing the same actions. If you do what you’ve always done, you will get what you have always got. We have to be willing to do different actions, mostly uncomfortable ones, if we wish to change our destiny.

Appropriate guidance

Much, if not all, of the wheel has already been invented! There is really no need to start from scratch. We must use the expertise of experts. If you want to attain a lofty physical state, go to a renowned asana teacher. If you want to attain a spiritual goal, work with masters who have been there, people who can specifically address your needs.

In our world, the only problem comes about because many profess to have attained what they have not. Therein lies the need for the cultivation of discrimination, or discernment. (Viveka khyāti).

But, there is always another form of guidance available. The quiet voice of our soul speaks from within. As Sri Aurobindo writes in *Savitri*,

There is a Power within that knows beyond
Our knowings; we are greater than our thoughts,
And sometimes earth unveils that vision here.

Consistent effort

Even with the loftiest aspiration, even with the willingness to change, even with the most insightful guidance, there will not be change until there is consistent effort. Our effort is our major contribution to creating the potential pathway away from our unefforted karma, our doomed destiny. Perseverance pays profitably.

Patience

Destiny is like a large cruise ship plowing through the ocean on a predetermined path. To change its course not only requires perseverance but patience. Obstacles come up which

have to be dealt with, while opposition always rises in the face of all growth and progress. We must be patient because we oppose a force of nature, a breaking of the status quo, a shakeup of the stupefaction of stagnancy.

Forming Fate

As we contemplate these five requirements, we realize that, to leverage our lot, we must develop control for each one. The way to make destiny our own lies in the conscious daily control of all these five elements.

This is the process of consciously applying our will to change destiny:

Every day I must aspire. Every day I be receptive to change. Every day I must be receptive to the Divine Light and the guidance that comes from my own soul or a truly wise master. Every day I must act upon this guidance. And then, as Patanjali's last niyama implies, every day I must be patient, and leave the fruits of my effort to the Divine (Ishvara pranidhana).

By controlling these five areas of our lives, we condition our future, we remake our destiny.

We must grapple with the feeling of discontent and develop an inner urge—an emotional drive—to attain a higher destiny, both for our own selves and for the human race. We must let that emotion resonate through our days and create the thoughts that we need to think to change the DNA vibration in our cells. It is thoughts and feelings that change the vibration more than anything else. Next, and ever so crucially, we must change our words and actions to take that elevated vibration from within us to bless the material world without.

Is destiny immutable or do we live with licentious free will? The accumulation of all our past thoughts, words, and deeds have paved the path for our current destiny. Then, it must inevitably follow that our current thoughts, words, and deeds can convincingly coerce our future, defying destiny.



BEAUTY AND DELIGHT



Painting by Leonardo da Vinci (Source: Internet)

**“Painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt,
and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen.”**

Leonardo da Vinci

Sri Aurobindo and Leonardo da Vinci*

Anurag Banerjee

Regarding Sri Aurobindo's former incarnations KD Sethna alias Amal Kiran writes: "The two certainties about Sri Aurobindo's past, as deducible from his correspondence with me, were Augustus Caesar and Leonardo da Vinci."¹ About Augustus Caesar and Leonardo da Vinci, he once asked Sri Aurobindo in one of his letters: "Is it true that the same consciousness that took the form of Leonardo da Vinci had previously manifested as Augustus Caesar, the first emperor of Rome? If so, will you please tell me what exactly Augustus Caesar stood for in the history of Europe and how Leonardo's work was connected with his?" Sri Aurobindo replied (29 July 1937): "Augustus Caesar organised the life of the Roman Empire and it was this that made the framework of the first transmission of the Graeco-Roman civilisation to Europe—he came for that work and the writings of Virgil and Horace and others helped greatly towards the success of his mission. After the interlude of the Middle Ages, their civilisation was reborn in a new mould in what is called the Renaissance, not in its life-aspects but in its intellectual aspects. It was therefore a supreme intellectual, Leonardo da Vinci, who took up again the work and summarised in himself the seeds of modern Europe."² Elsewhere KD Sethna adds: 'I used to pester Sri Aurobindo with all sorts of questions, dangling a long string of names: "Were you Homer, were you Shakespeare, were you Valmiki, Dante, Virgil, Milton?" And he stoutly said "No." I asked him also whether he had been Alexander and Julius Caesar. He replied that Alexander was too much of a torrent for him and, as for Caesar, he said: "You have forgotten that Mrs. Besant claims Julius Caesar. I don't want to be prosecuted for misappropriation of personality...But, while he said "No" to all, he didn't answer in the negative to my proposal of Leonardo and Augustus Caesar.'³ And again: 'An interesting bit of occult news I heard in the early days of my stay here...was that, when in a past of theirs Sri Aurobindo had been Leonardo da Vinci and the Mother Mona Lisa.'⁴

The Mother confirmed Sri Aurobindo's incarnation as Leonardo da Vinci to Udar Pinto as well. Udar, who craved a Sanskrit name for his wife Mona from Sri Aurobindo, was told by the Mother that Sri Aurobindo wanted her to keep her name unchanged as it reminded him of Mona Lisa. Then the Mother told Udar: "You know, Udar, I was Mona Lisa, and Sri Aurobindo, as Leonardo da Vinci, painted me in that famous picture."⁵ With reference to this context KD Sethna too writes in his article on K Amrita: "On one occasion when I remarked to the Mother that the way she had poised her arm and hand a moment earlier reminded me of the depiction of Mona Lisa's in Leonardo's famous painting, she said that at times even physical characteristics were carried over from one life to another."⁶ In Mother's Agenda we find her saying (on 30 June 1962): "And then, for the Italian Renaissance: Leonardo da Vinci, Mona Lisa and for the French Revolution: François I, Marguerite de Valois and so forth. Twice I knew that it wasn't just images but something that had happened to ME..."⁷ KD Sethna too observes: "As Mona Lisa, she was a mysterious inspirer of the greatest art."⁸(<http://savitri.in/blogs/light-of-supreme/the-former-incarnations-of-sri-aurobindo-and-the-mother-by-anurag-banerjee>)

* Title given by the editors

Reference:

1. Amrita: Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume, p. 82
2. KD Sethna, Life, Literature and Yoga, p. 6
3. KD Sethna, Light and Laughter, p. 33
4. KD Sethna, Our Light and Delight, p. 84
5. Shyam Kumari, More Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, p. 200
6. Amrita: Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume, p. 83
7. Mother's Agenda_, Vol. III, pp. 150-151
8. Our Light and Delight, p. 48

MONA LISA

6.2.1940

Mother was arranging flowers. It was an understanding that in order to save time I could show to her paintings etc., at that hour when she arranged flowers.

C: Can I show the Plate now?

Mother smiled and said: Yes. Yes.

After seeing the painting Mother said: That is the best. C: Is that so?

Mother: I think so. We shall see. Sri Aurobindo was the artist.

C: Leonardo da Vinci?

Mother smiled sweetly and said: Yes.

Then I pointed to the picture and said: Mother, it seems this is yours?

Mother: Yes, do you not see the resemblance?

Mother put her finger on the lips (as in the picture) and showed also the lower portion of the face.

(Editor M. P Pandit, *Champaklal Speaks*, pp 45-46)

Leonardo da Vinci: Seeker of Beauty and Delight

Oeendrila Guha

Da Vinci sought “a curious beauty” which revealed itself only to those who chased after it carefully and on having gained a rich understanding of “types of beauty, have refined as far upon these, as these refine upon the world of common forms.” (Pater 5) To da Vinci, the Beautiful is the universal expression of the Spirit. According to the Mother, “Beauty is the worship Nature offers to the supreme Master of the universe; Beauty is the divine language in forms.” (CWM 1: 353) Notwithstanding an atheist and a heretic, he refers to the eternal Spirit as the “First Mover” or the “*primo motore*: the inventor of all”. (Qtd. in Joshi 52) His love for learning from Nature was questioned by his peers because Nature in Christianity was looked down upon as immanent and evil. Earth/Nature symbolizes evil and death because Adam and Eve, who were immortal at Garden of Eden before they committed the Original Sin, became mortal after committing it and were sent to earth. Nature came to be symbolised as the abode of the Devil. It is to conquer the fear of the Devil in nature that Jesus fasted for forty days in the wilderness.

Since he was an atheist, completely untarnished by any religious or sectarian moulding, he did not have to battle the Spirit-Nature dichotomy. In him, the scientist and the artist, the Spirit-forms/Nature chasm is resolved as truth in beauty or “the largest and deepest revelation of spiritual power.” (Bosanquet 272) He realised beauty in the youthful faces of women and children.

Before the time of Leonardo, beauty was judged morally. Plato’s moralistic principle of beauty observes that all Art must be judged morally. For him Art is hedonistic. Plato’s philosophy of the noumenon and phenomenon clearly justifies the ideal world as situated “outside” of the Real world. The artist imitating the once removed Nature creates a thrice removed impression of Nature called Art and a false impression of Nature which is limited to pleasure-production and pleasure-enjoyment of Art. Plato’s aesthetic of beauty pertaining to Nature is intellectual as “art is a second nature, only in the sense of being an incomplete reproduction of nature”. (Bosanquet 18) Aristotle attempted to bridge the gap between Nature and Art by saying that imitation is “the imaginative reconstruction of life” (qtd. in Chopra 7), rather than a “mere representation”. Aristotle places great importance on the perfection of “forms or fancies for the purpose of aesthetic enjoyment” (Bosanquet 17) and his aesthetic principle is founded on the premise that “beauty is purely formal” and that the greater the beauty the more sensuous the expression of unity in the variety of forms: pleasure-production and pleasure-enjoyment of Art. One of the ways to weigh the ratio of beauty is by measuring the proportions of the forms. Little wonder that the Greeks invented the concept of the Golden Ratio!

Da Vinci was of the strong opinion that a painter, depending on his power of imagination, could either behold beauty or ugliness in Nature or create beautiful and joyful or monstrous depictions. Thus the painter was the rival of Nature as he, like the mirror, reflected the image to its purest transparency. An example of this is the painting of the “Battle of Anghiari” which demonstrated the gory details of the war between Milan and Florence. The painting

was commissioned by Piero Soderini who on seeing it told da Vinci to make it less realistic and more pleasing in terms of brutality. In general, da Vinci preferred quiet scenes which revealed a natural harmony between man and Nature.

Vinayak Krishna Gokak opines that the Western mind lay emphasis on thought in aesthetics. Aesthetics, as originated in Greece, means to perceive. Such a perception is an intellectual activity, critiquing the beautiful based on its symmetry. On the other hand, the Indian mind underscores “the communion of the soul with the Eternal”. The earliest philosophical school of Indian thought, the Vedanta, as asserted by Sri Aurobindo affirms “...all this is the Brahman; Mind is Brahman, Life is Brahman, Matter is Brahman...” (CWSA 21: 338) The Brahman or the unmanifest Consciousness participates in the process of manifestation out of “an immense delight to be”. Delight implies

....infinite variation in phenomenon and form of its self-conscious being and endlessly enjoying the delight of that variation. (CWSA 21: 99)

Delight stems from the will to be or exist:

Delight is existence, Delight is the secret of creation, Delight is the root of birth, Delight is the cause of remaining in existence, Delight is the end of birth and that into which creation ceases. (CWSA 21: 109)

Sri Aurobindo clarifies that the delight or *Ananda* is one of the three poises of the Brahman. To experience delight in “infinite variation” one must realize the Spirit behind forms, followed by an unbounded joy in appreciating them. Unless the individual establishes a dynamic contact with the Spirit, the world will remain a static illusion, a fleshy mass of grey matter, devoid of an intelligent consciousness.

It is equally important to have a consciousness which recognizes the presence of the Spirit behind these external forms. One wanting this understanding is without a complete consciousness. Therefore violating the ideas of Truth is as serious as violating the forms of the beautiful. Leonardo’s concept of beauty is similar to the Indian aesthesis.

A polymath, he tried his hand at everything that required further clarification. As a worshipper of beauty, he preferred the simple and the real to the gaudy and the contrived. The faces of his characters were not stylised as seen in the characters of his contemporaries; Raphael in particular preferred grandeur of execution to grandeur of conception and “pure, honest, simple art”. Leonardo’s characters reflect human emotions by concentrating on “the new concept of volumes and space” (Santi 22) by placing humanity and Nature in an “atmospheric” manner. He is a genius because he had the courage to introduce the new concept of movement to painting and yet remain faithful to the aspirations of the human race in its quest for universal truth and beauty by illustrating a face as intriguing as Mona Lisa’s.

Through movement he caught the passions of the Spirit, its “universal dimension”. When emotion or “perfect love” unite with movement or “perfect knowledge” harmony is born. According to him “perfect knowledge and perfect love are one and the same.” (Merejkowski 183) It is harmony that characterizes da Vinci’s paintings. Critics and admirers praise da

Vinci's paintings for extraordinary texture and personality since through him the Muse of painting reached "an artistic consummation". By choosing to return to Nature, da Vinci found himself in the presence of "perpetual surprises" which led him to better express the presence of the Spirit behind the external form. Thus is justified his life-long endeavour to work out the secrets of Nature. During his indefatigable hours of investigation of every form he came to know of truth also as "endless joy".

To da Vinci movement and expression were essential to bring out the element of truth, beauty and delight. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo identify the ability to experience unalloyed joy as one of the characteristics of the Yogi. Such delight is the direct outcome of the Yogi's vision to appreciate universal beauty, that of the imprint of the Spirit behind the form or as Sri Aurobindo puts it "certain eternal truths". M. H. Abrams defines joy as "the shaping spirit of Imagination" or "the free exercise of all his faculties...the precondition and the end of the highest art" (431)

This sense of joy is also expressed as "a feeling of maternity" which is "indeed always characteristic of Leonardo". (Pater 8) It moved his being, generating the best of his works, lending them "a type of subtle and curious grace" that can be found in the soft features of Madonna and Child, Mona Lisa, La Belle Freronniere, Ginevra de Benci and other women. It can be assumed that since woman fulfilled the creative role, like Nature, he painted women more than men. Besides, himself being of a sensitive nature, he identified himself with the less privileged which is why he took under his wings the weak and the needy. Of women he seemed to have said that men treated them the same way they treated animals. (Excerpt from a research paper "Leonardo da Vinci: a Yogi" accepted for publication by SACAR)

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Two Friends



Deepshikha Reddy

The Advent of Peace...

Shruti Bidwaikar

*Om Dyauh Shaantir-Antarikssam Shaantih
Prthivii Shaantir-Aapah Shaantir-Ossadhayah Shaantih |
Vanaspatayah Shaantir-Vishve-Devaah Shaantir-Brahma Shaantih
Sarvam Shaantih Shaantireva Shaantih Saa Maa Shaantir-Edhi |
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||*

May peace radiate there in the whole sky as well as in the vast ethereal space everywhere.

May peace reign all over this earth, in water and in all herbs, trees and creepers.

May peace flow over the whole universe.

May peace be in the Supreme Being Brahman.

And may there always exist in all peace and peace alone.

Aum peace, peace and peace to us and all beings!

A mantra as reverberant and powerful like the one mentioned above has been chanted by many a people all across the globe. It is a gift of peace given by the rishis to the entire creation! The last line of this mantra which has been repeated in many other mantras, on hearing it Sri Aurobindo said: “I remember when I first read the OM Shanti Shanti Shanti of the Upanishads it had a powerful effect on me.”

What is this peace that is being invoked by the sages? In the words of Sri Aurobindo: “Peace is a deep quietude where no disturbance can come – a quietude with a sense of established security and release.” (CWSA 29: 138) When such beautiful mantras have been given to us since millenniums why has peace not been established yet on earth? Where are we lacking? What is missing? Meditation does bring peace to the distracted human mind but where does it vanish when one comes out of meditation? This happens because during meditation the mind experiences peace and the body and emotions are suspended for a while. The moment one comes out of meditation the other members – body and emotions, who like to be in action and strife, destroy that peaceful state. Not only that, mind itself gets tired being in that peaceful state for long. It wants to wander and think and express. Sri Aurobindo describes this struggle most beautifully in *Savitri* thus:

Only awhile at first these heavenlier states,
These large wide-poised upliftings could endure.
The high and luminous tension breaks too soon,
The body's stone stillness and the life's hushed trance,
The breathless might and calm of silent mind;
Or slowly they fail as sets a golden day.
The restless nether members tire of peace;
A nostalgia of old little works and joys,
A need to call back small familiar selves,
To tread the accustomed and inferior way,
The need to rest in a natural pose of fall,
As a child who learns to walk can walk not long,
Replace the titan will for ever to climb,
On the heart's altar dim the sacred fire (34)

It is thus very difficult for us to be in a higher state of peace and joy for too long. We wish

to return to our mundane consciousness and experience the joy and suffering of life.

Another reason that peace has not been able to establish itself on earth as yet perhaps is that those who have attained peace have chosen to leave the earth and merged themselves in the Infinite. Even if they stayed on the earth for a while their aim was to get out of this world. Their presence did radiate peace and joy in all those who were around but that was not enough to establish peace on earth.

Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga does not advocate leaving the earth for the pursuit of peace. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have emphasized time and again that their yoga is for the earth and for its transformation. Therefore, for such a transformation to happen one has to be on earth and call for the divine qualities and powers here. Peace followed by the descent of Truth, Love, Light, Knowledge, Strength and such other divine qualities only will establish peace on earth. Peace is the basic pre-requisite of integral yoga. "Peace is necessary for all; without peace and an increasing purity, even if one opens, one cannot receive perfectly all that comes down through the opening." (CWSA 29:123)

Such a foundation of peace can be established when all the parts of the being invoke peace and let it establish in oneself. There has to be peace settled in the mental, vital and physical beings, only then will it be able to receive other qualities and powers of the divine. Therefore establishment of peace is the first condition for integral yoga.

In the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* innumerable times she has asked for peace to the Lord for the earth. Her prayer dated February 14, 1914 begins with the clause: "Peace, peace upon all the earth! May all escape from the ordinary consciousness and be delivered from the attachment for material things; may they awake to the knowledge of Thy divine presence, unite themselves with Thy supreme consciousness and taste the plenitude of peace that springs from it..." and it ends with "Peace, peace upon all the earth!" She called peace so that the tormented beings upon earth could get respite and some harmony could prevail.

At many other instances she asked for peace and light and strength and many such powers. For example, her prayer on July 23, 1913 she writes: "O Lord, inconceivable Splendour, may Thy Beauty spread through all the earth, may Thy Love be kindled in every heart and Thy Peace reign over all." In another prayer on February 11, 1914 she wrote in conclusion to her prayer: "May the peace of Thy divine love be with all beings." It may be noted that the Mother asks for Divine Love along with peace. The early prayers of the Mother she asked for peace and then kept on invoking love, joy, light, strength etc.

It is indeed significant that the Mother invokes Divine love which brings strength and peace and joy along with it. It indicates that peace although is a basic prerequisite, its role is fulfilled by Love that comes from the Divine. This Love has peace, strength, ananda, harmony, perfection and sweetness in it. Such has been the prayer of the Mother for earth and men and same are the boons that Savitri asks from the Supreme.

The Supreme, in order to tempt Savitri offers her "Ascend, O soul, into thy blissful home..." "O immortal, to felicity arise." Savitri refuses this boon for she does not want to return without even attempting to change the earth to heaven. She is again tempted to lose

her mortal self and merge into infinity but this too Savitri denies for she knows that Divine lives on earth and men also and she wants to be close to this manifestation of the Supreme. After refusing the third boon of rising into timelessness when Savitri does not give in to any further temptation from the Supreme and says:

Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep
Amid the roar and ruin of wild Time
For the magnificent soul of man on earth.
Thy calm, O Lord, that bears thy hands of joy. (696)

Further, she asks

Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts,
My Sweet infinity of thy numberless souls. (679)

We need to note here what Savitri is asking from the Supreme. It is also quite interesting to observe the sequence in which she asks them. First she asked for peace and calm and then for oneness. In the next boon she asks:

Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
To take all things and creatures in their grief
And gather them into a mother's arms. (697)

Last she asks for:

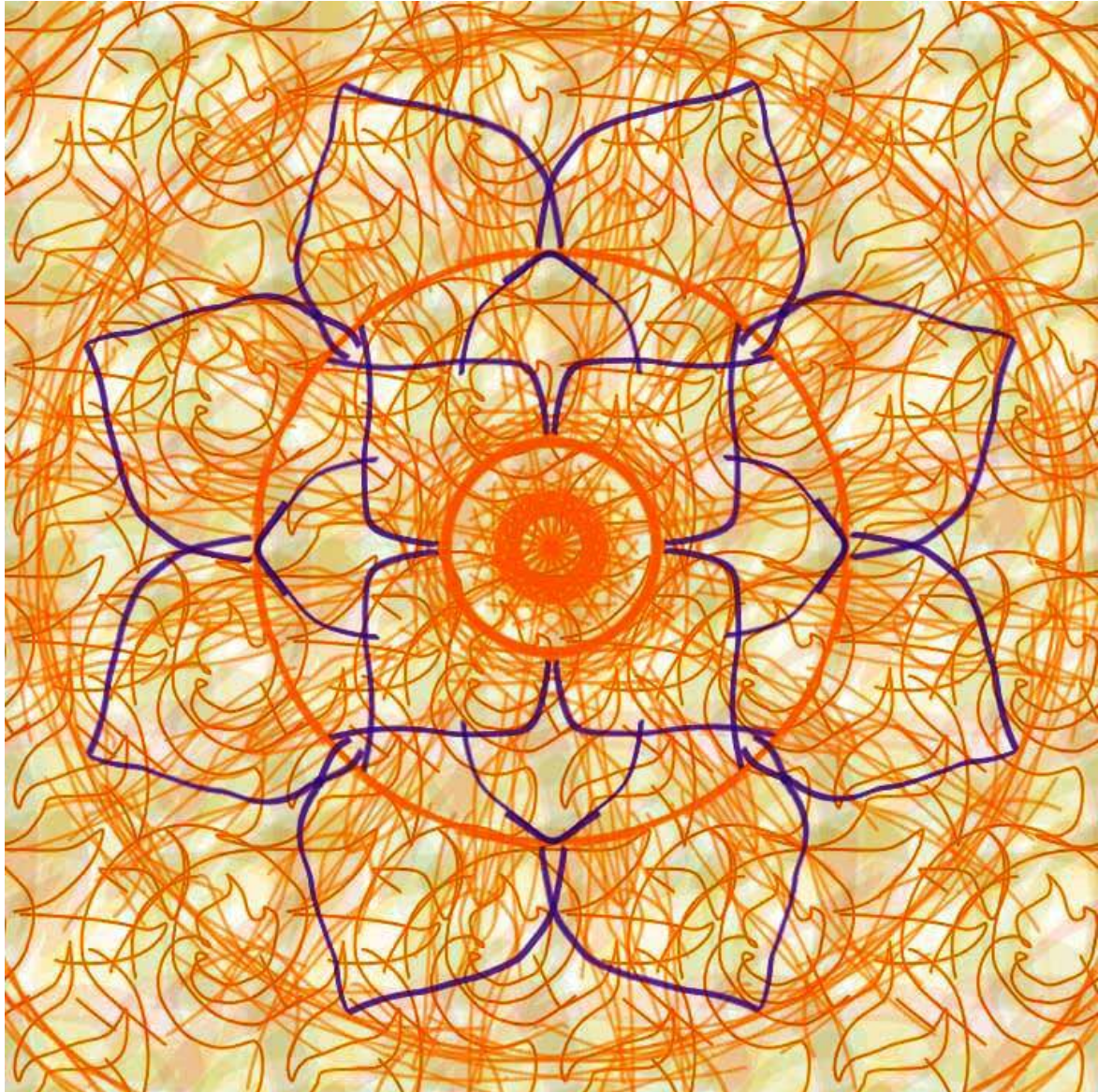
Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men. (Ibid)

Savitri asks for the energy, the strength for human beings and then the Divine's embrace and joy, love and sweetness which will remove all the pain and suffering from earth. In all the above lines from *Savitri* we observe that peace is the first basis to let all the other come and settle in. Without peace joy or strength or love or any of the Divine qualities would not get stationed here on earth. Therefore, Savitri asks for these boons for the earth from the Supreme.

It thus becomes clear that though peace is indispensable, peace alone is not enough. Since time immemorial innumerable sages have acquired peace and calm but they did not stay on earth after attaining it as there was too much unrest on the terrestrial plane and much ananda in that peace beyond earth. But Savitri asks for all the boons for earth while being on earth. For it is not the peace which leads one to abandon earth, but one that is dynamic and receives other powers which descend once peace is fully established. It is this dynamic peace that is required in Integral yoga.

A Lotus (A DIGITAL DESIGN)

Narendra Joshi



The Lotus symbolizes spirituality, fruitfulness, wealth, knowledge and illumination. The most important thing about lotus is that even after growing in murky water it is untouched by its impurity.

(Source: Internet)

The Spiritual Symbolism of the Lotus Flower

Internet Source

Lotus Flower Symbolism

As one of the most revered spiritual symbols, the lotus flower is held sacred by many cultures and people throughout the world. Of all the lotus flower symbolism, rebirth and purity are perhaps the most powerful symbols of all. This is because the lotus rises from muddy waters and blooms as a brilliantly pure, gorgeous flower. The lotus is also thought of as a symbol of human consciousness on the path to spiritual enlightenment.

No Mud, No Lotus...

For centuries, the lotus has been seen as a symbol of human consciousness on the path to enlightenment. Just as this sacred flower goes through so much before it blossoms, so does the human spirit before it can let go of the things that stand in the way of reaching enlightenment. Without going through the sometimes very difficult lessons of being human (the mud), a person would never be able to reach higher states of consciousness (the lotus). It's for this reason that the lotus flower also represents spiritual development.

Buddhism and the Lotus Flower

The lotus flower is held so sacred in Buddhist tradition that the Buddha himself is often depicted sitting on a lotus. To Buddhists, the lotus is connected with spiritual awakening and purity. According to the Mahayana branch of Buddhism, all souls emerge from the lotus. It is known as one of the eight auspicious signs of Buddhism, and the eight petals of the white lotus represent the Noble Eightfold Path.

Om Mani Padme Hum, one of the most powerful and well-known of all Buddhist mantras, is sometimes referred to as the “jewel in the lotus”. *Om* is known as the sound of the universe, *mani* means “jewel” or “bead”, *padme* means “lotus flower” and *hum* means “enlightenment”.

It is said the jewel in the lotus is representative of the divinity of human consciousness, as well as the divinity of the entire universe. It represents the divine, limitless potential that each person possesses, as well as their connection to the cosmos.

Hinduism and the Lotus Flower

The lotus is also a holy symbol that can be seen throughout Hinduism, and is also one of the eight auspicious symbols of this ancient religion. So sacred is the lotus considered throughout Hindu culture, that it is often used as an offering to the divine. Just as Buddha is often found sitting on the lotus flower, Lord Brahma (creator of the Universe) and Lord Vishnu (preserver of the Universe) are often depicted sitting within the lotus. Hindu legend has it that Lord Brahma was born from the lotus that was growing from Lord Vishnu. Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, fortune, and prosperity, is also depicted standing on a lotus.

In Hinduism, the unfolding lotus flower petals are suggestive of the awakening of the soul. Much like the symbolism in Buddhist tradition, the lotus flower rising from the mud denotes spiritual expansion and personal growth.

Chakras and the Lotus Flower

The lotus flower is also extremely symbolic in regards to a person's chakra system. These seven major energy centers located within a person's body are represented by a lotus flower, each with a specific number of lotus petals for each individual chakra.

The lotus flower was chosen long ago to symbolize the chakras because of the way it rises through the most difficult circumstances to become a thing of pure and unadulterated beauty. The more lotus petals a chakra contains, the higher the vibration or frequency of that particular chakra.

- Chakra One (Root): 4 petals
- Chakra Two (Sacral): 6 petals
- Chakra Three (Solar Plexus): 10 petals
- Chakra Four (Heart): 12 petals
- Chakra Five (Throat): 16 petals
- Chakra Six (Third Eye): 96 petals
- Chakra Seven (Crown): 972 petals (also known as “the thousand-petaled lotus”)

When each chakra becomes activated, each lotus petal of the chakra can be thought of as opening and “blooming” along with a person's energy.

Ancient Egyptians and the Lotus Flower

The spiritual symbolism of the lotus also had strong meaning amongst the ancient Egyptians. There are countless hieroglyphics that depict the lotus flower, and as with many other cultures, it is a symbol of rebirth. Because the lotus flower closes its petals at night and emerges back into the murky waters from which it came, then rises up again out of the water at dawn to bloom, the spiritual traditions of the Egyptians hold the lotus to represent the sun. This moves even deeper in symbolism to represent creation and the idea of rebirth. According to the ancient Egyptians, it was the lotus that gave birth to the sun.

The Lotus as a Symbol of Sacred Spirituality

The beauty and mysticism of the lotus flower is one that has touched the lives of countless people throughout time. As one of the most important spiritual symbols revered by two of the world's oldest religions and one of the world's most ancient cultures, the lotus flower is something that embodies a pure essence of untouched spirituality.

The lotus is the symbol of the purity we find when we begin to raise our consciousness and touch upon our own divinity. Just like the lotus flower working its way through the muddy waters, we too work through our own limitations until we discover the bliss found in the enlightened mind.

The lotus is a symbol of sacred spirituality that shows us we can overcome even the most difficult of circumstances and feel the innate beauty life can offer. The lotus is vibrant cosmic energy, the purity of consciousness, and the promise of spiritual renewal.

(<https://infinite-beings.com/blogs/infinite-blog/the-spiritual-symbolism-of-the-lotus-flower>)

LIFE



(Source: Internet)

**When one sees the lotus feet of the Lord,
all kinds of doubts and fears within the heart
are vanquished.**

Srimad Bhagavatam 4.24.52

An Interview with Laxmiben Patel about her Work with the Mother

(Continued from the previous issue...)

Deepshikha Reddy

Mother used to go to the Playground wearing Sari or Salwar Kameez. When she returned she used to take the staircase in the garage, you know. When she used to climb up the stairs, she used to hold her Sari up like this, then we could see a certain portion of her leg and we used to see beautiful gold anklets on her ankles. Once I went up to the Mother to do Pranam and I touched her feet – a little more inside. I slid my hand. In the morning The Mother used to wear gowns. Then I touched something solid on her Feet. Then I asked someone who told me that she did wear gold anklets. I always used to look for a chance whenever she would return from the Playground so that I could see her legs with the anklets on.

I used to sit near Nirodda's room and wait. It is said that the Goddesses in Indian temples wear gold anklets. It was my great wish to see that. Human beings are not supposed to wear gold anklets – only silver ones. That day she gave me a mala and to my mother she gave those gold anklets. On one anklet was Sri Krishna and on the other was Laxmi. I think someone from Punjab had given those to the Mother and the Mother said perhaps "I will wear these on my ankles." Then the Mother gave those to my mother. My mother was advancing in age and I used to be concerned about it. One day I told my mother: "You do not give me anything from your property, just give me the Mother's anklets." She had a pair of those and if she would melt them and divide them for all of us then everyone could get a piece of ornament made out of the Mother's gold ankelets. Whenever I used to come from Bombay, I used to tell her this but she was not so serious about it. Then one day I wrote a letter to my mother about it after which my sister Madhu took it up with her, convinced her and the anklets were divided into six pieces for all of us. I was in Bombay then. One night I saw a dream that the Mother was walking past over me and her feet was pressed well on my chest. I held her leg and found that there were no anklets on them. I wondered. Then after a few days my sister Madhu came and gave me my piece of the anklet wrapped in red paper. I always keep it with me close to my heart where the Mother had pressed my heart with her feet in my dream.

You know there are so many memories that come crowding in my mind! When we were small we were in Africa. When my younger sister Ravibala was born, my mother became seriously ill. Motiben was in Baroda then, not in Africa with us. At that time I had not yet seen the Mother. I was about eight years old. I used to hold on to my mother throughout the night. I was very fond of Lord Krishna. He was always there in my temple. I used to pray to Him saying "Do not take my mummy away O Lord – we are all too young now." It was about midnight and I saw a light descending from far through the window. As it came closer, I saw a beautiful figure. I can still see her with shining blue, silver and white shades. She had a flowing blue anchal and she had a silver bowl in her hand. It was a human figure of a Devi. She came flying inside through the window bar and made my mother drink something out of that bowl. I was wondering as to what she was doing with my mother so I went and caught a part of her Sari or the dress which came into my hand even though she went out through the window bars. I kept on saying "Do not take my mummy away, please don't take

her away.” I was crying so much that my father woke up and asked me what happened. I told him about my dream, how the Goddess came and made mummy drink something from a cup. After many years in 1942 February when I came here to Pondicherry then I came to know that the Mother told Satprem that a lady was struggling for life in Africa and She went to save her. My parents went away again and I stayed on here. I used to go to see her daily. At that time the third floor used to be a long big terrace – an open terrace. There used to be a staircase from Dyumanbhai’s room to go up to this beautiful terrace. Whatever kind of dress she would wear, she would use the same matching Japanese umbrella with it and take a stroll on the terrace. One day I saw the very same dress on her that I had seen in my dream in Africa when she came to save my mother when she was on the terrace. I went back in my past and realised then that it was none other than her who came to my mother to give the drink of eternal nectar.

In 1935 my mother came to India with the whole family and she wanted to come to Pondicherry. We were four sisters and three brothers. We came to our Mama (maternal uncle) in Baroda. My mother wanted to have the Darshan of Amba Devi before going to the village. So we all went to Mount Abu for the temple darshan. My mother was a believer of Amba Devi. We were going by train in the night. Most of us were asleep. I was awake. My mother was sitting. A lady completely dressed in white just like you have seen the picture of the Mother in full white Sari, standing on lotus flower, came and sat beside my mother. There was someone like Champak-bhai – her disciple or son, someone came along with her with a staff. My mother used to do japa of the Mother Goddess and on this journey as she was going to the temple after a long time, she was absorbed in japa. Then my mother asked her “Ma-jee, where are you going to?” she hardly spoke – said “just the next station.” I might have been nine or ten years old then they had some conversation between them.

The next station arrived. My uncle came from the next compartment and we all got off the train. It was quite cold and the time was early morning. We had hot tea available there. My mother told my uncle to first serve a cup of tea to the lady sitting inside the train before we start taking ours. Then my uncle returned saying that there is no one there at all. My mother was surprised and became sure that she was the Mother herself. We started searching all over the platform. We couldn’t find either her or the disciple figure. That was 1935. It all remained in memory.

My mother used to tell others that she met a Mataji while on the way to the Amba temple. In 1942 February 20th when we came here, I somehow entered with Bababhai on my lap who was just three months old and stood there for the Mother’s Darshan at around 10 or 10.30 a.m. on top of the balcony (roof of Dyumanbhai’s room). We used to call it Window Darshan as she would first peep down from the window before emerging outside. Then she would look at all of us. It was at that time a particular crow that used to come to her daily to take biscuits from her hand. We children used to run to see that specially at that time. That day was my first morning Darshan. We were four of us. Little Bababhai was on my lap, my mother and father. When the Mother looked at me and my mother, we were surprised. I took hold of my mother and said “Isn’t she the very same lady who accompanied us to Ambaji’s temple in the train?” My mother was as overwhelmed as me. You see generally

Gods and Goddesses come to human beings but mostly in some other form and not in their own original physical form. She came with her own physical body. Then my mother told my father about it. We discussed it so much that by the time it was evening, many in the Ashram came to know about it.

In the evening the Mother used to take class in the Playground where Milidi, Minidi, Vasudha, Gauridi, Violetdi, Anuben etc. used to attend. she used to do conversations in French and teach other things also. That day in the class she told others that in 1935 a family came from abroad and they were going for a pilgrimage. There the lady of the family had such a deep and powerful psychic call that she had to go to her. Now, that whole family is here. Then Violet became inquisitive to know who they were. Then the Mother said that it was the Patel family. Then Violet met Motiben asked her, also asked me about it. It was later that Satprem collected all the material and published it in the Agenda. The Mother has explained it very well in the Agenda. Whenever I look at that photo of the Mother on the lotus, I say, I have already seen you like this long back.

The Mother's chappal used to be made in Bombay and sent here, from J.J. (the famous chappal makers). My father used to give Saris to the Mother on Darshan or Pooja times. At that time Modern Silk House was the biggest shop here. The owner was a devotee and also a friend of my brother. Whenever new bundle of Saris would arrive, he would let us know about it. Once my father decided to take the whole bundle to the Mother for her to choose from. Then the Mother chose Saris of different colours and then said to my father that she would also like to have matching sandals alongwith those Saris. My father remembered that Manibhai (Chandrakant's father) had brought chappal for the Mother from Bombay. And the Mother had liked it also. Very light ones with cork but there were nails fixed inside those. So the Mother ordered my father to get five or six chappals of different colours. All the six boxes came. My father used to get the things offered to the Mother by my hands. Then I just thought that the Mother lives here in Pondicherry and her cobbler lives in Bombay! This is quite funny, why should it be so? If that cobbler can make her chappals then why can't I make them here? I was rather young at that time. But very innocently this idea crossed my mind. It was a very strong thought even though I had not even the very needle with which a cobbler might have worked! Then I asked my father whether out of these six pairs of the Mother's slippers, I could keep one single pair with me so that I can try to make her chappals. My father was quite wonderstruck at this strange request of mine. But he told me to go and ask the Mother instead of replying me anything in favour or against.

In the morning when I took all the boxes of her slippers, I kept one box with myself. Mother was observing everything. Then I said: "Mother, I want to ask you something. It is a request Mother. I want to try to make your slippers." She asked: "Can you make it? How will you make it?" I said, "Mother, first I will open it and see what are the materials used in it." The Mother smiled and said: "Do not spoil it." Then she said, "Don't put any nails in it, just stitch it." I didn't know anything till then, I came back home and opened a slipper. That day I didn't sleep the whole night. I was so excited that the Mother had permitted me to learn how to make her slippers. Somehow or the other I got its shape, opened the chappal, went to Govindaraju to know the different names of different parts and materials used etc. I wrote

down everything in detail. I brought swed and leather and then made the slipper. The slipper that came from Bombay had 30 nails in it. I took out all the nails and put in a box. When my chappal was ready I thought I would give it to her on my birthday. The Mother was so happy to see that, my God! And then I showed her all the nails that I had taken out. What I had done was that after taking out all the nails, I had to stitch it. As my needles were small and I didn't know the art. I called Govindaraju home and told him to come all clean after a fresh bath. My father told him to spend whatever necessary for making her chappal. He brought the new big needle and then it was finished. The Mother was really very very pleased. It was so specially because she saw that I could do it without using the nails. Then she told me to take all the other five slippers and redo those like the first one. But she gave me one by one only. This is how I started making her chappals.

Then you might have seen in the exhibition (Sri Smriti) an Egyptian chappal of the Mother. I made that one too. It is a beautiful one. I drew the design myself and showed it to the Mother – then she told me to change the design. She told me to put 1'', 1½'' and 2'', like a platform heel. Once I got the grip of making them, then I did them quite well without Govindaraju's help. He too was happy at my perseverance to learn. One part which was solid, in the beginning I couldn't do that. Then slowly I tried that too, I used to use only swed not leather. One has to tap the swed. On the floor tiles I used to tap it with a hammer and it used to make a sound. And the Mother used to hear that sound at 10 o'clock in the night even though our house was a little away. Mother had told me once that she knew that I worked till past midnight. Then she asked me what is the electric power I was using. I told her that it was a bulb of 40 Watts. she was quite astonished and then called Bulada to instruct him to put a bulb of 100 Watts in my room.

Beside my house was the furniture department where Umirchandda and Rishabhchandda lived. Rishabhchanda knew that I was working for the Mother so he didn't complain but Umirchandda was disturbed and therefore he complained to the Mother that Laxmi is working whole night and she makes a noise. Then next day Mother asked me as to how I was working. I told her that I was working on the floor daily. Then she herself made a design on the paper of my table with big and thin drawers, the kind of legs that she wanted, the footrest that I would need, the exact gap where I would place my chair, everything in detail and called Khirodda to say that by that evening she wanted the table ready. The table was brought to me by the evening and my workshop was all ready. Those days we could go to the Mother quite many times in the day. Usually at night when I went to her, she would be in trance. Next morning she told me, "Voila, so you got your table now. It has six drawers. Now all your tools etc. you will keep there. Now you do not tap on the floor." She used to be extremely caring and loving and it was incredible to see in what great detail she could work! Then I almost became the chappalwali.

I used to ask Vasudhaben what dresses she was going to have and accordingly I tried to prepare the slippers. All the slippers that the Mother used in the Playground were made by me. She used to wear only warm-cloth souls later and not leather.

Then one day she told me to change all that from inside also. She told me to use new cloth. Then again one by one I changed the material in all the chappals and remade them. So all these cuttings and threads etc. of all those old chappals were kept by me very meticulously

in a bag. They never got dispersed, as those were the used slippers of the Mother. Suddenly she asked me one day as to what I did with all those cut pieces? I told her that I am collecting and keeping them in a bag. She smiled; she used to smile always very beautifully.

Then when I was going to get married I went to her with my bag of bits and pieces from her chappals. she asked me about the contents of the bag and then told me to keep it saying that one day when the time comes you will use it all.

Years passed by. I had no idea at all as to what to do with that bag. Whenever I opened my almira I would see the bag and wait for her further instruction. Many years later at Ratlam, a Sri Aurobindo Centre was established. It became a Relics Centre eventually. One Ms. Mohankumari used to look after that centre. For the inaugural meditation of the centre we were invited. The card arrived twelve days before the ceremony. She had also requested me for something personal belonging to the Mother or used by the Mother if I could spare for that centre. Suddenly the idea struck into my mind as why not I make use of all those pieces of her slippers and make another new slipper for the Mother to be kept, adored and worshipped at that centre? After all, I always believed that those various pieces belonging to all the slippers that I had made, repaired and opened and redone for many reasons had all the Shakti, Grace and Power of the Supreme Mother for effectuation. It was no less than the sacred Relics of the Mother for me. Within these twelve days I made a new slipper for her and it was established at the centre to the amazement of all over there. It was as if she herself descended to live there permanently in the hearts of all the devotees. It was a total dry area. My prayer was that “Now Ma, that you have arrived here, please make this place green and vibrant with colours.” Ratlam is fifty miles from Indore and it is in U.P. You will not believe, not only flowers of various colours and shapes, fruits grow there, orchards have come up, the whole place has transformed physically to greet the Supreme descent.

Even if we did something little for the Mother, she used to express profound joy with such intense love that we just felt heavenly. That was her Divine attitude. You know when the album of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s photographs was being prepared, somehow they were not being able to prepare it by the time targeted by the Mother. There was a lot of work still to be done on that. Harikantbhai was in charge of that. They used to work on that in the Prosperity hall. At night all boys would assemble to work there – Ambu, Harikant, Chimanbhai, Albertda, Ashokbhai also came sometime and a few others. Then Harikant told the Mother that quite a lot of work was yet to be finished. Then the Mother suggested my name because I was very fast in working. She knew it. We would start our work at 8 in the evening and finish by 2 or 2.30 a.m. and then go home. In between the Mother would come with some biscuits or fruits or something to feed us and then go back.

Next day in the morning I went to the Mother to say that in the midnight when I return home, if anyone sees me alongwith a man (who is accompanying me to leave me home) then they will think that I roam with men in the midnight! I am afraid of such a misunderstanding. Hearing this she laughed and laughed a lot! Then the Mother said, “Okay, not one boy or man, Albert, Ashok and a few others – all together will accompany you while you return home at midnight instead of only one person. This was during 1940’s when Sri Aurobindo was there.

Those were golden days really — unforgettable!

Significance of Prayer in Indian Culture

Supriya Shirwalkar

A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule,
One mighty deed can change the course of things;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.

(Sri Aurobindo: Savitri)

Prayer is one of the most ancient expressions of religion, as a significant and characteristic element of most, if not all, religions. Whether halting or mystical, ceremonial or personal, individual or collective prayer expresses the experience of a mystery that envelops and surpasses humanity.

Deep down inside of every one of us is a desire to know God and enjoy a fruitful relationship with him. In times of distress or great need we cry out to God and ask questions, express grief and beg for direction.

The forms that prayer takes in the religions of the world, though varied, generally follow certain fixed patterns. These include benedictions (blessings), litanies (alternate statements, titles of the deity or deities, or petitions and responses), ceremonial and ritualistic prayers, free prayers (in intent following no fixed form), repetition or formula prayers (e.g., the repetition of the name of god, a hymns, (praise or glory of a deity), and other forms. From the ancient times to the beginning of the Common Era, forms of prayer changed little among the human beings and their descendants.

The practices and rites of contemporary tribal peoples might offer a glimpse into remnants of the earlier forms of the religious behavior. He often addresses his prayers, however, to various spiritual powers to the dead, the divinities of nature, protective gods, or a feminine divinity linked to the earth (i.e., the great mother) concerned above all with food, protection, and posterity. Prayers are also offered to the spirits of ancestors, for example, during *pitripaksha* or *shraadh* Hindus remember the dear departed. The mood is somber and celebrations and shopping sprees are put on hold. Offerings of food and other goods are made to people in the memory of ancestors whose blessings are invoked and prayers held for their souls.

Prayers in Hinduism: There is an elementary form of prayer—i.e., an affirmation of homage and refuge with the divinity. More frequent is a more elaborate prayer in two forms: *dhyana* (“meditation”) and the *stotra* (“praise”). The *stotra* occurs in a variety of sub forms and generally opens with an invocation. It is often characterized by a sort of litany of the titles given, for example, to Vishnu (the preserver god) or Shiva (the destroyer god). The Shivasahasranaman (The Thousand Names of Lord Shiva) or The Vishnusahasranama (The Thousand Names of Lord Vishnu). When recited with concentration and pure heart, these prayers are believed to achieve remission of sins. All the hymns begin with invocations of the names of the gods to whom they are addressed. The invocation was believed to have an almost magic value. Prayer was part and parcel of all the Vedic ceremonies and continues

to be invoked even today in Hindu temples all over India and other countries around the world, for example the Gayatri mantra is Hinduism's most representative prayer, many Hindus recite it daily .

Buddhism in addition to prayer that accompanies sacrifice, there is the monastic prayer, which is practiced in the morning, noon and night to the sound of a small bell. There is also a prayer for the dead related to the transmigration of souls which is recited at funerals, the 30th day, the anniversary of the death, and the celebration of the deceased's day of birth. Private prayer prepares the way for liberation and illumination. Other prayers accompany vows and pilgrimages. Both Buddhist monks and laity use a string with 108 beads, which monks always carry in their hands. Buddhists do not worship a deity in the same way as Christians, Jews and Muslims. They venerate and respect the Buddha, but do not see him as a God.

Christianity preserves Christian prayer, like that of other religions, includes liturgical prayer for Sundays as well as other days, includes readings from the Bible and personal prayers. Bible readings, silent prayer (in the West especially), brief fervent in vocations and the repetition of formulas like "Lord, have mercy" are practiced among the followers of this religion.

Islamic prayer is an act of adoration of Allah (God). The prayer is accompanied by a meticulous ceremonial prostration of the body. The sense of adoration and conversation with Allah has led many spiritual Muslims to the heights of mysticism (Sufism). This minutely detailed prayer is recited while the suppliant turns toward Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) five times a day. On Friday the (Friday prayer) replaces the noon prayer. It is celebrated by the community in the principal mosque. By the 12th century A.D., Sufism had become a universal aspect of Islamic social life as its influence extended over almost the entire Muslim community. Sufism represents the inward or esoteric side of Islam or the mystical dimension of Muslim religion.

Sikhism: Unique to a religion is *Ardas* (Request). One such feature of Sikhism, which sets Sikhism apart from other religious doctrines. *Ardas* is the prayer addressed to Almighty God. The way it is addressed is unique to Sikhism.

On Collective Prayer: There is a prayer which is a spontaneous formula for expressing something precise which one wants to ask for one prays for one thing or another, one can pray for somebody, for a circumstance, for oneself, the efficacy of collective prayer depends upon its quality governed by the nature of the collectivity that prays. There are groups, for instance, that come together for a while drawn by some common interest. It may be to pray for someone in danger. Or it may be a prayer for averting a threatened general calamity or prayer for rain etc. In all such cases the mass that prays is constituted of those who meet only for that purpose and then disperse. All the same, this prayer has a certain power; it releases into the atmosphere a charge of will and call which evokes a response, the precise nature of which is, indeed, determined by so many other factors. (based on the Mother's explanation in *Collected Works of the Mother*, vol. 9, 38-39)

The development of Bhakti (devotion was expressed by a devotee through the repetition of the name of the Almighty. The mode of expression was usually singing of Bhakti songs. Bhakti movement started in South India between the 7th and the 12th centuries through the teachings of poet saints known as Alvars and Nayanars whose hymns were collected and compiled in the 10th century. The Sufi saints also emphasized devotion to Allah (God). The spiritual yearning made Kabir, Guru Nanak, Mirabai, Surdas, Tulsi Das, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and others, the great exponents of Bhakti movement.

This movement was responsible for many rites and rituals associated with the worship of God by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Indian subcontinent. For example, Kirtan at a Hindu Temple, Qawaali at a Dargah (by Muslims), and singing of Gurbani at a Gurdwara are all derived from the Bhakti movement of medieval India (800-1700). The leader of this Hindu revivalist movement was Shankaracharya, a great thinker and distinguished philosopher. And this movement was propounded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Namadeva, Tukaram, Jayadeva and a few others.

Followers of Bhakti movement in 12th and 13th Century included saints such as Bhagat Namdev, and Saint Kabir Das, who insisted on the devotional singing of praises of lord through their own compositions. The leading light of the Rama cult was saint-poet Tulsidas. All of them emphasized that God was supreme, all men were equal and Bhakti or devotion to God was the way to achieve salvation. It led to devotional transformation of medieval Hindu society and pushed the early means to achieve salvation (Vedic rituals and ascetic lifestyles) put to background and brought individualistic relationship with personally defined God on forefront. Bhakti Movement led to the emergence of new forms of spiritual leadership and social cohesion such as community singing, chanting of deity names together, festivals, pilgrimages, and rituals etc. many of which are in vogue even today. It also led to new forms of voluntary social giving such as Seva (service), Dana (Charity) and Community Kitchens (Bhandara / Langar etc.). The mode of expression was usually singing the method of worship and belief in God took a new turn during the movement. Henceforth, importance was given to devotion and love for God. Bhakti or devotion for the Almighty was the central theme of this movement.

The Bhagavadgita on How God Answers Your Prayers Chapter 4 - Sloka 11

*Ye yathāmāprapadyantetāmstathaivabhajāmyaham
mama vartmānuvartantemanusyāhpārthasarvaśah*

In whatever (manner) they approach Me, in the same manner I reward them. O Partha, human beings follow My path in every way.

Other views on prayer: Man has become a habitual seeker of short cuts in finding ways out of problems facing him. But it does not stop man from going on pilgrimages or attending mass regularly or performing *namaaz* five times daily so as to calm the pangs of his conscience. Man will exploit his fellow beings and then go on pilgrimages or donate to some charity and feel that he committed no sin. This is what happens in a man-centric world, the world governed by *human*. What we need to do is to rid ourselves of this state of mind and see the world as it really is. This world will survive if the natural balance remains intact. And this balance will remain

intact if we act in harmony with each other for this will need two abilities — compassion and empathy.

Efficacy of the prayer

Prayer is frequently invoked as a means of putting our personal needs or desires before God, so that God can personally respond and answer those prayers. This is in fact a major basis of the religious viewpoint on prayer. This basis is often ridiculed by those who do not accept the idea that there is a personal Judge or Creator God sitting on a throne in the sky who listens to and responds individually to prayers.

As long as we look at the situation from the perspective of the human mind, we try to understand prayer from a dualistic viewpoint. Thus, prayer goes up from a separated individual to a separate God who then responds (or not) to the individual putting up the prayer.

Sri Aurobindo takes a somewhat different view of the matter in his explanation as to the basis and true efficacy of prayer. His explanation is based on the inherent unity of all creation and the oneness of the individual soul with the Divine:

It is true that the universal will executes always its aim and cannot be deflected by egoistic propitiation and entreaty, it is true of the Transcendent who expresses himself in the universal order that, being omniscient, his larger knowledge must foresee the thing to be done and it does not need direction or stimulation by human thought and that the individual's desires are not and cannot be in any world-order the true determining factor. But neither is that order or the execution of the universal will altogether effected by mechanical Law, but by powers and forces of which for human life at least, human will, aspiration and faith are not among the least important. Prayer is only a particular form given to that will, aspiration and faith. Its forms are very often crude and not only childlike, which is in itself no defect, but childish; but still it has a real power and significance. Its power and sense is to put the will, aspiration and faith of man into touch with the divine Will as that of a conscious Being with whom we can enter into conscious and living relations." (Sri Aurobindo: CWSA 24: 566-567)

Prayer seen in this light represents the action of the Divine Will unfolding itself in the universal manifestation and expressing itself through the individual soul as an expression of that Will.

There is always a question whether prayer has any meaning at all in modern world, is not prayer a superstition, though many people bear the witness of the efficacy of prayer in their individual life, does it have any significance individually and collectively? Is it possible for human prayer to alter the course of the individual or collective destiny? Is it possible to tune one's will to the Divine will by prayer and move the cosmic will. To respond whether the prayer is granted or not is another matter because we ourselves do not know what is ultimately good for us so as Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri* "Heaven's wiser love rejects the mortal's prayer" (456).

Most religionist have turned prayer into a ritual. But prayer is a spiritually recognized means to change ones destiny, to invoke the forces from the higher planes by linking oneself with the transcendent Force or divine strength. Sri Aurobindo explains, the quality of prayer is important, not just a mechanical repetition but should be an evocation, intensely inspired to move the higher will in our favor. One must have a sufficient aspiration and a prayer sufficiently intense, of course it follows being optimist, being calm and peaceful, having faith, trust in the Divine for a chance to succeed.

Prayers and Scientific view: The efficacy of prayer is about the outcome of what is prayed for. This topic has been discussed in many fields such as theology, philosophy, history, medicine, and psychology. Numerous religious traditions have complex understandings of the nature, function and expectations of prayer. Prayer is the most common complement to mainstream medicine, far outpacing acupuncture, herbs, vitamins and other alternative remedies. Recent medical studies on prayer have generally shown mixed results when it comes to healing from illnesses.

Some studies on subjective well-being and personal effects of prayer have shown positive effects on the individual who prays.

A number of studies have been performed to scientifically measure the impact of prayer, often within a medical setting. The studies performed have used different structural methods and measured both hard data (such as blood pressure variations) and soft data such as anxiety levels and number of doctor visits. They have measured *first-person effects* (where the beneficiary performs the prayer), *second-person effects* (where someone with a personal connection to the beneficiary performs the prayer), and *third-party effects* where a group of unknown people pray for the beneficiary.

The studies cited here have also generally not measured physical parameters, such as “proximity to the nearest place of common worship” and the distance between the beneficiary and the location of the prayer has not been clarified in the studies. For example does prayer for a person who is a continent away have the same effect as prayers for a person who is inches away? Does the “skill level” of the person praying have an effect on the outcome as stipulated by Wisneski and Anderson in their book *The Scientific Basis of Integrative Medicine* and stated that it is not the length of a prayer that matters, but the fervor, purity, and respect with which it is said.

The Power of Prayer: “Prayer is a conversation with God,” says African-American theologian James M. Washington, author of *Conversations with God*. Scripture are source of prayers which have deep meaning. Reciting prayers a number of times in a day helps to find peace and silence within it aids in psychological and physical recovery. Prayer helps to reduce stress and anxiety, and infuses a positive energy which has positive effect on wellbeing of a person. Other practices such as yoga, meditation also have a positive effect on our health. A 2008 study by Bhutkar, et al. considered only 78 subjects, but concluded that the regular practice of Surya Namaskar had a positive impact on cardio-respiratory health .Prayer is becoming increasingly used in approaches to healing.**

Conclusion: Though historians of religion, psychologists, and anthropologists debate various theories concerned with the origin of prayer, the act of prayer itself is of great significance to the believers of all religions, whatever their inspiration, revealed or otherwise. Ludwig Feuerbach, a 19th-century German philosopher, summed up the significance of prayer when he stated, “The most intimate essence of religion is revealed by the most simple religious act: Prayer.”

A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule,
One mighty deed can change the course of things;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent. (*Savitri*, 20)

In addition to references mentioned , excerpts and extracts from various web sites , from readings in *Savitri* , Service letters , academia.edu , Integral Healing (ISBN978-81-7058-774-3) compiled from works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were referred .

** (ideas collected from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26597674_Effect_of_Suryanamaskar_Practice_on_Cardio-respiratory_Fitness_Parameters_A_Pilot_Study)

A PRAYER

*O Mother, let me be always drawn in my heart towards thee;
Make my love for thee more and more pure
And my aspiration and faith more intense and strong.
Fill my heart, my life, my mind and my body
with thy luminous and loving Presence.
Supreme Mother, grant that my psychic
is ever awake and my inner and outer being
always consecrated to thee.*

*Grant that I may always be open to thy love and light,
Strengthen my faith, fortify my confidence,
Eternally unite me with thy Presence,
with thy Light conjoin, undeniably relate and blend.*

V. Madhusudan Reddy

Taking Charge of your Body, Emotions and Mind - A Practical Guide

Yogesh Mohan

Our ordinary existence - ego bound limited life

If one were to observe the human life over the centuries, it appears like a often repeated story. The same old game of desires, worries, ending in disease and death. Most of us are caught up in ordinary life, imprisoned by our ego bound personality. We feel vulnerable, overpowered by fate and helpless against the vast currents of world forces.

As long as we are bound by our ego bound nature, we are shaped by the laws and determinism of this ego consciousness. In this state, we live a life shaped by the powers of fate, are susceptible to people and mind forces, and have a limited range of freedom to work and act upon.

Our being is like an ocean, vast and deep

However, fortunately this is not the entire truth of our being. We are much more than our surface ego bound nature. We may compare our being to that of an ocean. The ocean is vast and deep. Near the shores, the waters are shallow, and the waves are high and unruly. Deep inside the ocean, he is vast and deep. There is lots of richness of plant and animal life. When we are inside the ocean, the entire perspective is entirely different. Even if there is a tsunami, it hardly creates a ripple in the depths of the ocean. We too are like an ocean, shallow on the outer shores, vast and powerful within. However since we live mostly in the shores, we are unduly shaken by the waves of life and turbulence of waters. But the depth is also ours. If we can learn to live in our depths, we will experience a totally different life - vast and powerful, full of riches and joy. The perspective will change, the meaning will change.

We can take charge of our body, mind and life

We all have this wonderful possibility to discover and live in the deeper layers of our consciousness. We have the possibility of bringing to play the higher levels of consciousness in our life, which have the power to change and influence our body and fate. We all have this capacity to change our body at a cellular level, to help her heal and become healthier and happier. We have the capacity of bringing silence in our being, silence which has a power to heal. We have the capacity to open up to Love and Light, powerful forces which can change our very consciousness. We have the capacity to change our body, mind and life

Purpose of this article, practical guide to take charge of your body, emotions and mind

The purpose of this article is to help the participant go a little deeper into the sea of their existence, so that he can experience a glimpse of that vastness, richness and power. Only a real experience can truly change our being. The steps mentioned have the power to guide you to explore the depths of your being. These techniques have evolved over years of working with patients and helping them heal their body and mind. These are a few practical steps which will help you take better control of your body, emotions and mind.

Do you want to take action now?

Before you move further, question your real motive behind reading this article. If you are looking for a theoretical or philosophical stuff, then this article is not for you. Follow this article, only if you wish to take action now. Mere casual reading will not help.

Important Directions for following these steps.

- ◆ Before you start these steps, allow your mind and mind to relax consciously.
- ◆ Practice these steps in complete silence, external and more importantly internal silence.
- ◆ Practice these steps when you have enough time for yourself. Do not hurry yourself.
- ◆ Do each step consciously. Do not do anything mechanically or ritualistically.
- ◆ Focus on the feelings within the body, and try to experience them with greater clarity.
- ◆ Do not be in a hurry to complete and move to higher steps. The first step is the most important of all, if the first step is performed perfectly, all other steps come naturally and easily.

Taking control of your body

Step 1, 5 minutes

- ◆ Become aware of your external body, and perceive how it is.
- ◆ Look at how you are sitting in the present posture, the position of your legs, back, arms, neck, head.
- ◆ Are you comfortable in your present posture, if not, make slight adjustments in your posture and make each part of the body comfortable.

Step 2, 5 minutes

- ◆ Close your eyes, and bring your awareness in your body.
- ◆ Become acutely awareness of the sensations coming from the body.
- ◆ Perceive how relaxed the body is, perceive the state of heaviness or discomfort or heat or pain in different parts of the body. Don't try to actively do anything, just observe for now.

Step 3, 10 minutes

- ◆ Keep your feet on the floor, become aware of the sensations at the sole of the feet.
- ◆ Try to connect your body to Mother Earth through your feet
- ◆ Feel as if there are roots coming from your feet connecting your body to the Earth
- ◆ Feel as if you are breathing from the soles of your feet.
- ◆ Allow the energies of pain or discomfort flow from the body into the earth.
- ◆ Do not try to be in a hurry, be in the body and deepen the perception.

Step 4, 5 minutes

- ◆ Completely relax your entire body
- ◆ Become aware of the breath in your body.
- ◆ Feel as if you are breathing with your entire body.
- ◆ Allow the body to become completely light, weightless, buoyant.

Step 5, 10 minutes

- ◆ Relax at will any part of the body
- ◆ Take your awareness to that part, feel the part and relax it.
- ◆ You may start with feet, and relax each toe part by part.
- ◆ Feel each toe, slightly move it to establish the connection better, and completely relax it.
- ◆ Observation

- ◆ You will gain an ability to relax at will any part of the body.
- ◆ You will also gain the ability to feel prana and breathe from any part of the body.

Step 6, 5 minutes

- ◆ Be aware of your posture. Feel from within what is the most comfortable posture in which the body feels good and energetic.
- ◆ Allow the body to move into its best posture, which is most relaxing.
- ◆ Let all the parts of the body be completely quiet and relaxed.
- ◆ Let no part of the body move without your will.
- ◆ Move any part of the body at will, using the least amount of energy.

IMPACT

- ◆ This will enable you to have control over the external parts of the body. Let no part of the body move unconsciously, without your conscious will. Continue this practice later in the day also.
- ◆ This practice will make you increasingly aware of your body, of the mild disturbances that occur within the body, and the ability to handle them immediately.

Taking control of your breath

Step 1, 5 minutes

- ◆ Become aware of your breath.
- ◆ Breathe normally.
- ◆ Follow the breath as you inhale and the air moves in your nostrils, larynx, trachea, lungs.
- ◆ Follow your breath as you exhale, and the air moves out of your lungs, larynx, nostrils.

Step 2, 5 minutes

- ◆ Consciously slow down your breath
- ◆ Breathe slowly and deeply.
- ◆ Close your eyes, and follow the movement of breath into your lungs.

Step 3, 5 minutes

- ◆ Become aware of your body changing with each breath
- ◆ Become aware of the movements in your chest, abdomen, back, with each breath.
- ◆ Become aware of the feelings with each breath.
- ◆ Do not worry about the thoughts that may come and intrude.
- ◆ Take your awareness back to your breath and body, and just breathe.
- ◆ Continue this awareness of your breath throughout the day.

IMPACT

Whenever you get emotionally or mentally excited, just become aware of your breath, and allow it to become slow and deep. This will change dramatically your emotional and mental state.

Whenever you become restless or bored, just become aware of your breath. It will immediately change the status of your mind.

Taking charge of your emotions

Getting control of emotions is easier once if we have some degree of control over the body, and breath.

Step 1, 5 minutes.

- ◆ Become aware of your emotions at this moment.
- ◆ Where do you perceive these emotions in your body.

Intention

- ◆ to enhance our awareness of the emotions within us, and the part of the body they affect

Step 2, 5 minutes

- ◆ Take up one dominant emotion you are feeling right now.
- ◆ Feel the emotion more intensely
- ◆ Feel the emotion physically in the body
- ◆ See how the body feels with this emotions

Intention

- ◆ Experience the impact of emotion on the body

Step 3, 5 minutes

- ◆ Become aware of the emotion and the part of the body where you feel it intensely
- ◆ Try to build a distance between the emotion and your body. You will realise that the influence of emotion on your body diminishes almost immediately.
- ◆ Bring prana in that part, and feel as if you are breathing from that part
- ◆ Allow the emotion to flow out with the breath. You will be surprised to realise that emotion flows out with the breath

Intention-

- ◆ Experience that emotion is like an energy, and that you can change its impact on your body.
- ◆ Experience that you can dissociate from your emotion and observe it like a third person.

Step 4, 5 minutes

- ◆ Reenact the circumstances in your mind that created those emotions.
- ◆ Consciously change your emotional response to the same situation.
- ◆ Chose a response according to your highest understanding.
- ◆ Experiment using different emotional responses
- ◆ Become aware of the response which helps you deal with the circumstance in the best possible manner, with least anxiety.

Intention -

- ◆ Experience that you have the capacity to change your emotional response at will to circumstances.
- ◆ Experience that you have the power to change the impact of emotions on your self.
- ◆ Experience that you can chose to have your emotion

Step 5, 5 minutes

- ◆ Find out why you respond emotionally in a specific manner to the particular circumstances
- ◆ Explore what makes you so attached and identified with your response.
- ◆ Explore if you can change that part within you, which reacted in a particular way to the circumstances.
- ◆ Explore why you give so much importance to these circumstances
- ◆ Once you get closer to the real reason, you will observe that the power of the emotion on you diminishes considerably. The knowledge alone liberates you from its impact.

Intention -

- ◆ Experience how the emotions and their impact changes once you understand the reasons for these emotional reactions

Step 6, 5 minutes

- ◆ Think of an event or topic which makes evokes gratitude within you towards a particular person or to Divine.
- ◆ Relive the event completely with your eyes closed, and allow your being to get immersed in feelings of gratitude.
- ◆ Perceive how the being feels with the emotion of gratitude.

Intention -

- ◆ To experience at will the feeling of gratitude
- ◆ To experience the effect of gratitude on ones own being

Step 7, 5 minutes

- ◆ Experience love towards your most loved one.
- ◆ Feel as if you are enclosing your beloved within your heart
- ◆ Experience how your heart expands, and your body changes with the experience of love.

Intention -

- ◆ To experience at will the feeling of love
- ◆ To experience the impact of love on one's being

Step X, - - Minutes

- ◆ Go within your heart and dive deep inside.
- ◆ Suddenly you will feel as if you have entered another state of consciousness, a totally new world within you.
- ◆ Just stay there, without trying to do anything actively with your mind.
- ◆ Allow the experience to unfold on its own.
- ◆ Once you come out of this state, come out slowly trying to retain the connection to the inner world.
- ◆ Stay quietly for a few minutes, just be.

IMPACT

This step takes you in a different state of consciousness other than your ordinary ego bound one. Once you reach this state of consciousness, you feel a sense of vastness and freedom, a causeless joy of being, a sweet presence. In this state, you are totally released from your mental and emotional worries, and preoccupations. This state is a self existing state within you, independent of your outer state of stress and anxiety.

Even a few seconds in this state can be quite a revelatory experience, a life changing event. For it suddenly strikes you that you are not just a vulnerable mortal full of anxieties and worries, but much more than that. The experience will hit your belief of who you are. This will give a deep belief that there is a power and Peace within you, which nourishes and protects you. You can trust your self within

Taking Charge of your mind

Taking control of the mind s slightly difficult for most of us are so identified with our thoughts, beliefs and we find ourselves incapable of changing them. This needs a little patience, and the willingness to challenge and change our cherished beliefs and ideals.

Step 1, 5 minutes

- ◆ Sit in a quiet place.
- ◆ Just observe quietly the thoughts running through your mind.
- ◆ Do not try to actively think, merely observe the thoughts coming and going.

Observation

- ◆ You will become aware of scores of random thoughts crossing your mind. They need not have any relationship with each other.
- ◆ You were not actively involved in any of those thoughts, yet they were crossing your mind.
- ◆ With some thoughts, you tend to get involved and follow them
- ◆ Some thoughts, you allow them totally just pass through.

Step 2, 15 minutes

- ◆ Bring your awareness to your body
- ◆ Feel the sensations coming from the body
- ◆ Relax each part of the body one by one.

Observation

- ◆ You will realise that the mind is much quieter
- ◆ The frequency of thoughts has reduced considerably
- ◆ You can allow much easily to let the thoughts pass by now.

Step 3, 10 minutes

- ◆ Become aware of your breath
- ◆ Allow your breath to become slow and deep.
- ◆ Just be with your breath, there is nothing else to do but breathe

Observation

- ◆ You will observe that your mind has become very quiet
- ◆ You can even feel the breath in your head.

Step 4, 10 minutes

- ◆ Become aware of your thoughts
- ◆ Observe them passively without reacting or following them.
- ◆ Detach your self from these thoughts. These thoughts are mere visitors, they don't belong to you
- ◆ Just be, breathe and let things be.

Observation

- ◆ You will realise that the power of the thoughts to engage you has reduced considerably.
- ◆ The thoughts may still come, but without affecting you.
- ◆ You will realise that these thoughts do not belong to you, you do not generate them. These thoughts are rather unwanted visitors.

Step 5, 10 minutes

- ◆ This step becomes effective once you have mastered the previous 4 steps.
- ◆ Choose a topic which you want to reflect upon.
- ◆ Allow the entire mind to focus only on this topic
- ◆ Become aware of any other thoughts, and let them pass by.
- ◆ Bring all the rays of mind on to one topic alone.
- ◆ Stay with the topic for at least 10 minutes

Observation

This practice will sharpen your ability to think on a topic at will, and go deep into it. It will help you to engage your mind in conscious willful effort, rather than in unconscious scattered activity. Slowly you will gain the ability to engage the mind on a particular subject in complete silence and without any effort.

Moving forward

It may take few days to learn these steps, but decades to master them. As you learn to awaken and live in the deeper layers of your consciousness, you will develop your own ways of going within and invoking the higher powers. These steps have the power to connect you to the deeper layers of your being, and awaken the powers within. Even a few moments of a true inner experience has the power to completely change your perspective and change the direction of your life.

TEN SINS OF BODY, SPEECH AND MIND

These ten sins pertaining to the body, speech and mind should be avoided.

- *Himsa* (causing injury, torture etc.)
- *steya* (stealing, robbing),
- *anyathakama* (unlawful sexual activity, desiring for others),
- *paisunya* (abusive or harsh speech),
- *parusha vachana* (harsh speech)
- *Anruta vacana* (speaking untruth),
- *sambhinna alapa* (speech causing separation, breaking of company),
- *vyapada* (quarrel, intention of harming),
- *abhidya* (jealousy, not tolerating good of others) and
- *drgviparyaya* (finding fault, misunderstanding, faithlessness etc. with scriptures, elders etc)

Of these ten, the first three are related to body, next four- related to speech and last three – related with mind.

(Archarya Vagbhata: 22.10, <https://ayur-veda.guru/books/astanga-hridaya-sutrasthan-handbook-pdf.pdf>)

Acharya Vagbhata was one of the great acharya from among the three known as *brihat trayees* - Acharaya Charak, Acharaya Sushrut and Acharya Vagbhata. He has written two treatise on health and Ayurveda which are used in Ayurvedic science till date.

About the Contributors

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Dr. Reddy is the Director of Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust in Pondicherry. He has been giving talks on the work and vision of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for almost two decades. He has also authored many research papers and written five books.

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A writer, healer and teacher, he is Coordinating Editor of NAMAHA, the Journal of Integral Health. Fascinated by the interplay between soul and nature, his aim in life is simply to radiate love, truth, harmony and peace.

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Dr. Falguni Jani is a counsellor, who specializes in Integral counselling. Her approach towards psychological issues is based on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga Psychology. Since last 25 years she has worked in the areas of School Counselling, Adolescent issues and Family conflict. Settled in Pondicherry since 2016, she is working as a facilitator for online students at Sri Aurobindo Center for Advanced Research (SACAR), and conducts workshops in Integral Counselling.

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Dr. Yogesh Mohan, MD (JIPMER), the Founder of “Consciousness as Medicine”, trained in modern medicine, has a profound understanding of yogic psychology and a rich clinical experience using consciousness as therapy. He brings the essence of deeper insights and practices developed over more than 20 years of inner work. Based in Chennai, he is the CEO of Saveetha Medical College & Hospital.

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Aadil Palkhivala has been training teachers all around the world since 1976 and is the author of Fire of Love, a book that seeks to restore the essence of yoga. He has written and filmed for Yoga International and Yoga Journal and has served as advisor and board member to Prevention Magazine, Yoga Alliance, Yoga Journal and The Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States.

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Each race has a part to play; each race has one side of human nature to develop. And we have to take all these together; and, possibly in the distant future, some race will arise in which all these marvellous individual race perfections, attained by the different races, will come together and form a new race, the like of which the world has not yet dreamed.

Swami Vivekananda