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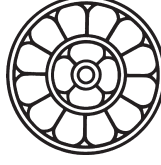
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXI

No. 9

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## THE INNER SOVEREIGN

Now more and more the Epiphany within  
Affirms on Nature's soil His sovereign rights.  
My mind has left its prison-camp of brain;  
It pours, a luminous sea from spirit heights.

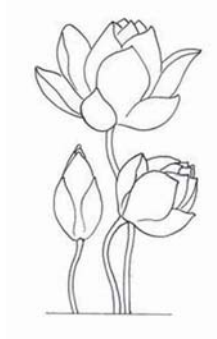
A tranquil splendour, waits my Force of Life  
Couched in my heart, to do what He shall bid,  
Poising wide wings like a great hippogriff  
On which the gods of the empyrean ride.

My senses change into gold gates of bliss;  
An ecstasy thrills through touch and sound and sight  
Flooding the blind material sheath's dull ease:  
My darkness answers to His call of light.

Nature in me one day like Him shall sit  
Victorious, calm, immortal, infinite.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 613)*



# **TRANSFORMATION OF HUMAN NATURE IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA**

## **PART ONE — SADHANA ON THE LEVEL OF THE MIND**

### **SECTION ONE THE MIND AND SADHANA**

#### **Chapter Four The Physical Mind and Sadhana**

##### **The Activity of the Physical Mind**

Activity of the physical mind is not a new thing that needs to take root. It has been there very well rooted since you began your human evolution in the primaevael forests.

\*

What you have now seen and describe in your letter is the ordinary activity of the physical mind which is full of ordinary habitual and constantly recurrent thoughts and is always busy with external objects and activities. What used to trouble you before was the vital mind which is different, — for that is always occupied with emotions, passions, desires, reactions of all kinds to the contacts of life and the behaviour of others. The physical mind also can be responsive to these things but in a different way — its nature is less that of desire than of habitual activity, small common interests, pains and pleasures. If one tries to control or suppress it, it becomes more active.

To deal with this mind two things are necessary, (1) not so much to try to control or fight with or suppress it as to stand back from it: one looks at it and sees what it is but refuses to follow its thoughts or run about among the objects it pursues, remaining at the back of the mind quiet and separate; (2) to practise quietude and concentration in this separateness, until the habit of quiet takes hold of the physical mind and replaces the habit of these small activities. This of course takes time and can only come by practice. What you propose to do is therefore the right thing.

\*

The mechanical movements are always more difficult to stop by the mental will, because they do not in the least depend upon reason or any mental justification but are founded upon association or else a mere mechanical memory and habit.

\*

This mechanical putting out of the thoughts happens to everybody at all times and it is especially strong in the physical mind — one has not to be upset by it, but go on quietly drawing the mind in, for if one does that, the obstacle after a time will diminish and one can then remain inside with the greater part of the consciousness, even if there are some wandering thoughts. So long as there is interest in outward things this can only be done for short periods, — but if there is not any strong interest, then the habit becomes purely mechanical and it can be got over in a shorter time. Its entire disappearance comes only when there is a complete silence in the being, but even before complete disappearance, one can arrive at a point when, in spite of it, one can go inside at will and remain there.

\*

This going out of the mind and this siege of thoughts is a difficulty which everybody has to meet for a time or often when he wants to concentrate within. You should not allow it to depress you or make you hopeless or lead you to think that there is some special disability in you from which others do not suffer. One has to keep one's poise, recognise it as an inherent difficulty of the nature of mind (physical mind), one which has to be overcome and will be overcome in time. In that way one feels the pressure of these obstacles less and gets over it sooner than if one gets distressed or upset by them or takes them for a sign of incapacity for the Yoga.

\*

It is the usual fit and the same round of thoughts mechanically repeated that you always get in these fits. These thoughts have no light in them and no truth, for the physical mind which engenders this routine wheel of suggestions is shut up in surface appearances and knows nothing of deeper truth or the things of the spirit. There is plenty of "increment", but with this superficial part of the physical mind it is not likely or possible that you can see it. Your impression of the dwindling light is also an impression of this mind natural to it especially in its periods of darkness; for that matter when the periods of darkness come to any sadhak they always seem darker than before; that is the nature of the darkness, to give that impression always. It is also quite according to the rule of these reactions that it should have come immediately after a considerable progress in bhakti and the will to surrender in the

inner being — for it comes from the spirit of darkness which attacks the sadhak whenever it can, and that spirit resents fiercely all progress made and hates the very idea of progress and its whole policy is to convince him by its attacks and suggestions that he has made none or that what progress he has made is after all null and inconclusive.

The laws of this world as it is are the laws of the Ignorance and the Divine in the world maintains them so long as there is the Ignorance — if He did not, the universe would crumble to pieces, *utsīdeyur ime lokāḥ*, as the Gita puts it. There are also, very naturally, conditions for getting out of the Ignorance into the Light. One of them is that the mind of the sadhak should cooperate with the Truth and that his will should cooperate with the Divine Power which, however slow its action may seem to the vital or to the physical mind, is uplifting the nature towards the Light. When that cooperation is complete, then the progress can be rapid enough; but the sadhak should not grudge the time and labour needed to make that cooperation fully possible to the blindness and weakness of human nature and effective.

All the call for faith, sincerity, surrender is only an invitation to make that cooperation more easily possible. If the physical mind ceases to judge all things including those that it does not know or are beyond it, like the deeper things of the spirit, then it becomes easier for it to receive the Light and know by illumination and experience the things that it does not yet know. If the mental and vital will place themselves in the Divine Hand without reservation, then it is easier for the Power to work and produce “tangible” effects. If there is resistance, then it is natural that it should take more time and the work should be done from within or as it might appear underground so as to prepare the nature and undermine the resistance. It seems to me that the demand for patience is not so terribly unreasonable.

\*

It [*perfection of the physical mind*] can come only by farther development and the activity of another kind of knowledge communicating itself to the physical and taking up gradually the functions of the mind in all its parts.

### **The Unsteadiness of the Physical Mind**

The unsteadiness you speak of is the nature of the human physical mind — almost everybody has it, for the physical mind goes after all sorts of outward things. To fix the consciousness within, to keep it concentrated on the Divine alone is a great difficulty for all, it is what makes sadhana a thing for which long time and a slow development of the consciousness is usually necessary, at first at any rate. So that need not discourage you. In your inner vital there is plenty of strong will and deep



down in your psychic there is the true aspiration and love which come up when the psychic is active and will eventually possess the whole nature.

\*

It is quite natural that the unsteadiness of the physical mind should interfere with the settling of full and constant quietude and faith — it always does with everybody, but that does not mean that this quietude and faith will not or cannot settle in the nature. All that I meant was that you should try to get a constant will for that quietude, so that when the restlessness or unsteadiness come across, your will to quiet might meet it or soon reappear and dispel the disturbance. That would make the elimination of the restlessness or impatience easier; but in any case the Mother's force is there working behind the variations of the surface consciousness and it will bring you through them.

The experiences you had were renewed glimpses of the psychic working that is going on all the time even when there is no sign of it on the surface. The golden sword was the sword of Truth which will destroy the difficulties.

\*

Of course it is difficult to be withdrawn inwardly, difficult especially for the physical mind and consciousness with which you are now in contact. But that is not peculiar to you, — as in the other things, it is a general difficulty of human nature. The instability of which you speak is also a usual characteristic of the external mind and vital. But you have the capacity to do it as recent experiences have shown; the capacity will grow, for as the psychic develops that develops and the inability or instability of the physical consciousness becomes less pressing.

\*

Diabetes or any other physical illness cannot be a cause of absence of concentration. There is always a difficulty in the beginning to concentrate for more than a short time because it is contrary to the habits of the physical mind. Perseverance is necessary. At the same time there should be a call for the help of the Divine Power above the mind; for if one can open to that, the process can be more rapid.

### **The Obscurity of the Physical Mind**

What you felt was the obscurity of the external physical mind and nature (the centre in the throat is the centre of this external mind). So long as that is there the external

nature and action remain as they always were and there is no correspondence between it and the inner spiritual consciousness and experience. This cannot disappear by a single experience; a steady will to change is necessary.

\*

It means that the outer physical mind has a certain obscurity in it which impedes the knowledge from coming out. This obscurity is universal in the external physical mind — you feel it more just now because it is in the physical consciousness that the opposition is now centred. It will pass as soon as the Force can descend through the mind and vital and act directly on the physical nature.

\*

But that is a common experience — it is extraordinary how long it takes for the simple and right thing to do to dawn on the physical mind.<sup>1</sup>

\*

It is the nature of the physical mind not to believe or accept anything that is supraphysical unless it is enlightened and compelled by the light to do it. Do not identify yourself with this mind, do not consider it as yourself but only as an obscure functioning of Nature. Call down the light into it until it is compelled to believe.

### **Other Problems of the Physical Mind**

Yes, it [*the physical mind*] is closely connected with the brain functioning. All these things — irritation, grief, fear etc. etc. — can become entirely discharged of thought content and felt simply as a physical sensation in the cells, not accepted by the thought (even in the physical mind), not shared in by the emotional being — a wave brought from outside into the material body consciousness.

\*

These small things of the physical mind [*such as being disturbed by the defects of others*] are such as everybody has and they will fall off when the truer wider consciousness comes out. You have the understanding in your mind, but these

1. *The correspondent wrote that it took him a long time to figure out the best place to put the cot in his room.*  
— Ed.

things persist because they really belong to the smaller vital part and when that part widens, then they will no longer be able to recur. One can discourage them by keeping certain ideas in mind, such as that the things which vex you belong to the nature and can go only with the change of the nature, that one has to do the work well oneself but not be troubled by the defects of others in their work, that a quiet inner will for their doing right is more effective than getting vexed and disturbed by their lapses. But fundamentally it is by the widened consciousness in your mind and vital and physical that you will be quite freed from these small reactions. You have only to continue with the Mother's Force working in you and these things will smooth themselves out hereafter.

\*

These small movements [*such as useless talking*] are the most difficult of all to change owing to their very smallness and the habit of frequent indulgence as natural and trifling everyday movements of life. The best thing to do is to mass the force and light and peace in the mind and higher vital until they can occupy the physical mind even — then through the physical mind, which usually supports more or less these movements, they can be worked on with more success.

\*

It [*chasing sparrows out of a garden because they made it dirty*] was I suppose an idea that came through the physical mind, suggesting the following of a physical utility only and ignoring all other perceptions and motives. You must be on your guard against the ideas and suggestions of this physical mind and accept none without discrimination and subjection to a higher light.

\*

The confusion and inertia of which you speak must be in the physical mind which has not yet the Light. It does not matter very much if you keep in touch with the consciousness of the Force working upon you; for such periods of inertia in one part or another, especially in the physical consciousness, come to everybody. If you keep and deepen the quietude and become continuously conscious of the Force, it will itself work these defective states and movements out of the being in time. All depends on that, increasing quietude, increasing consciousness of the Force at work in you.

\*

One is either conscious of the power or peace or other force (light, ananda, knowledge, movements of the divine working) or, if not conscious of that, is aware of the results — either of these things is sufficient to show that one is open. To feel the grace descending and yet doubt whether it is not a vital imagination is a folly of the physical mind; a spiritual experience must be accepted as it is; if one questions at every moment whether an experience is an experience or Grace is grace or peace is peace or light is light, one will spend all the time in these useless and fantastic doubts instead of making a quiet and natural progress.

\*

It is the physical mind that would like everything made easy.

### **The Physical Mind and the Lower Vital**

Formerly the mental will and the higher vital and the psychic were active, so their consent was sufficient for the lower vital to be kept down or to be influenced. But now it is the physical mind that is active in you and the physical mind gives a value and therefore a power to the lower vital which it did not have before.

\*

What you describe, the insistence of the physical mind and the insistence of the small desire vital, are indeed the two things that still obstruct the sadhana. The mind must give up its insistence on its own ideas and the vital the insistence on satisfying its desires for the full quietude to come and for the permanent opening of the inner experience to realise itself. We shall put our Force persistently for the removal of these two difficulties till it is done.

\*

No, there is a limit to the resistance [*of the physical mind and the lower vital*]. At any rate a time comes when the fundamental resistance is broken for good and there is only left a dealing with details which is not troublesome.

### **The Physical Mind and the Psychic**

It [*the psychic*] can have a very great influence [*on the physical mind*] by giving it the right attitude and the right way of looking at things so that it supports the emotional being in its aspiration, love and surrender and itself gets interest, faith and insight in

the inner truth of things instead of seeing only their outer aspects and following false inferences and appearances. It also helps it to get rid of the narrowness and doubt which are the chief defects of the physical mind.

\*

When the physical mind is disturbed by the vital, it is not easily convinced because its reasoning is supplied to it by the vital which thinks according to its own desires and feelings — unless a great clarity from the psychic or from the thinking mind above comes to the rescue.

It is the psychic consciousness, not perfect but still well developed, that supports some of those whom you mention and makes it easy for them to go on in faith — but it is only after much vital difficulty that it developed in them, — and there is no reason why that should not happen speedily in you also.

\*

The psychic if it gets hold of them [*the vital physical and the physical mind*] can change completely their will and outlook and orientation and open them to the true perception of things and right impulse. The mind and higher vital can help much towards that.

### **The Physical Mind and Peace and Silence**

There is always a difficulty in keeping the physical mind within or silent, because it has been its nature to occupy itself with outward things and it finds a difficulty in accustoming itself to a contrary movement. You must not be depressed by that, but persist in the aspiration and will till it is done. The Mother's Force will be there to bring it about as soon as possible.

\*

You have only to allow the consciousness to develop — at first there will be mistakes as well as true ideas, but when there is sufficient development and the Mother's force and knowledge directly working in you, things will become more and more right — not only so, but you will have the certitude. At present there is still too much of the old physical mind for perceptions to be always right. As the Peace and Force take direct and complete possession of the physical consciousness, this will change and the consciousness develop more surely and with a greater light.

\*

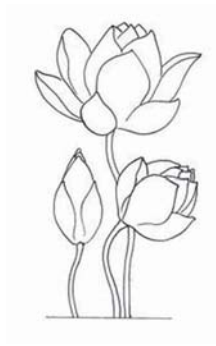
To get rid of the random thoughts of the surface physical mind is not easy. It is sometimes done by a sudden miracle, as in my own case, but that is rare. Some get it done by a slow process of concentration, but that may take a very long time. It is easier to have a quiet mind with things that come in passing on the surface, as people pass in the street, and one is free to attend to them or not — that is to say, there develops a sort of double mind, one inner silent and concentrated when it pleases to be so, a quiet witness when it chooses to see thoughts and things, — the other meant for surface dynamism. It is probable in your case that this will come as soon as these descents of peace, intensity or Ananda get strong enough to occupy the whole system.

\*

If the peace and silence continue to come down, they usually become so intense as to seize the physical mind also after a time.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Letters on Yoga – IV, CWSA, Vol. 31, pp. 30-39)*



## THE NEEDED SYNTHESIS

*What is the Synthesis needed at the present time?*

Undoubtedly, that of man himself. The harmony of his faculties is the condition of his peace, their mutual understanding and helpfulness the means of his perfection. At war, they distract the kingdom of his being; the victory of one at the expense of another maims his self-fulfilment.

The peculiar character of our age is the divorce that has been pronounced between reason and faith, the logical mind and the intuitive heart. At first, the declaration of war between them was attended by painful struggles, a faith disturbed or a scepticism dissatisfied. But now their divorce has created exaggerated tendencies which impoverish human life by their mutual exclusiveness, on the one side a negative and destructive critical spirit, on the other an imaginative sentiment which opposes pure instinct and a faith founded on dreams to the sterile fanaticism of the intellect.

Yet a real divorce is impossible. Science could not move a step without faith and intuition and today it is growing full of dreams. Religion could not stand for a moment if it did not support itself by the intellectual presentation, however inadequate, of profound truths. Today we see it borrowing many of its weapons from the armoury of its opponent. But a right synthesis in virtue of a higher and reconciling truth can alone dissipate their mutual misunderstandings and restore to the race its integral self-development.

The synthesis then of religious aspiration and scientific faculty, as a beginning; and in the resultant progress an integrality also of the inner existence. Love and knowledge, the delight of the Bhakta and the divine science of the knower of Brahman, have to effect their unity; and both have to recover the fullness of Life which they tend to banish from them in the austerity of their search or the rapture of their ecstasy.

The heart and the mind are one universal Deity and neither a mind without a heart nor a heart without a mind is the human ideal. Nor is any perfection sound and real unless it is also fruitful. The integral divine harmony within, but as its result a changed earth and a nobler and happier humanity.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 439-40)*

## THE VEDA AND EUROPEAN SCHOLARSHIP<sup>1</sup>

The handling of the Vedic hymns by the bold & ingenious scholarship of the Europeans has had at any rate one striking outcome, — it has converted the once admired, august & mysterious sacred books of the Hindus into a mass of incoherent rubbish. An Indian freethinker recently gave it as his opinion that the quickest & most effective way to make an end [to] the Hindu religion would be to translate the Vedas, its foundation, into the vernaculars & distribute them cheaply by the thousand throughout the peninsula. I have no doubt the method would be fairly effective, if not in destroying Hinduism, at least in driving it more exclusively into its stronghold of Vedanta. For, if the translation adopted were based on the work of European scholars, I can well imagine the idea that the mind of the coming generations would form about these ancient writings. I think there would be a general agreement that a more gross, meaningless & confused collection of balderdash had never been composed or penned. If this description should be thought too violent I would only ask the objector to read for himself Max Muller's translation of the hymn by Kanwa son of Ghora to the Maruts, the 39<sup>th</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> Mandala and ask himself honestly what sense worth having he can make out of it — even leaving aside the language & images, looking beyond them to the thing the poet is trying to say. For my part all I can make out, [is] that some primitive savage named Kanwa with a hopelessly confused brain and chaotic imagination is greatly terrified by some idea, sight or imagination of ghost, fiend or devil and calls upon the storm-gods to get rid of the cause of his fear. The language in which he expresses his appeal, is as barbarous & confused as the thought. In one verse he leaps from one thought to another which has no visible connection with its predecessor. The similes & metaphors are grotesque & inappropriate, e.g. "you cast forwards your measure like a blast of fire", "Come to us with your favours as lightnings go in quest of rain." Half the verse presents, when sounded, no intelligible sense, but there is a good deal of half-insane sound & fury.

The European scholar will reply that he cannot help it — he deals with the Vedas according to his philology & his ideas of what the text ought to mean, & this is the result given by his scholarship & his philology. He is even well satisfied, for his theory, founded on Western Science, is that men writing so long ago must have been undeveloped semi-savages and their writing very likely to be the stuff of a barbarous imagination which to the modern mind makes neither good sense nor good poetry. The European is not at fault; he translates according to his knowledge.

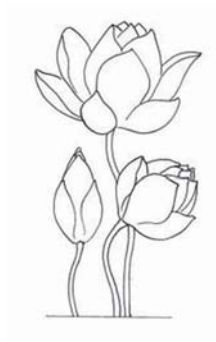
1. Early 1912. Heading in the manuscript: "Veda." This piece follows directly after entries for the *Record of Yoga* dated 13 January to 8 February 1912. [Editorial Note in CWSA]



But the Hindu who knows the depth & sublimity of the Upanishads, who has in his spiritual experience tested, realised & established Vedantic truth by a sure & unflinching experience as surely as the scientist has tested & established his laws of gravitation & the indestructibility of matter, — the Hindu perceiving many truths of Veda surviving in Purana & Tantra & Itihasa, already present in the deeper passages of the Brahmanas, — will not easily believe that the European scholars' is the last word & that in this modern rubbish of Nature-worship & incoherent semi-savage poetry we have the secret of that Veda from which Vedanta, Purana, Tantra, Itihasa, Yoga & Brahmana spring, that Veda which was so admirable to the greatest minds of antiquity. He will ask whether no other interpretation can arise from the text, — whether the philology of the Europeans is so perfect & infallible as to forbid us to review & question their results.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Vedic and Philological Studies, CWSA, Vol. 14, pp. 3-4)*



# THE HYMNS OF MADHUCHCHHANDAS<sup>1</sup>

[A]

## Chapter I

In a work devoted to the formulation of the early Vedantic philosophy of the Upanishads — and especially to that philosophy as we find it massively concentrated into some of its greatest principles in the Isha Upanishad, I hazarded the theory that the Vedas were not a collection of sacrificial hymns to material Nature-gods, as supposed by the Europeans, but something more profound and noble, that they were indeed, I thought, the true substance & foundation of the Upanishads, if not of all “Hindu” religion & spirituality. Certain considerations were added which, it seemed to me, delivered me from the intellectual necessity of implicit submission to European standards and modern theories. Modern Science might not be infallible; some suggestions there are that lead us to the possibility of a fundamental error in her way of narrating the progress of human civilisation and her account of the origin and growth of our religious notions and practices. Western philology is admittedly imperfect and as applied to the Veda boldly conjectural & in the absence of a more perfect science of language we are not bound by its conclusions. We might even go so far as to assert the presence in the Vedas not only of a strong moral & spiritual element in its conceptions & the symbolism of sacrifice, but a conscious & elaborate psychological rationale for the assignment of their various functions to the Vedic deities.

This was the substance of the argument, an argument then only suggested, not pursued. The present work proposes some opening spadework with the object of rescuing this profounder significance from the ancient obscurity of the Veda. Like the labours of the European scholars, my work must be, from the intellectual

1. Early 1912. These two versions of “Chapter I” of a proposed book whose working title was “The Hymns of Madhuchchhandas” were written one after the other in a notebook used a little later for entries for the *Record of Yoga* dated July 1912.

[A] The first version begins with a reference to an earlier work by the author expounding Vedantic philosophy as found in the Isha Upanishad. This is probably what is published as “Chapters for a Work on the Isha Upanishad” on pages 311 to 349 of *Isha Upanishad*, volume 17 of *CWSA*. No work with the title mentioned in the last paragraph, “God & the World”, is known to have survived. In the third paragraph Sri Aurobindo writes that he intends to examine “the eleven hymns of Madhuchchhanda Vaiswamitra & his son Jeta with which the Rigveda opens”, since these hymns form “a favourable ground for the testing of my theory”. The same approach was later taken up, but not completed, in *The Secret of the Veda*, volume 15 of *CWSA*.

[B] The second and longer version of “Chapter I” is entitled “Surya, Sarasvati and Mahi”, but as far as it was completed it does not discuss any of these deities. [Editorial Note in *CWSA*]

standpoint, inductive and conjectural; — it is a large suggestion that I am offering to the religious consciousness of India, a suggestion time & human knowledge may confirm, if it is true & fortunately supported, but will reject, if it turns out to be an error or a premature discovery. It would be highly out of place in such a tentative to be positive or dogmatic. For although the position I take, that the Veda contains the foundations of Brahavidya, is old & hoary in Indian tradition, it is an audacious novelty to the modern intellect. Sayana does not establish it for us. Shankara acknowledges only to turn away from it and take refuge in the trenchant division of Karmakanda from Jnanakanda. The Europeans believe themselves to have shattered it for ever & buried it away among the numerous delusions of the unscientific & superstitious past. What does this ancient ghost here, many may ask, revisiting the glimpses of the moon; we thought it had received its quietus; we had repeated Credos & Aves for its peaceful repose and sealed its tomb by sprinkling on it the holy waters of Science. Where a man presumes thus to differ from all the enlightenment & all the orthodoxy of his time, it behoves him to walk carefully, to content himself with the tone of suggestion only, and, however firm his own convictions, assert them to others with modesty & some hesitance.

My method in this book will be to separate from the first Mandala the eleven hymns of Madhuchchhanda Vaiswamitra & his son Jeta with which the Rigveda opens and selecting from them the verses which seem to me to give a clear indication and a firm foundation for my theory, explain adequately the meaning I attach to them, coordinating as I proceed other verses from various hymns of this small group which set forth the same psychological notion. From this basis I shall ascend to the interpretation of the shlokas which are of an inferior clarity & modernity of language or are already in the firm possession of the ceremonial interpretation and construct from them whatever rendering of the hymns seems to me their true and ancient sense. I have selected the Madhuchchhanda group because, in my opinion, he troubles himself less than many other Rishis, less for instance than Medhatithi Kanwa who follows him in the received order of the Veda, with the external symbols of sacrifice & ceremony & is more clearly & single mindedly occupied with moral & spiritual ideas & aspirations. He presents, therefore, a favourable ground for the testing of my theory.

I have already explained in the work, *God & the World*, the main ideas of the psychological system which I suppose to be discoverable in the Veda. I shall not therefore take up any space with a fresh formulation of its principles, but simply expose their application in the different & more antique language of the Veda. Nor shall I trouble myself, more than is necessary for clearing the ground, either with Sayana or the Germans. My process being constructive and synthetic, its defence against other theories must necessarily be left aside until the construction is complete and the synthesis appreciable in its entirety.

[B]

## Chapter I

Surya, Sarasvati and Mahi.

Who are they, the gods of the Rigveda? Ancient and yet ever youthful powers, full of joy, help and light, shining ones with whose presence the regions of earth and the hearts of men were illuminated, Angels and Deputies of the mysterious unknown God, worshipped in India, worshipped in Mesopotamia & Central Asia fifteen hundred years before the Christian era, worshipped by the wild Scythians, — for the name of Bhaga is still the Russian name for God, — worshipped in Iran before Ahuramazda replaced them, — for Ahriman, the dark spirit of the Persians, preserves the name of the strong Vedic deity, — worshipped at some time by Greek & Roman & Celt and Scandinavian, they have long given way even in India to the direct adoration of their Master whom they revealed, the Deva Adhiyajna whom through them the ancient masters of the sacrifice so persistently sought and finally attained. What were they, then? — vain imaginations of men? personifications of material realities? the idea of God behind phenomena? or even — for we know too little of the worlds, are still, as Newton was, children picking up pebbles on the shore of the infinite ocean of knowledge, — were there and are there — behind the names men give them — real personalities who stand in spirit behind the functions of man and of Nature, hidden masters, now unworshipped gods? If they were nothing, wherefore did the fire of the sacrifice flame up to them so persistently from the hearts and the hearths of men? — from what vague primeval terror and need of propitiation or supernatural assistance, — or if something, from what higher knowledge of the secrets of force that lie behind these outward movements of the machinery of the world? Wherefore did they yoke the bright flaming coursers to their chariots of bliss and hasten down so swiftly to rejoice in the fires of the Aryan altar and drain the outpourings of the Soma-wine?

The Europeans believe that these Vedic gods were personifications of the material powers of Nature; Sky, Rain, Sun, Moon, Wind, Fire, Dawn and the Ocean are the gods of the Aryans. The names, they think, carry with them their own interpretation, and the language of the hymns, as translated by them, consents to this modern insight. Vayu blows, Agni burns, Indra opens the cloud and hurls the thunderbolt. There are passages that do not agree with this theory, do not, at least, permit us to accept it as an all-sufficing explanation, but we can account for them by a progressive moralising of the old naturalistic religion destined [to] culminate in the idea of the universal God and open the way for Vedanta. In the sacrifice we see the systemisation of the old savage sense of dread and weakness, having as its result according to temperament or culture the propitiation of terrible and maleficent

powers or the invocation of bright and helpful deities. These shadows of our own terror or yearning were given their share of meat and wine, — because primitive men were naturally anthropomorphic in their conceptions of deity, — and imagined their gods to resemble their own chiefs & rulers. And if so much stress was laid on the Soma wine, was it not because the Vedic Rishis loved to get frequently drunk and naturally thought their gods would have the same robust inclination? For, it seems, heaven is only a magnified shadow of our own vain aspiration towards perfect strength, beauty & happiness and, if God did not make us in His image, we at least atone for His failure by making Him in ours!

The Indian Pundits, with Sayana at their head, give us little help against these ideas which attack so fatally the ancient bedrock of our religion; servant & passive minds, they make no inquiry of their own, but preserve for us the traditions of Puranic mythology, which, themselves symbols, cannot, unless themselves first explained, help us to explain more ancient images. Consequently, these European notions have had a sweeping victory, until at last an Indian hater of India's past, brought up in their school of thought, was able to say, not without some plausibility, that the best way to destroy popular faith in the Hindu religion would be to print and publish broadcast cheap translations of the Veda, — of course, as they are now, by those foreign minds, understood and interpreted. But the method might be partially effective, without the effect being just. The European theory of the Vedas well supported though it seems may not be the true theory or even the only rational theory now available. A past race of men, great thinkers, whose writings are the source and fountainhead of some of the sublimest philosophies in the world, much nearer to the Vedic Rishis in time, more capable of understanding and entering into their mentality, did not hold this view of the ancient deities. They considered them to be divine beings whose nature was vital, moral and spiritual, not simply material; they thought sacrifice to be a helpful and even a necessary symbolism. Throughout the Brahmanas & Upanishads we see this constant idea and the great pains taken to penetrate into the meaning not only of Vedic language but of Vedic ritual. We have therefore two different clues to the inner sense of these ancient words and obsolete practices. The European clue has been followed for many decades; the Vedantic clue perhaps might also be not unprofitably pursued. We know what European scholars understand by the Vedas; it may not be labour lost to know what the Vedantic sages understood by the Vedas.

In this book I intend to make the attempt even with such limited qualifications as I possess — for it seems to me of importance to our religion and future culture that the attempt should be made even if it should prove unsuccessful. In order to avoid the danger of a merely futile industry, I must first make myself sure that the Rigveda is not plainly & entirely a naturalistic document, but contains utterances inconsistent with the naturalistic, consistent with the Vedantic explanation.

I open then the Rigveda, — open it at its commencement and cast my glance

over the eleven hymns ascribed to Madhuchchhanda Vaiswamitra and his son Jeta. In the very first hymn, a hymn to Agni, I am struck with certain expressions which do not agree very well with the naturalistic conception of Agni. A divine personification of Fire may be described poetically as the Purohit, Ritwik and Hota of the sacrifice (purohitam Yajnyasya devam ritwijam hotaram ratnadhatamam), though it is curious the old clear & rigid ideas on these subjects being given — to find these different functions heaped pell-mell together without any clear appropriateness; for granting Agni to be in his place as Purohit, how is he the Ritwik, how is [he] the Hota? Agni is adorable to the sages of the past & of the future because he carries the gods to the sacrifice, sa devan eha vakshati. There seems to be no clear and firm idea in this talk of Fire carrying or bringing the gods — for what are we to think of Fire carrying thunder, rain, wind, moon and sun to the sacrifice? We will suppose however that the ideas of these early savages were not, could not have been clear and firm and, for want of this lucidity, they confused the idea of Fire carrying the sacrifice to the Gods with the contrary idea of Fire carrying the Gods to the sacrifice. We read next that by Agni one gets substance and increase or plenty day by day; by him one gets puissant fame. It may pass; — for were not the Vedic Rishis carpenters, greengrocers, chariot-makers? and perhaps the poet was a renowned blacksmith or a primitive iron-master or even, like Draupadi, a successful & famous cook. But when we find that Agni is said to exist encompassing the adhwara Yajna on every side, the expressions already strike us as strange and almost unintelligible in their form if there is no supra-naturalistic suggestion. Adhwara yajna stands in need of explanation (for both words in more modern Sanscrit mean sacrifice), unless indeed we are to take it as a parallel expression to Homer's theleiai gunaikes which scholars long persisted in understanding as "female women". Visvatah paribhur asi has a singularly Vedantic ring. Nevertheless I will refrain from pressing any of these points for fear of being misled by my own associations. I will put by these expressions as vague poetical tropes, the result of a loose imaginative diction. But when I read in the next line Agni described as kavikratuh satyash chitrasravastamah, the strong in wisdom, the true, the rich in various knowledge, I reach the limit of my powers of complaisance, I shake off the yoke of the materialist. The naturalistic interpretation sinks under the triple blows of these epithets and from my mind at least passes away never to return. Fire, material fire, has nothing to do with wisdom, truth and various knowledge — except indeed to burn them when it gets the chance from Holy Office or enthroned bigotry. Agni, of whom wisdom, truth and various knowledge are the attributes, cannot be the personification of fire or the god of the material flame, but must be & is something greater. The Rishi of the Veda is raising his hymn to a mighty god, moral and intellectual, a god before whom sages can bow down, not to a savage & materialistic conception. He is not thinking of the burning fire, he is thinking of the helper of man who fortifies his character & purifies his intellect, vaisvanara, pavaka, jatavedas.

Many objections can be urged against so rapid a conclusion. Originally it may be argued Agni was the personification of fire, and although in the present hymn Vedic religious conceptions have reached a stage of ennoblement and moral progress in which the primitive idea could no longer satisfy, we must even here take account of the original conception. But I am concerned with the ideas of the gods as conceived by Vedic men and not with the far-off origins of these ideas in the minds of their unknown ancestors. For the one question about the Veda that is not only of interest, but vital to us in India, is not what some remote savages who may or may not have existed, thought about fire & the sun, — a matter on which we have no real evidence, — but what our Vedic ancestors thought about fire & the sun and their relations to the Godhead. My conclusion touches this question alone. Anthropologists may be interested in hunting in the dark for undiscoverable origins — my purpose, more practical and immediate, need only take into account the actual facts of the Veda. But there are passages in which Agni is clearly the material flame; these, it may be contended, bring us back to the European theory. But so is the Agni of the Vedanta the material flame and yet pre-eminently a moral and spiritual deity. The question we have put to ourselves is whether it is worth while following the clue given us by the Upanishads, — whether, relying only on the plain meaning of the words, we can find Vedanta implied or explicit in the terms & notions of the Veda. The occasional materiality of Agni is not inconsistent with the Vedanticity of Veda; it is his essential materiality, if established, that would convict the Vedantic hypothesis of unreality. For to the Vedantist also the material flame is not only so much carbon & oxygen. It is the manifestation of a force; it is also the expression of a Personality & not only a God, but God Himself. For when he sees the flames of Agni burning up towards heaven, it is God whom the Vedantist watches burning up towards God. The Vedantic explanation of Veda does not therefore suffer, it gains by the occasional materiality of Agni. And from this single hymn we have it established that his materiality in the physical flame was only one circumstance in the personality of the Vedic Agni; we find the conception of him in this hymn identical in important respects with the fiery god of the Vedanta. In the Vedanta we already know him to be Agni Vaisvanara, an universal might filling the worlds, jatavedas, one to whom the highest knowledge has appeared, visvani vayunani vidvan, he who has known all phenomena, who in his might & his knowledge attacks the crooked attractions of the world, asmaj juhuranam eno. And here, in the very opening hymn of the Veda, we find him visvatah paribhuh, universally encompassing — the word used being the very one employed to describe Virat Vaisvanara, the Master of the physical universe — we find him to be satya, serving the fundamental law of the world (satyadharmanam adhwara), opposed to all deviation & crookedness — chitrasravas, he, shall we not say, who has detailed knowledge of the Sruti, — jatavedas Agni — kavikratu, the mighty in divine knowledge, well fitted therefore to be our helper & saviour, to “lead us by the good path to felicity.” When the Rishi proceeds to describe

Agni as the guardian of immortality, a brilliant splendour increasing in its home, and appeals to him to be as accessible as a father to his child and to cleave to us for our weal, we may say with some confidence that the home is not the altar of sacrifice, that in the appeal for accessibility there is no mere request to the god not to give us too much trouble when the pieces of tinder are struck together to produce him; that the Sage is surely not entreating the fire of his hearth or of his altar to cling to him for his weal! Whatever else may be in store for me in my inquiry, I can feel that I have made at the very beginning a great stride forward. For we are rid of that pervading character of barbarous childishness which the modern scholars have stamped upon the Vedas; we have thus opened the doors of rational interpretation to admit deeper ideas and a subtler psychology.

No doubt the gain is only negative until we can determine precisely what sense to attach to these notions about Agni. For it may be argued that these Vedic terms have not as yet the developed Vedantic significance, but are merely the vague beginnings to which Vedanta afterwards gave shape & brought into a state of precision & philosophic lucidity. We need therefore before we can go very far with our Vedantic hypothesis, passages in which the thoughts of Veda & Vedanta coincide exactly & clearly in the more subtle & precise ideas of the later Transcendentalism. But meanwhile we have perfectly established that to one of the Rishis, to the son of Visvamitra, — surely no late or modern voice, — the character of Agni as a mere personification of fire does not exist. Here at least we have him as a greater type of deity; we have moral notions of a high order, religious emotions of great depth and sweetness underlying the thought & diction. The religious ideas of the fatherhood of God, of a divine friend & lover, a recompenser of virtue, a Master of Truth and Knowledge are already present to this early Indian consciousness. The idea of Zeus pater or Jupiter existed in European antiquity but it evoked in the Greeks & Latins no such emotions as break out in the piteva sunave of Madhuchchhandas & are paralleled by the intimacy of his claim, later on, of special & dear comradeship with Indra, the master of the thunderbolt. The Fatherhood of Zeus was the distant fatherhood of the Prajapati, general & remote, not this near & moving personal relationship. But we have done more than ascertain the religious ideas & temperament of this single Rishi. We have established the right to look for similar ideas in other hymns, if not in the whole strain of the Veda; — we cannot do otherwise for we must surely suppose that Madhuchchhandas was no solitary mind, alien to the surrounding conceptions, a single flower of advanced spirituality in a desert of naturalistic barbarism. These thoughts must, to some extent, have been current; this attitude must have been partly created for him by his environment.

All this will be admitted. It may be suggested at the same time, that it does not carry us very far on our journey. Some of the hymns, it is said, are frankly naturalistic; others moralistic & religious as modern minds have understood religion. Madhuchchhanda, [who] was a Rishi of the second and later order, naturally brings with him



this accent of a moralised and partly spiritual worship into the opening hymns of the first Mandala. For as the old Nature-worshippers progressed in civilisation, they would naturally come to attach deeper ideas to godhead. Without rising to the exalted level of Semitic monotheism, — for they kept their gods of the flame & the lightning-stroke and the storm-blast, — they would seem to have yielded to an universalising tendency — they did not, indeed, roll up all their gods into one, but they expanded each into the whole. Thus they established an universality of godhead which did the same elevating work as the Semitic monotheism and through which the Indian mind, released from materialistic religion, travelled towards the Vedanta. By following this line the Hindus missed monotheism; but they found henotheism and made it a halfway house to their destined Pantheistic development.

The theory has a plausible ring — the question for us, is whether it is as true as it is plausible. From some of its suggestions we must guard ourselves carefully — for example, from the vulgar error that Vedanta is Pantheism. It is not that, but a Transcendentalism of which Theism, Pantheism, polytheism are all single circumstances & carefully harmonised factors. It is doubtful whether pure Pantheism can be discovered anywhere in Indian thought or Indian religion — for even when the Vedantist sees the flame as God, he is able to do so because he regards the flame not as a flame but as intrinsically something else, a supramaterial presence which has the appearance of a material fiery tongue. We must remember too that the henotheism discovered by Max Muller in the Veda, is no obsolete eccentricity of the human mind but the still existent Indian theory of the ishta devata which sees God in many forms & names but chooses one name & figure in preference to all others as the centre of its spiritual experiences and emotions. Henotheism is merely a permanent circumstance in Indian transcendentalism for the sake of a more intimate relation with Him. It is not a useful aberration from which it rose to Pantheism but itself a result of the transcendental view of the Universe. Neither should we lend ourselves to the view of some European scholars who see in the Visve devah of the Veda a movement towards the idea of universality in godhead. The description of the Visve devah in the hymns does not support that view. It does not go beyond a special application of the idea that all activities in the world have behind them hosts of divine personages whose function it is to support & maintain the inert forgetfulness of matter with the secret consciousness of spirit. Pantheism, Henotheism, Vaisnavism (taken as a self-sufficient religious synthesis) are European notions imported into Veda & Vedanta. The Vedic data from which they seem to arise, are more perfectly explained by ideas which are still persistent actualities of the Indian religious consciousness.

We are left, therefore, still in ignorance as to the means and possibility of this extraordinary rapid stride from a superstitious poetical materialism to profound moral and spiritual conceptions and even to the Transcendentalism which alone makes henotheism possible to the Indian intellect. We will suppose, however, that the

Vedic worshippers, even when they saw Agni flaming before them on the altar, were able without the aid of any transcendentalism, to forget his material aspects, to regard him only as a god, and not as the particular god of fire, and therefore clothe him with the general attributes of godhead. But are we then to suppose that such an expression as *gopamritasya didivim, vardhamanam swe dame*, guardian of immortality, a splendour increasing in its home, has no special meaning, that it is in vain that Varuna & Mitra are continually referred to as *kavi ritavridhav ritasprisha*, as seers, as increasing by law & truth, as desiring or enjoying that always & finding in it their strength and fullness? In the henotheistic theory, the theory which differentiates only the material aspects of Varuna, Agni, Indra and confounds their moral aspects in the general notion of universal deity — a half-fledged Pantheism roughly doing duty for monotheism, — these and a host of other powerful expressions become vague & almost meaningless; or at any rate without distinct meaning, — the terms of a vague and fluid poetry which catches at ideas & images without mastering them. This is possible, though with the concrete, clear-thinking ancients improbable. But it is also possible and more probable that we have here religious notions of another order than the modern, but quite as firm and clear — a religion which knew its own ideas and its own psychology. If we can find out what precisely are these ideas, what notions of God and the world are covered by these images of Indra, Agni, Vayu, the Aswins, Varuna, we may find out the real secret which the lapse of ages keeps concealed from us in the hymns. We may even find that our opening conjecture was justified and we were only speaking an ancient truth when we hazarded the use of the phrase, the Vedanticity of the Veda.

Still, whatever the precise nature of these higher religious concepts & emotions, their development from the alleged primitive & materialistic naturalism has to be explained. The safest course is to get away from these terms, henotheism, pantheism, Nature worship and keep our eyes fixed firmly on the concrete facts supplied to us by Veda. There is a flame burning on the altar; that, say the Europeans, was personified to the Vedic consciousness as *Agnidevata*, fire the god; Agni had originally no other significance. But now we see *Madhuchchhanda* with his eyes on that flame beholding in it a vision of wisdom, truth, knowledge, fatherhood, moral force, spiritual helpfulness. How has this psychological miracle been effected? By the anthropomorphic tendency in man, say the Europeans, — Fire the god, given in imagination the shape of a man, he of the tongue of flame, came to be regarded as a personality independent of the fire — a personality first with the qualities of fire, speed, brightness, destructiveness, helpfulness, — but afterwards with the general qualities of godhead, — whatever qualities the developing Aryan consciousness came to attribute to godhead. Agni is wise, true, beneficent not because he is fire, but because he is a god — that is to say an idealised man. He keeps his peculiar material qualities, but morally he may not be very different from Indra or Varuna.

All three, with whatever slight variations, are shaped on common lines by a common religious & moral mentality. They must differ if this theory is true, only as the thunder, fire & sky, not as moral forces. The wisdom of Agni is also the wisdom of Indra, it is the common divine wisdom; the moral helpfulness of Agni is also the moral helpfulness of Varuna, it is the common divine helpfulness. This is the reason why sometimes Agni, sometimes Varuna, sometimes Indra appear as the supreme god, because the poet has no reason to distinguish, he has about them all different physical images but the same moral conceptions.

These ideas give us a better explanation than the other fancy of a naturalistic henotheism. On the surface it explains the Veda; it explains at least the Vedas as they are interpreted in Europe. If I find that the actual terminology & ideas of the Vedic hymns coincide with this theory, I am bound unhesitatingly to accept it. But if, on the other hand, I find that there are clear, precise & firm psychological and moral conceptions attached to the Vedic deities, that though they belong to one moral family, they have strong personal differences, I shall then be free to follow, undisturbed, my original Vedantic hypothesis.

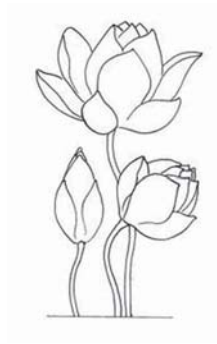
What is the actual meaning, the precise force we are to attach to Vedic language and terminology? If the European theory is to stand, we must suppose that the expressions applied to Agni, *Gopamritasya didivim vardhamanam swe dame*, have no clear & settled significance — there is the shapeless idea of a helpful immortal godhead coupled confusedly with the physical image of a domestic or sacrificial flame increasing upon altar or hearth. There is no appropriateness in *swe dame* — we are not to gather from it that Agni could not increase quite as well elsewhere! And when, proceeding to the second hymn, we read the striking lines about Mitra & Varuna, when we find them continually described with a peculiar emphasis on *ritam*, a noble reiteration of the conception of truth & law, *ritavidhav ritasprisha*, increasing by law & truth, desiring and enjoying it always, finding in law & truth their strength & fullness, we must here too suppose that these powerful & stirring expressions have no definite force & application, — though they may have been suggested originally by the majesty & fixity of the sky & the regular & regularising movements in it of the sun. They are the terms of a vague & fluid poetry, reaching out through half forgotten physical impressions to moral ideas & images which they have not mastered, in which as yet there is no fixity. Yet the moral ideas of other ancient races, — Aryan races — seem to have been otherwise clear, concrete & definite. The Greeks knew well what they meant by Fate, Necessity, Ate, Themis, Dike, Koros, Hubris; we are in no danger of confusing morally Zeus with Ares, or Ares with Hephaistos, Aphrodite with Pallas or Pallas with Artemis! We will suppose, however, that the higher spiritual development of the Indians, their urge towards universality, prevented them from arriving at this clearness of individual conception. Or else that they were arrested by this tendency at an early & fluid stage of the mythological imagination, when material distinctions were clear & unblurred, the

moral ideas which were to obscure or hide them not yet sifted and organised.

What then is the desideratum, if we are to have clear authority to proceed with the Vedantic hypothesis — for it is not yet a theory. We must have, obviously, some clear & indubitable passage to start with, assigning definite & minute psychological, moral or intellectual functions to a particular Vedic deity, in a sense which shall be identical with or closely related to the ideas & the psychology of the Upanishads. If I can find one such passage, & if it is of a nature to shed light upon others of a less indubitable clarity I shall have firm hold of our clue. I shall be in a position to build up my hypothesis, & to posit & test, as I go, by means of a number of particular indications this truth so dim to us, but which to our forefathers was so clear, the Vedanticity of the Veda.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Vedic and Philological Studies, CWSA, Vol. 14, pp. 5-19)*



## THE CENTURY OF LIFE

(The Nitishataka of *Bhartrihari* freely rendered into English verse)

(Continued from the issue of July 2018)

### ON THE WICKED

#### Evil Nature

A heart un pitying, brawling vain and rude,  
An eye to others' wives and wealth inclined,  
Impatience of true friends and of the good, —  
These things are self-born in the evil mind.

#### The Human Cobra

Avoid the evil man with learning crowned.  
Lo, the dread cobra, all his hood a gem  
Of glory, yet he crawls upon the ground.  
Fearst thou him less for that bright diadem?

#### Virtue and Slander

A spiritless dull block call modesty;  
Love of long fasts and holy vows must be  
Mere shows, yon pure heart but a Pharisee,  
The world-renouncing sage a fool; the high  
World-conquering hero's taxed with cruelty.  
This sweet word's baseness, that great orator  
A windbag, and the great spirit furious pride,  
And calm patience an impotent weakness poor.  
Thus the base-natured all high things deride.  
Judged by the slanderous tongue, the uncandid eyes,  
What brightest virtue turns not blackest vice?

### Realities

Greed if thou hast, thou art of sin secure:  
 Being treacherous, of what heinous fault hast need?  
 No distant temple wants whose soul is pure:  
 Heart's truth is more than penance, vow or creed.  
 With natural goodness, why mere virtues pile?  
 The soul being great, a royal crown were poor;  
 Good books thou hast, rubies were surplus vile;  
 When shame has pierced the heart, can death do more?

### Seven Griefs

Seven griefs are as seven daggers in my heart, —  
 To see a lake without its lilled bloom,  
 The moon grow beggared of her radiant part,  
 Sweet woman's beauty fade towards the tomb,  
 A noble hug his wealth, a good man gone  
 Down in the press of miseries, a fair  
 And vacant face when knowledge is not there,  
 A base man standing by a monarch's throne.

### The Friendship of Tyrants

Tyrants have neither kin nor lover. Fire  
 Accepts the rich man's offerings; at the end  
 Shall these then slake its wrathful swift desire?  
 Nay, let him touch it! It will spare its friend!

### The Hard Lot of the Courtier

Hard is the courtier's lot who fain would please.  
 Being silent, "Lo the dumb man!" they gibe; if speech  
 Eloquent edge his wit, "He seeks to teach,  
 The chatterer!" else, "Hark to his flatteries!"  
 Rude, if he sit near; far, — "What want of ease!"  
 Enduring insult, "Coward!"; if he spurn  
 The injurer, "Surely a spawn of parents base!"

Such service is in courts, whose laws to learn  
Wise sages are perplexed, or tread its ways.

### **The Upstart**

Yea, how this high sun burns that was so low,  
    Enlightening with his favours all things base!  
    Hating all good, with chainless licence vile  
Of those his filthy deeds makes arrogant show  
    Obscurely engendered in his unseen days  
    Ere sudden fortune raised from miry soil.  
No virtue now, genius nor merit's safe  
From vulture eyes that at all cleanness chafe.

### **Two Kinds of Friendship**

Like shadows of the afternoon and morn  
    Friendship in good men is and in the base;  
    All vast the lewd man's in its first embrace,  
But lessens and wears away; the other's, born  
    A dwarfish thing, grows giantlike apace.

### **Natural Enmities**

Trust not thy innocence, nor say, "No foe  
    I have the world through;" other is the world.  
The deer's content with simple grass, yet bow  
    Of hunter fears; the fisher's net is hurled  
To catch the water's innocents; his high  
    And simple life contented leads the good,  
Yet by the evil heart insatiably  
    With causeless hatred finds himself pursued.

## ON VIRTUE

### Description of the Virtuous

Homage to him who keeps his heart a book  
 For stainless matters, prone others' gifts to prize  
 And nearness of the good; whose faithful look  
 Rejoices in his own dear wife; whose eyes  
 Are humble to the Master good and wise;

A passion high for learning, noble fear  
 Of public shame who feels; treasures the still  
 Sweet love of God; to self no minister,  
 But schools that ravener to his lordlier will,  
 Far from the evil herd on virtue's hill.

### The Noble Nature

Eloquence in the assembly; in the field  
 The puissant act, the lion's heart; proud looks  
 Unshaken in defeat, but modest-kind  
 Mercy when victory comes; passionate for books  
 High love of learning; thoughts to fame inclined; —  
 These things are natural to the noble mind.

### The High and Difficult Road

To give in secret as beneath a shroud;  
 To honour all who to thy threshold come;  
 Do good by stealth and of thy deeds be dumb,  
 But of another's noble acts be proud  
 And vaunt them in the senate and the crowd;  
 To keep low minds in fortune's arrogant day;  
 To speak of foemen without scorn or rage;  
 What finger appointed first this roughest way  
 Of virtue narrower than the falchion's edge?



### **Adornment**

The hand needs not a bracelet for its pride,  
 High liberality its greatness is;  
 The head no crown wants to show deified,  
 Fallen at the Master's feet it best doth please.  
 Truth-speaking makes the face more bright to shine;  
 Deep musing is the glory of the gaze;  
 Strength and not gold in conquering arms divine  
 Triumphs; calm purity the heart arrays.  
 Nature's great men have these for wealth and gem;  
 Riches they need not, nor a diadem.

### **The Softness and Hardness of the Noble**

Being fortunate, how the noble heart grows soft  
 As lilies! But in calamity's rude shocks  
 Rugged and high like a wild mountain's rocks  
 It fronts the thunders, granite piled aloft.

### **The Power of Company**

Behold the water's way, — on iron red  
 When it falls hissing, not a trace remains,  
 Yet 'tis the same that on the lotus shines,  
 A dewy thing like pearls, — yea, pearl indeed  
 Turns when the oyster-shell receives and heaven  
 To those rain-bringing stars their hour has given.  
 High virtue, vice or inconspicuous mean  
 'Tis company that moulds in things or men.

### **The Three Blessings**

He is a son whose noble deeds and high  
 His loving father's heart rejoice;  
 She is a wife whose only jewellery  
 Is her dear husband's joy and bliss;  
 He the true friend whose actions are the same

In peaceful days or hours of bale and shame;  
 These three who wins, finds earth his Paradise.

### **The Ways of the Good**

Who would not honour good men and revere  
 Whose loftiness by modesty is shown,  
 Whose merits not by their own vaunts appear,  
 Best in their constant praise of others known,  
 And for another's good each power to brace  
 To passionate effort is their selfishness?

Hark to their garrulous slanderer's gurge of blame  
 Foaming with censure violent and rude!  
 Yet they revile not back, but put to shame  
 By their sweet patience and calm fortitude.  
 Such are their marvellous moods, their noble ways,  
 Whom men delight to honour and to praise.

### **Wealth of Kindness**

Then is the ear adorned when it inclines  
 To wisdom; giving bracelets rich exceeds;  
 So the beneficent heart's deep-storèd mines  
 Are worked for ore of sweet compassionate deeds,  
 And with that gold the very body shines.

### **The Good Friend**

Thus is the good friend pictured by the pens  
 Of good men: — still with gentle hand he turns  
 From sin and shame his friend, to noble gains  
 Still spurs him on; deep in his heart inurns  
 His secret errors, blares his parts abroad,  
 Gives at his need, nor takes the traitor's road  
 Leaving with facile wings when fortune spurms.

### **The Nature of Beneficence**

Freely the sun gives all his beams to wake  
 The lotus slumbering in the darkened lake;  
 The moon unasked expends her gentle light,  
 Wooing to bloom her lily of the night;  
 Unasked the cloud its watery burden gives.  
 The noble nature in beneficence lives;  
 Unsought, unsued, not asking kindness back  
 Does good in secret for that good's sole sake.

### **The Abomination of Wickedness**

Rare are the hearts that for another's joy  
     Fling from them self and hope of their own bliss;  
 Himself unhurt for others' good to try  
     Man's impulse and his common nature is:  
 But they who for their poor and selfish aims  
 Hurt others, are but fiends with human names.  
 Who hurt their brother men themselves unhelped,  
 What they are, we know not, nor what horror whelped.

### **Water and Milk**

By water and sweet milk example Love.  
     Milk all its sweetness to the water gives,  
     For in one wedded self their friendship lives;  
 And when hot pangs the one to anguish move,  
     The other immolates itself to fire.  
 To steal his friend's grief is a friend's desire.

He seeing his friend's hard state is minded too  
     To seek the flame; but happily again  
     Wedded to him is eased of all his pain.  
 This friendship is, one heart that's shared by two.

### **Altruism Oceanic**

Here Vishnu sleeps, here find his foes their rest;  
 The hills have taken refuge, serried lie  
 Their armies in deep Ocean's sheltering breast;  
 The clouds of doom are of his heart possessed,  
 He harbours nether fire whence he must die.  
 Cherisher of all in vast equality,  
 Lo, the wide strong sublime and patient sea!

### **The Aryan Ethic**

Hear the whole Gospel and the Law thereto: —  
 Speak truth, and in wise company abide;  
 Slay lust, thine enemy; abandon pride;  
 Patience and sweet forgiveness to thee woo;  
 Set not in sin thy pleasure, but in God;  
 Follow the path high feet before thee trod;

Give honour to the honourable; conceal  
 Thy virtues with a pudent veil of shame,  
 Yet cherish to the end a stainless fame;  
 Speak sweetness to thy haters and their weal  
 Pursue; show pity to unhappy men,  
 Lift up the fallen, heal the sufferer's pain.

### **The Altruist**

How rare is he who for his fellows cares!  
 His mind, speech, body all are as pure jars  
 Full of his soul's sweet nectar; so he goes  
 Filling the world with rows on shining rows  
 Of selfless actions ranked like the great stars.

He loves man so that he in others' hearts  
 Finding an atom even of noble parts  
 Builds it into a mountain and thereon  
 His soul grows radiant like a flower full-blown;  
 Others are praised, *his* mind with pleasure starts.

## Mountain Moloy

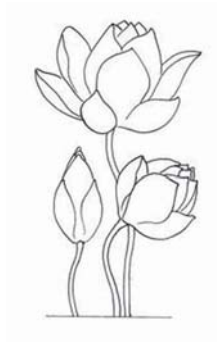
Legends of golden hills the fancy please,

But though they were real silver and solid gold,  
Yet are the trees they foster only trees.

Moloy shall have my vote with whom, 'tis told,  
Harbouring the linden, pine and basest thorn  
Ennobled turn to scent and earth adorn.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Translations, CWSA, Vol. 5, pp. 336-46)*



## ‘LIE CRADLED IN MY HEART . . .’

**June 15, 1914**

“Lie cradled in my heart and do not worry: what has to be done will be done. And it is just when thou doest it unknowingly that it is done best” . . .

I am in Thy heart, Lord, and nothing can take me away from it. And it is from the unfathomable depths of this heart, in the smiling peace of its beatitude, that I look at all the outer forms of Thy manifestation struggling and endeavouring to understand Thee better, manifest Thee better.

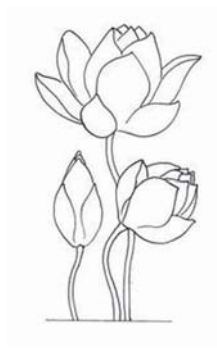
If the hour has come, as Thou lettest me know, for the new forms of Thy realisation, these forms will inevitably be born. Something in the being senses it but does not yet know; so it makes an effort to adapt itself, to prove equal to what Thou askest of it. But what is conscious of Thee and lives in Thy force knows that this new form is only an infinitesimal progress in the infinite progression of Thy manifestation, and looks at every form with the serenity of eternal plenitude.

And in this serenity is the very omnipotence of realisation.

One must know how to soar in an immutable confidence; in the sure flight is perfect knowledge.

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 174)*



## DEFINITIONS

*Could you give me your definitions of the following words?*

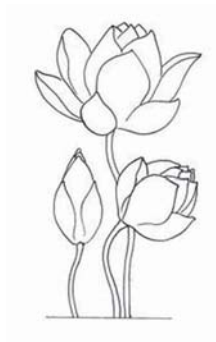
- 1. Courage and love*
- 2. Meanness and selfishness*
- 3. Nobleness and generosity.*

1. Courage is the total absence of fear in any form.
2. Love is self-giving without asking anything in return.
3. Meanness is a weakness that calculates and demands from others the virtues one does not possess oneself.
4. Selfishness is to put oneself at the centre of the universe and to want everything to exist for one's own satisfaction.
5. Nobleness is to refuse all personal calculation.
6. Generosity is to find one's own satisfaction in the satisfaction of others.

15 December 1969

THE MOTHER

*(On Thoughts and Aphorisms, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 10, p. 282)*



## COMMENTARY ON FIVE APHORISMS OF SRI AUROBINDO

*117 – “Neither is it that I was not before nor thou nor these kings nor that all we shall not be hereafter.” Not only Brahman, but beings and things in Brahman are eternal; their creation and destruction is a play of hide-and-seek with our outward consciousness.*

*118 – The love of solitude is a sign of the disposition towards knowledge; but knowledge itself is only achieved when we have a settled perception of solitude in the crowd, in the battle and in the mart.*

*119 – If when thou art doing great actions and moving giant results, thou canst perceive that thou art doing nothing, then know that God has removed His seal from thy eyelids.*

*120 – If when thou sittest alone, still and voiceless on the mountain-top, thou canst perceive the revolutions thou art conducting, then hast thou the divine vision and art freed from appearances.*

*121 – The love of inaction is folly and the scorn of inaction is folly; there is no inaction. The stone lying inert upon the sands which is kicked away in an idle moment, has been producing its effect upon the hemispheres.*

This is the experience I have had these last few days, yesterday or the day before. The feeling of an irresistible Power governing everything: the world, things, people, everything, without needing to move materially, and that this excessive material activity is only like the foam that forms when water flows very fast — the foam on the surface; but that the Force runs on underneath like an all-powerful stream.

There is nothing else to say.

One always comes back to that: to know is all right, to speak is good, to do is all very well, but to *be* is the only thing which has any power.

You see, people are restless, because things do not move quickly; so I had this vision of the formation, of the divine creation in the making, under the surface, all-powerful, irresistible, and in spite of everything, of all this outer turmoil.



*But in order to express itself, this great flow of Power needs instruments, doesn't it?*

A brain.

*But, exactly, not only a brain. This Power can express itself, as in the past, in a mental or overmental way; it can express itself vitally through force; it can express itself through the muscles; but how can it express itself physically, purely, directly — since you often speak of “material power”? What is the difference between the Action above and the true Action here?*

Each time I have been conscious of the Power, the experience has been similar. The Will from above is translated into a vibration which certainly takes on some vital force but which acts in a subtle physical domain. One perceives a certain quality of vibration which is difficult to describe, but which gives the impression of something coagulated, not fragmented, something which seems to be denser than air, but which is extremely homogeneous, with a golden luminosity, with a tremendous driving power, and which expresses a certain will — which is not of the same nature as human will, which has the nature of vision rather than of thought; it is like a vision that imposes itself in order to be realised — in a domain that is very close to material Matter, but invisible, except to the inner sight. And that vibration exerts a pressure on people, things, circumstances, to mould them according to its vision. And it is irresistible. Even people who think the opposite, who want the opposite, do what is wanted without wanting to; even the things that by their very nature are opposed to it are turned around.

For national events, relations among nations, world circumstances, it acts like that, constantly, constantly, as a tremendous Power. And so if one is oneself in a state of union with the divine Will, without any intervention of thought, or any conception or idea, one can follow it, one sees and knows.<sup>1</sup>

The resistances of the inertia that is in every consciousness and in Matter mean that this Action, instead of being direct and perfectly harmonious, becomes confused, full of contradictions, clashes and conflicts; instead of everything resolving itself “normally”, so to say, smoothly — as it should be — all this inertia that resists and

1. It is interesting to note that shortly before this conversation, Mother received the following question: “Is the American presence and intervention in Vietnam justifiable?”

She replied: “From what point of view are you asking this question?”

“If it is from the political point of view — politics are sunk in falsehood and I have nothing to do with them.

“If it is from the moral point of view — morality is a shield which ordinary men flourish to protect themselves from the Truth.

“If it is from the spiritual point of view — the divine Will alone is justifiable and That is what men travesty and distort in all their actions.”

opposes, gives it a tangled movement in which things collide and there is disorder and destruction, which become necessary only because of the resistance, but which were *not indispensable*, which might not have existed — which truly speaking should not have been — because this Will, this Power is a Power of perfect harmony where each thing is in its place, and it organises things wonderfully. It comes as an absolutely luminous and perfect organisation, which one can see when one has the vision; but when it comes down and presses on Matter, everything begins to seethe and resist. Therefore, to attempt to impute the disorders and confusions and destructions to the divine Action, to the divine Power, is another human foolishness. It is the inertia — not to mention the bad will — which *causes* the catastrophe. It is not that the catastrophe was intended, nor even foreseen, it is *caused* by the resistance.

And then, there is added the vision of the action of Grace, which comes to moderate the results wherever possible, that is to say, wherever it is accepted. And this explains why aspiration, faith, complete trust on the part of the earthly human element, have a harmonising power, because they allow the Grace to come and set right the consequences of this blind resistance.

This is a clear vision — clear, clear, even in the details.

One could, if one wanted to, make prophecies by saying what has been seen. But there is a kind of super-compassion which prevents this prophecy, because the Word of Truth has a power of manifestation and to express the result of the resistance would make that state concrete and diminish the action of the Grace. That is why even when one sees, one cannot speak, one *must not speak*.

But Sri Aurobindo certainly meant that it is this Power, this Force which does everything — which does everything. When one sees it or is one with it, one knows at the same time, one knows that *That* is really the only thing that acts and creates; everything else is the result of the domain or the world or the material or the substance in which it acts — the result of the resistance, but not the Action. And to unite with *That* means to unite with the Action; to unite with what is below means to unite with the resistance.

And so because it wriggles and tosses and turns, wants and thinks and makes plans . . . it imagines that it is doing something — it is resisting.

Later, a little later, I shall be able to give examples for very small things, showing how the Force acts and what interferes and mixes with it, or is moved by this Force and distorts its movement, and the result, that is to say, the physical appearance as we see it. Even the example of a very small thing with absolutely no importance for the world, gives a clear idea of the way in which everything happens and is distorted here.

And this applies to everything, everything, all the time, all the time. And so, when one is doing the yoga of the cells, one notices the same thing: there is the Force that acts, and then (*Mother laughs*) what the body does with this Action! . . .

*(Silence)*

Immediately there comes the how and why. But that belongs to the domain of mental curiosity, because the important thing is to stop the resistance. That is the important thing, to stop the resistance so that the universe can become what it should be: the expression of a harmonious, luminous, wonderful power, of an unparalleled beauty. Afterwards, when the resistance has stopped, if out of curiosity we want to know why it happened . . . it won't matter any more. But now, one cannot find the remedy by seeking the reason why, but by taking the true attitude. That is the only thing that matters.

To stop the resistance by a total surrender, a total self-giving in every cell, if one can do that.

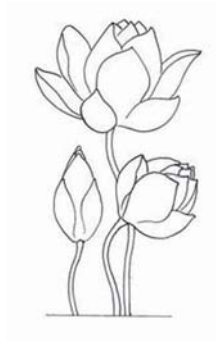
They begin to feel the intense delight of existing only by the Lord, for the Lord, in the Lord.

When this is established everywhere, all will be well.

6 July 1966

THE MOTHER

*(On Thoughts and Aphorisms, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 10, pp. 228-33)*



# THE KEY TO THE DIVINE DOORS

(Continued from the issue of August 2018)

## SINCERITY — FAULTS, MISTAKES, DEFECTS AND WEAKNESSES

**One result of sincerity is to perceive one's own weaknesses**

To perceive one's own weaknesses is one result of sincerity. (S29: 53)

\*

**Sign of sincerity: to confess one's weakness and faults to the Divine**

*Mother, here it is written:*

*“Q: Is it a sign of sincerity to confess one's weakness and faults to the Divine and to others?”*

*“A: Why to others? One has to confess them to the Divine.”*

*“Q: But if one does some wrong to a person, is it not necessary to confess it to him? Is it enough to confess it to the Divine?”*

*“A: If it concerns the other persons, then it can be done.”*

It is harmless. You can do it if it gives you pleasure! Fundamentally, if it sets you at rest and allows you to progress, if you feel you must do it in order to progress, it is very good. (M6: 125)

\*

**People must see their own faults and correct themselves**

People must see their faults by themselves and correct themselves. It is they who can check their own selves, they cannot correct anybody's faults.

When you correct yourself with full observation you will feel happy and peaceful. Also you will feel my Presence which is guiding you from within yourself. The right thing is to find your own way inwardly to the Truth without taking anybody's advice. I am helping you constantly towards your Goal. . . . (Huta, *Mother You Said So*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2011, p. 90, ©Havyavahana Trust)

\*

### **Sincerely misbehave?**

Do you think sincerity and fearlessness mean to sincerely misbehave? — The Mother  
(*Champaklal's Treasures*, 2008, p. 29)

\*

### **Trying to justify a mistake**

[There is] the habit of always furnishing in the presence of a mistake a *favourable explanation* — this favourable explanation seems to jump out from the mind spontaneously and automatically — trying to obviate any sincere recognition of the error. (M14: 341)

\*

### **To make a mistake proves that one is not sincere in some part of the being**

*Sweet Mother,*

*Is a mistake or a bad action pardonable if one is sure that what one is doing is right and that one is sincere? How can one know that one is mistaken?*

The very fact of being mistaken proves that one is not sincere in some part of the being. For the psychic being *knows* and is not mistaken; but more often than not, we do not listen to what it says because it speaks without violence or insistence — it is a murmur in the depths of our heart which is easy to ignore.

However, there are cases where one acts wrongly *out of ignorance*, and this error is effaced as soon as the ignorance is replaced by knowledge and the way of acting completely changed. What man in his ignorance calls “pardon” is the effacement, the dissolution of errors committed. (M16: 305)

\*

### **The weakness which says, “I would like it so much, but I can’t” is insincerity**

*Does not the vital seek its own transformation? It aspires but it is always the victim of things, of impulsions from outside.*

If it seeks to transform itself, it is truly wonderful! And if it aspires for transformation, it will try to free itself. If the vital is weak, its aspiration will be weak. And mark that weakness is an insincerity, a sort of excuse one gives oneself — not very, very

consciously perhaps, but you must be told that the subconscious is a place full of insincerity. And the weakness which says, "I would like it so much, but I can't" is insincerity. Because, if one is sincere, what one cannot do today one will do tomorrow, and what one cannot do tomorrow one will do the day after, and so on, until one can do it. If you understand once for all that the entire universe (or, if you like, our earth, to concentrate the problem) is nothing other than the Divine who has forgotten Himself, where will you find a place for weakness there? Not in the Divine surely! Then, in forgetfulness. And if you struggle against forgetfulness you struggle against weakness, and to the extent you draw closer to the Divine your weakness disappears.

And that holds good not only for the mind, but also for the vital and even for the body. All suffering, all weaknesses, all incapacities are, in the last analysis, insincerities.

There are many places where insincerity may be lodged, and hence it should never be said as so often people say to me, "I am perfectly sincere." It is like those who assure you, "I have never told a lie." If you were perfectly sincere, you would be the Divine, if you had never told a lie, that is, something that is not true, you would be the Truth! So, as you are neither the Divine nor the Truth in fact (you are that in essence but not in fact), you have always a long way to go to reach the Truth and sincerity.

You need not look unhappy because it is like that. (M4: 252-53)

\*

### **Insincerity: if you know it is a mistake and make it, this means that there is something perverse in you**

*Mother, you said that when one consciously makes a mistake it is much more serious than if one makes it unconsciously.*

When you make a mistake because you don't know that it is a mistake, through ignorance, it is obvious that when you learn that it is a mistake, when the ignorance has gone and you have goodwill, you don't make the mistake any more, and so you come out of the condition in which you could make it. But if you know it is a mistake and make it, this means that there is something perverse in you which has deliberately chosen to be on the side of confusion or bad will or even the anti-divine forces.

And it is quite obvious that if one chooses to be on the side of the anti-divine forces or is so weak and inconsistent that one can't resist the temptation to be on their side, it is infinitely more serious from the psychological point of view. This means that somewhere something has been corrupted: either an adverse force is

already established in you or else you have an innate sympathy for these forces. And it is much more difficult to correct that than to correct an ignorance.

Correcting an ignorance is like eliminating darkness: you light a lamp, the darkness disappears. But to make a mistake once again when you know it is a mistake, is as if someone lighted a lamp and you deliberately put it out. . . . That corresponds exactly to bringing the darkness back deliberately. For the argument of weakness does not hold. The divine Grace is *always* there to help those who have decided to correct themselves, and they cannot say, "I am too weak to correct myself." They can say that they still haven't taken the resolution to correct themselves, that somewhere in the being there is something that has *not decided* to do it, and that is what is serious.

The argument of weakness is an excuse. The Grace is there to give the supreme strength to whoever takes the resolution.

That means an insincerity, it does not mean a weakness. And insincerity is always an open door for the adversary. That means there is some secret sympathy with what is perverse. And that is what is serious.

In the case of ignorance which is to be enlightened, it is enough, as I said, to light the lamp. In the case of conscious relapse, what is necessary is a cauterisation. (M9: 306-07)

\*

**If you see a bad man become unlucky and miserable, you must immediately respect him — it means that the flame of inner sincerity is not altogether extinguished**

If you see a bad man become unlucky and miserable, you must immediately respect him. It means that the flame of inner sincerity is not altogether extinguished and something still reacts to his bad actions. (M3: 279)

\*

### **A prayer**

I aspire to be delivered from all egoistic weakness and all unconscious insincerity. (M15: 212)

\*

### **On mistakes: maintain a perfect sincerity in your aspiration**

*This evening Z talked to me about yoga. I know now that it wasn't very good to have talked with her. It would have been better if I hadn't done it. But do you think it has done me any harm?*

We should not get upset about the mistakes we make; we need only maintain a *perfect sincerity in our aspiration* — then all will be well in the end. (M17: 21)

\*

### **To change defects in one's nature depends on the sincerity of the sadhak**

*I see many defects in my nature — for instance my tendency to get angry and to argue. I request the Mother to change all this, for it is in her hands to transform me.*

It depends not only on the will of the Mother but on the sincerity of the sadhak. I do not see that you have any sincere will to do Yoga or to change. (S32: 164)

\*

### **If a sadhak is making a sincere effort to conquer a defect he is always put on test till he has overcome and is free**

That [*proneness to anger*] is the real reason for all these things happening to X. When there is something in the nature that has to be got over, it is always drawing on itself incidents that put it to the test till the sadhak has overcome and is free. At least it is a thing that often happens especially if the person is making a sincere effort to overcome. One does not always know whether it is the hostiles who are trying to break the resolution or putting it to the test (for they claim the right to do it) or whether it is, let us say, the gods who are doing it so as to press and hasten the progress or insisting on the reality and thoroughness of the change aspired after. Perhaps it helps most when one can take it from the latter standpoint. (S31: 653)

\*



**To have an insight into your own life you must be utterly sincere and say, “How tiny I am.”**

People who make an effort to progress and grow in consciousness, realise that what at one time in their lives they took to be a disaster or a calamity may appear fifteen years later like a blessing, an effect of Grace, some highest good. From a higher standpoint, it is quite obvious that if you bring your highest consciousness down into your ordinary life, it will bring the greatest good into your life.

People who have made some progress always have this experience. They see clearly that the so-called “disaster” was in fact the starting-point of their ascension, an ascension which could not have taken place without it. If someone has the inner vision and is able to enter his higher consciousness at will, he will see that it is the greatest good that happens to him when he is in contact with his highest consciousness.

But, to be able to understand this, there are two conditions. You must make an effort for progress and be utterly sincere, for if you are not sincere, you will never have any insight into your own life. You must be able to look at yourself and say, “How tiny I am.” (M15: 290)

\*

**If you are sincere you will see that you don’t know**

In fact, you see — I say except for a very few, so few that one can hardly speak about them — all men live in a total ignorance, a total ignorance of the way to live, not of the things in the universe but simply of the most elementary knowledge of living. They don’t know how to live. All the time they do things they should not do, and I am not speaking of satisfying desires and all that, I am speaking simply of the life of each moment, the movement of each instant; because one is in a state of total ignorance, one does exactly the opposite of what one should do to get the result one wants. One tries to follow some aim, whatever it may be — it may be a selfish aim, it may be a disinterested aim, it may be a material aim, it may be a spiritual aim, but one wants to get somewhere — and one does just the opposite of what is necessary to go there, all the time. And if you are simply just a little attentive and are able to look at yourself at any minute, whatever be the thing you have to do, stop for half a second and look at yourself and ask, “Do I know what I have to do?” If you are sincere you will see that you don’t know it at all. You do it automatically, instinctively, by habit or else with some kind of impulse, you see; but to know: “Is this what must be done? Is it in this way that it ought to be done?” — I don’t think once in a thousand times you can answer. (M6: 449-50)

\*

**Be sincere: to avoid being misled by the forces of falsehood in your sadhana**

*How can the sadhaks avoid being misled by the forces of falsehood in their sadhana?*

They have always to be sincere — it depends upon that.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Elements of Yoga*, 2009, p. 18)

\*

**Recognising one's faults**

A noblest courage is to recognise one's faults. (M14: 170)

\*

**Recognising one's own mistakes**

There is no greater courage than that of recognising one's own mistakes.

(M14: 170)

\*

**The best way to correct one's mistakes: be frank and open**

*I think that what I wrote yesterday was not good. Now I regret what I wrote.*

You must not regret. It is always better to be frank and open; that is the best way to correct one's mistakes. (M17: 5)

\*

**Each recognition of a mistake can become a stepping-stone to a higher progress**

If the central will is sincere, each recognition of a mistake can become a stepping-stone to a truer movement and a higher progress. (S32: 228)

\*

### **Where there is that sincerity there is nothing that does not draw its own forgiveness**

You may be quite sure that she [*the Mother*] entirely forgives you if there is anything to forgive; she was very much pleased with the frankness with which you have confessed all your feelings and where there is that sincerity there is nothing that does not draw its own forgiveness.

(Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo to Dilip*, Vol. 4, 2011, p. 299)

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### **Nobler to recognise one's faults than to conceal them**

*I want to overcome a difficulty: it is that when I perceive faults or weaknesses in myself, something tries to justify them or to prevent me from attending to them.*

This “something” is the insincerity of an ignorant self-esteem which has not yet understood that it is nobler and loftier to recognise one's faults in order to correct them, than to conceal them in the hope that they will not be noticed.

As for all psychological problems, here too sincerity, a total and uncompromising sincerity, is the true remedy. (M16: 364)

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### **Be very grateful to those who show you your faults**

In all Scriptures meant to help mankind to progress, it is always said that you must be very grateful to those who show you your faults and so you must seek their company; but the form used here is particularly felicitous: if a fault is shown to you it is as if a treasure were shown to you; that is to say, each time that you discover in yourself a fault, incapacity, lack of understanding, weakness, insincerity, all that prevents you from making a progress, it is as if you discovered a wonderful treasure.

Instead of growing sad and telling yourself, “Oh, there is still another defect”, you should, on the contrary, rejoice as if you had made a wonderful acquisition, because you have just caught hold of one of those things that prevented you from progressing. And once you have caught hold of it, pull it out! For those who practise a yogic discipline consider that the moment you know that a thing should not be, you have the power to remove it, discard it, destroy it. (M3: 220-21)

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### **On mistakes — the only way out of it is to become sincere**

It is easy to see that the mistakes are due to a lack of sincerity in the being — the only way out of it is to become sincere. You have been given the power of will and of knowledge for that purpose. (M14: 71)

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### **To discover a fault is an acquisition: Not to remedy a defect is a lack of will that verges on insincerity**

To discover a fault is an acquisition. It is as though a flood of light had come to replace the little speck of obscurity which has just been driven out.

When you follow a yogic discipline, you must not accept this weakness, this baseness, this lack of will, which means that knowledge is not immediately followed by power. To know that a thing should not be and yet continue to allow it to be is such a sign of weakness that it is not accepted in any serious discipline, it is a lack of will that verges on insincerity. You know that a thing should not be and the moment you know it, you are the one who decides that it shall not be. For knowledge and power are essentially the same thing — that is to say, you must not admit in any part of your being this shadow of bad will which is in contradiction to the central will for progress and which makes you impotent, without courage, without strength in the face of an evil that you must destroy.

To sin through ignorance is not a sin; that is part of the general evil in the world as it is, but to sin when you know, that is serious. It means that there is hidden somewhere, like a worm in the fruit, an element of bad will that must be hunted out and destroyed, at any cost, because any weakness on such a point is the source of difficulties that sometimes, later on, become irreparable.

So then the first thing is to be perfectly happy when someone or some circumstance puts you in the conscious presence of a fault in yourself which you did not know. Instead of lamenting, you must rejoice and in this joy must find the strength to get rid of the thing which should not be. (M3: 221-22)

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### **It is more important for each one to find the mistake in himself than to insist on the mistake of others**

To recognise the presence of a “disharmonious atmosphere” is useful only so far as it wakes in each one the will to change it into a harmonious atmosphere and to do that the first important step is for each one to get out of his own limited point of view

in order to understand the point of view of others. It is more important for each one to find the mistake in *himself* than to insist on the mistake of others.

I add that all those to whom I have given responsibility in the work are expected to be faithful to this responsibility and, without allowing of any “hurt feeling” to creep in, do their best to carry on successfully their duty.

My blessings are with all those who are sincere and have goodwill.

(M14: 310)

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### **Any fault can be corrected if you sincerely set to work to correct yourself**

When one has work to do for a community, to take a decision for personal motives and to abandon one’s work is a serious mistake.

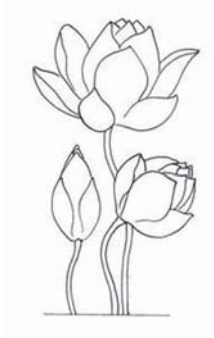
You mention faults committed which cannot be corrected: this is wrong. Any fault can be corrected if you sincerely set to work to *correct yourself*. To run away from the progress to be made is an act of cowardice and I cannot approve of it.

First of all make a sincere and complete confession of faults committed. Afterwards I shall see what is to be done. (M14: 312)

#### *References:*

M: *Collected Works of the Mother*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.

S: *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*



# A NEW EDUCATION FOR A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

## Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education

*(Continued from the issue of July 2018)*

*(The short notes preceding each section are by the editors of the compilation.*

*This compilation was published in 1992.)*

*The seers attuned to the universal Will,  
Content in Him who smiles behind earth's forms,  
Abode ungrieved by the insistent days.  
About them like green trees girdling a hill  
Young grave disciples fashioned by their touch,  
Trained to the simple act and conscious word,  
Greatened within and grew to meet their heights.  
Far-wandering seekers on the Eternal's path  
Brought to these quiet founts their spirit's thirst  
And spent the treasure of a silent hour  
Bathed in the purity of the mild gaze  
That, uninsistent, ruled them from its peace,  
And by its influence found the ways of calm.  
The Infants of the monarchy of the worlds,  
The heroic leaders of a coming time,  
King-children nurtured in that spacious air  
Like lions gambolling in sky and sun  
Received half-consciously their godlike stamp:  
Formed in the type of the high thoughts they sang  
They learned the wide magnificence of mood  
That makes us comrades of the cosmic urge,  
No longer chained to their small separate selves,  
Plastic and firm beneath the eternal hand,  
Met Nature with a bold and friendly clasp  
And served in her the Power that shapes her works.  
One-souled to all and free from narrowing bonds,  
Large like a continent of warm sunshine  
In wide equality's impartial joy,  
These sages breathed for God's delight in things.*

*Assisting the slow entries of the gods,  
Sowing in young minds immortal thoughts they lived,  
Taught the great Truth to which man's race must rise . . .*

(S34: 382-83)

*To lead a child on the paths of the Future, to be his "teacher", one must first understand that his psychic being carries within itself its own aspirations and intentions which he shall live tomorrow, thus enriching the already long experience he has acquired upon earth; one must understand that any teaching is but a progressive revelation of hidden faculties powerful enough to give a concrete shape to a new experience.*

*One must help the student to become, as much as possible, what he can and wants to be — for if his soul has more or less chosen his life's destiny, yet what he shall make of it is in no way determined.*

*The child is not only a mind to be trained, but a consciousness that must be helped to grow and widen itself.*

#### **IV. To Be a Teacher**

Nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature. So also all perfection of which the outer man is capable, is only a realising of the eternal perfection of the Spirit within him. We know the Divine and become the Divine, because we are That already in our secret nature. All teaching is a revealing, all becoming is an unfolding. Self-attainment is the secret; self-knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process. (S23: 54)

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The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, he is a helper and guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine. Child or man, boy or girl, there is only one sound principle of good teaching. Difference of age only serves to diminish or increase the amount of help and guidance necessary; it

does not change its nature.

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a prearranged career. To force the nature to abandon its own *dharma* is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common. Every man has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of strength and perfection in however small a sphere, which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it, use it. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.

The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be. The basis of a man's nature is almost always, in addition to his soul's past, his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country, the soil from which he draws sustenance, the air which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed. They mould him not the less powerfully because insensibly. From that then we must begin. We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life which is alien to that in which it must physically move. If anything has to be brought in from outside, it must be offered, not forced on the mind. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development. [. . .] (S1: 384-85)

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A very remarkable feature of modern training which has been subjected in India to a *reductio ad absurdum* is the practice of teaching by snippets. A subject is taught a little at a time, in conjunction with a host of others, with the result that what might be well learnt in a single year is badly learned in seven and the boy goes out ill-equipped, served with imperfect parcels of knowledge, master of none of the great departments of human knowledge. [. . .]

The old system was to teach one or two subjects well and thoroughly and then proceed to others, and certainly it was a more rational system than the modern. If it did not impart so much varied information, it built up a deeper, nobler and more real culture. Much of the shallowness, discursive lightness and fickle mutability of the average modern mind is due to the vicious principle of teaching by snippets. [. . .]

In defence of the modern system it is alleged that the attention of children is



easily tired and cannot be subjected to the strain of long application to a single subject. The frequent change of subject gives rest to the mind. The question naturally arises, are the children of modern times then so different from the ancients, and, if so, have we not made them so by discouraging prolonged concentration? [. . .] We make his lessons supremely uninteresting and repellent to the child, a harsh compulsion the basis of teaching and then complain of his restless inattention! The substitution of a natural self-education by the child for the present unnatural system will remove this objection of inability. A child, like a man, if he is interested, much prefers to get to the end of his subject rather than leave it unfinished. To lead him on step by step, interesting and absorbing him in each as it comes, until he has mastered his subject is the true art of teaching.

The first attention of the teacher must be given to the medium and the instruments, and, until these are perfected, to multiply subjects of regular instruction is to waste time and energy. [. . .]

The mother-tongue is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium. Almost every child has an imagination, an instinct for words, a dramatic faculty, a wealth of idea and fancy. These should be interested in the literature and history of the nation. Instead of stupid and dry spelling and reading books, looked on as a dreary and ungrateful task, he should be introduced by rapidly progressive stages to the most interesting parts of his own literature and the life around him and behind him, and they should be put before him in such a way as to attract and appeal to the qualities of which I have spoken. All other study at this period should be devoted to the perfection of the mental functions and the moral character. A foundation should be laid at this time for the study of history, science, philosophy, art, but not in an obtrusive and formal manner. Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him and through them let him master without knowing it the living and human parts of his nation's history. Every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to these qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiry. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the groundwork of the faculty of the artist.

It is by allowing Nature to work that we get the benefit of the gifts she has bestowed on us. Humanity in its education of children has chosen to thwart and hamper her processes and, by so doing, has done much to thwart and hamper the rapidity of its own forward march. Happily, saner ideas are now beginning to prevail. But the way has not yet been found. The past hangs about our necks with all its prejudices and errors and will not leave us; it enters into our most radical attempts to

return to the guidance of the all-wise Mother. We must have the courage to take up clearer knowledge and apply it fearlessly in the interests of posterity. Teaching by snippets must be relegated to the lumber-room of dead sorrows. The first work is to interest the child in life, work and knowledge, to develop his instruments of knowledge with the utmost thoroughness, to give him mastery of the medium he must use. Afterwards, the rapidity with which he will learn will make up for any delay in taking up regular studies, and it will be found that, where now he learns a few things badly, then he will learn many things thoroughly well. (S1: 393-96)

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The teacher should not be a book that is read aloud, the same for everyone, no matter what his nature and character. The first duty of the teacher is to help the student to know himself and to discover what he is capable of doing.

For that one must observe his games, the activities to which he is drawn naturally and spontaneously and also what he likes to learn, whether his intelligence is awake, the stories he enjoys, the activities which interest him, the human achievements which attract him.

The teacher must find out the category to which each of the children in his care belongs. And if after careful observation he discovers two or three exceptional children who are eager to learn and who love progress, he should help them to make use of their energies for this purpose by giving them the freedom of choice that encourages individual growth.

The old method of the seated class to which the teacher gives the same lesson for all, is certainly economical and easy, but also very ineffective, and so time is wasted for everybody. (M12: 367)

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What you should do is to teach the children to take interest in what they are doing — that is not the same thing as interesting the students! You must arouse in them the desire for knowledge, for progress. One can take an interest in anything — in sweeping a room, for example — if one does it with concentration, in order to gain an experience, to make a progress, to become more conscious. [. . .]

Most teachers want to have *good students*: students who are studious and attentive, who understand and know many things, who can answer well — good students. This spoils everything. The students begin to consult books, to study, to learn. Then they rely only on books, on what others say or write, and they lose contact with the superconscient part which receives knowledge by intuition. This contact often exists in a small child but it is lost in the course of his education.

For the students to be able to progress in the right direction, it is obvious that

the teachers should have understood this and changed their old way of seeing and teaching. Without that, my work is at a standstill. (M12: 170)

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Children have everything to learn. This should be their main preoccupation in order to prepare themselves for a useful and productive life.

At the same time, as they grow up, they must discover in themselves the thing or things which interest them most and which they are capable of doing well. There are latent faculties to be developed. There are also faculties to be discovered.

Children must be taught to like to overcome difficulties, and also that this gives a special value to life; when one knows how to do it, it destroys boredom for ever and gives an altogether new interest to life.

We are on earth to progress and we have everything to learn. (M12: 366)

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[. . .] In assessing the possibilities of a child, ordinary moral notions are not of much use. Natures that are rebellious, undisciplined, obstinate, often conceal qualities that no one has known how to use. Indolent natures may also have a great potential for calm and patience.

It is a whole world to discover and easy solutions are not much use. The teacher must be even more hard-working than the student in order to learn how to discern and make the best possible use of different characters. (M12: 373)

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The first thing is to learn how to know by identity. That is indispensable when one has the responsibility for others. To learn how to guide other people, the first indispensable step is to know how to enter into their minds so as to know them — not to project one's thought, imagine what they are, but go out of oneself and enter into them, to know what is happening there. Then, in this way, one knows them because one is them. When one knows only oneself in others, that means one knows nothing. One may be completely mistaken. One imagines it is like this or that — one judges by appearances or else through mental preferences, preconceived ideas; that is to say, one knows nothing. But there is one condition in which one doesn't even need to know, to try to know what somebody is like: one can't do otherwise but feel what he is, for he is a projection of oneself. And unless one knows how to do that, one can never do what is necessary for people — unless one feels as they feel, thinks as they think, unless one is able to enter into them as though one were they themselves. That is the only way. If you try to know with a small active mind,

you will never know anything — nor by looking at people and telling yourself: “Why, he does this in this way and that way, so he must be like that.” That is impossible.

So, the first task of those who have a responsibility — for instance, those who are in charge of educating other children, taking care of others, from rulers to teachers and monitors — their first task is to learn how to identify themselves with the others, to feel as they do. Then one knows what one should do. One keeps one’s inner light, keeps one’s consciousness where it ought to be, very high above, in the light, and at the same time gets identified, and so one feels what they are, what their reactions are, what their thoughts, and one holds that before the light one has: one succeeds in thinking out perfectly well what should be done for them. You will tell each one what he needs to hear, you will act with each one as is necessary to make him understand. And that is why it is a wonderful grace to have the responsibility for a certain number of people, for that obliges you to make the most essential progress. And I hasten to tell you that ninety-nine times out of a hundred, people don’t make it. But that is exactly why things are in such a bad way. [. . .]

(M5: 298-99)

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*For young students to learn about themselves and express the truth of their inmost self, they have to be given freedom — a freedom in which they can make their own choices, find their own way, breathe in the joy of a progressive self-flowering.*

*Freedom — increasing progressively according to the child’s capacity — is necessary for the refinement of his faculties. Freedom is also necessary for latent capacities to reveal themselves.*

*A free approach in education is absolutely essential, for thus alone can the child’s inner being come to influence and determine his conscious awakening. To this approach, the Mother gave the name “free progress”. “Free progress” she said, “is a progress guided by the soul and not subjected to habits, conventions and preconceived ideas.”*

I said we should give freedom of choice to exceptional children because for them it is absolutely indispensable if we truly want to help them to develop fully.

Of course this freedom of choice can be given to all the children, and after all it is a good way to find their true nature; but most of them will prove to be lazy and not very interested in studies. But, on the other hand, they may be skilful with their hands and be willing to learn to make things. This too should be encouraged. In this way the children will find their true place in society, and will be prepared to fulfil it when they grow up.

Everyone should be taught the joy of doing well whatever he does, whether it is intellectual, artistic or manual work, and above all, the dignity of all work, whatever it may be, when it is done with care and skill. (M12: 368)

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I think it was just today or perhaps yesterday, I was pleading for the right of everyone to remain in ignorance if it pleases him — I am not speaking of ignorance from the spiritual point of view, the world of Ignorance in which we live, I am not speaking of that. I am speaking of ignorance according to the classical ideas of education. Well, I say that if there are people who don't want to learn and don't like to learn, they have the right not to learn.

The only thing it is our duty to tell them is this, "Now, you are of an age when your brain is in course of preparation. It is being formed. Each new thing you study makes one more little convolution in your brain. The more you study, the more you think, the more you reflect, the more you work, the more complex and complete does your brain become in its tiny convolutions. And as you are young, it is best done at this time. That is why it is common human practice to choose youth as the period of learning, for it is infinitely easier." And it is obvious that until the child becomes at least a little conscious of itself, it must be subjected to a certain rule, for it has not yet the capacity of choosing for itself.

That age is very variable; it depends on people, depends on each individual. But still, it is understood that in the seven-year period between the age of seven and fourteen, one begins to reach the age of reason. If one is helped, one can become a reasoning being between seven and fourteen.

Before seven there are geniuses — there are always geniuses, everywhere — but as a general rule the child is not conscious of itself and doesn't know why or how to do things. That is the time to cultivate its attention, teach it to concentrate on what it does, give it a small basis sufficient for it not to be entirely like a little animal, but to belong to the human race through an elementary intellectual development.

After that, there is a period of seven years during which it must be taught to choose — to choose what it wants to be. If it chooses to have a rich, complex, well-developed brain, powerful in its functioning, well, it must be taught to work; for it is by work, by reflection, study, analysis and so on that the brain is formed. At fourteen you are ready — or ought to be ready — to know what you want to be.

And so I say: if at about that age some children declare categorically, "Intellectual growth does not interest me at all, I don't want to learn, I want to remain ignorant in the ordinary way of ignorance", I don't see by what right one could impose studies on them nor why it should be necessary to standardise them.

There are those who are at the bottom and others who are at another level. There are people who may have very remarkable capacities and yet have no taste

for intellectual growth. One may warn them that if they don't work, don't study, when they are grown up, they will perhaps feel embarrassed in front of others. But if that does not matter to them and they want to live a non-intellectual life, I believe one has no right to compel them. That is my constant quarrel with the teachers of the school! They come and tell me: "If they don't work, when they are grown up they will be stupid and ignorant." I say: "But if it pleases them to be stupid and ignorant, what right have you to interfere?"

One can't make knowledge and intelligence compulsory. That's all.

Now, if you believe that by abstaining from all effort and all study, you will become geniuses, and supramental geniuses at that, don't have any illusions, it won't happen to you. For even if you touch a higher light, through an inner aspiration or by a divine grace, you will have nothing in there, in your brain, to be able to express it. So it will remain quite nebulous and won't in any way change your outer life. But if it pleases you to be like this, nobody has the right to compel you to be otherwise. You must wait till you are sufficiently conscious to be able to choose. [. . .]

Here's something then which already changes your outlook on education completely.

Essentially, the *only thing* you should do assiduously is to teach them to know themselves and choose their own destiny, the path they will follow; to teach them to look at themselves, understand themselves *and* to will what they want to be. That is infinitely more important than teaching them what happened on earth in former times, or even how the earth is built, or even . . . indeed, all sorts of things which are quite a necessary grounding if you want to live the ordinary life in the world, for if you don't know them, anyone will immediately put you down intellectually: "Oh, he is an idiot, he knows nothing."

But still, at any age, if you are studious and have the will to do it, you can also take up books and work; you don't need to go to school for that. There are enough books in the world to teach you things. There are even many more books than necessary. [. . .]

But what is very important is to know what you want. And for this a minimum of freedom is necessary. You must not be under a compulsion or an obligation. You must be able to do things whole-heartedly. If you are lazy, well, you will know what it means to be lazy. . . . You know, in life idlers are obliged to work ten times more than others, for what they do they do badly, so they are obliged to do it again. But these are things one must learn by experience. They can't be instilled into you.

(M8: 179-81)

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[. . .] it is very difficult to know how to organise one's own freedom oneself. Still, if you were to succeed in doing that, in giving yourself your own discipline — and for higher reasons, not in order to pass exams, to make a career, please your teachers, win many prizes, or all the ordinary reasons children have: in order not to be scolded, not to be punished, for all that; we leave out all those reasons — if you manage to impose a discipline upon yourself — each one his own, there is no need to follow someone else's — a discipline simply because you want to progress and draw the best out of yourself, then . . . Oh! you will be far superior to those who follow the ordinary school disciplines. That is what I wanted to try. Mind you, I don't say I have failed; I still have great hope that you will know how to profit by this unique opportunity. But all the same, there is something you must find out; it is the *necessity* of an inner discipline. Without discipline you won't be able to get anywhere, without discipline you can't even live the normal life of a normal man. But instead of having the conventional discipline of ordinary societies or ordinary institutions, I would have liked and I still want you to have the discipline you set yourselves, for the love of perfection, your own perfection, the perfection of your being.

[. . .] And because I have a very marked aversion for conventional disciplines, social and others, it does not mean that you must abstain from all discipline. I would like everyone to find his own, in the sincerity of his inner aspiration and the will to realise himself.

And so, the aim of all those who know, whether they are teachers, instructors or any others, the very purpose of those who know, is to inform you, to help you. When you are in a situation which seems difficult to you, you put your problem and, from their personal experience, they can tell you, "No, it is like this or it is like that, and you must do this, you must try that." So, instead of forcing you to absorb theories, principles and so-called laws, and a more or less abstract knowledge, they would be there to give you information about things, from the most material to the most spiritual, each one within his own province and according to his capacity.

[. . .] That is the usefulness, the *true* usefulness of teachers and instructors. They have learnt more or less by practice or through a special study, and they can teach you those things it is indispensable to know. That makes you save time, a lot of time. But that is their only usefulness: to be able to answer questions. And, in fact, you should have a brain which is lively enough to ask questions.

(M8: 184-86)

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*Isn't this immense freedom we are given dangerous for those who are not yet awake, who are still unconscious? How can we account for this good fortune we have been given?*

Danger and risk form part of all forward movement. Without them, nothing would ever move; besides, they are indispensable in forming the character of those who want to progress. (M12: 154)

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According to what I see and know, as a general rule, children over 14 should be allowed their independence and should be given advice only if and when they ask for it.

They should know that they are responsible for managing their own existence.  
(M12: 152)

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[. . .] if the individual can progress at his maximum the group will necessarily benefit by it. If the individual is submitted to the possibility and capacity of the group, he loses his chance of total progress. (M12: 180)

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Usually, if several individuals are brought together, the collective quality of the group is much lower than the individual value of each person taken separately, but with a sufficiently conscious and coordinated organisation, it would be possible, on the contrary, to *multiply* the power of individual action. (M9: 370)

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*. . . the system of education we follow still remains, as Sri Aurobindo says, “a brilliant poverty of the human intellect”.*

You are speaking of the education which *you* give to your students, is that it? But it is high time it changed!

People have a lamentable habit of copying what has been done before and what is done by others. Long ago I told you this. That argument: “This must be done, because this is what is done everywhere!” I reply, “That is why perhaps it should not be done! For if all others do it, what is the use of doing it here also?”

*But without your intervention, how can we do anything?*

But why do you ask me that? You should first change your system of education in accordance with the principles of the Supermind. At least you should try. You must



not ask, you must do it. If you always move in the same rut, you can continue indefinitely in that rut. You must try to get out of it. (M8: 178-79)

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*The guiding principles of the new ideal of education, said the Mother, are Truth, Harmony and Liberty.*

*Three words, three concepts — but we must experience them! And we must learn to live ever more integrally in the global awareness they imply, an awareness in which all contraries meet and become one, and something more . . .*

[. . .] our faculties of perception are quite linear and very one-sided; so when we want to understand, we are immediately assailed by countless things which are almost inconsistent with each other and intermix in such an intricate way that one can no longer make out the lines and follow things — one suddenly enters a whirlwind.

But this is because . . . For instance, most men think one thought after another, even as they have to say one word after another — they can't say more than one word at the same time, you know, or else they stammer. Well, most people think like that, they think one thought after another, and so their whole consciousness has a linear movement. But one begins to perceive things only when one can see spherically, globally, think spherically, that is, have innumerable thoughts and perceptions simultaneously.

[. . .] So, when one begins to see like this — to see, to discern, to feel, to think, to will like this — one draws near the Truth. But so long as one sees as one speaks, oh, what a lamentable poverty! (M8: 56)

\*

Intellectually, the Truth is the point where all the opposites meet and join to make a unity.

Practically, the Truth is the surrender of the ego, to make possible the birth and manifestation of the Divine. (M14: 199)

\*

For all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting

out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unilluminated compromise. For essentially, all Nature seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. The greater the apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilised, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavour. (S21: 4-5)

\*

Beyond all preferences and limitations, there is a ground of mutual understanding where all can meet and find their harmony: it is the aspiration for a divine consciousness. (M15: 187)

\*

The freedom I speak of is the freedom to follow the will of the soul, not all the whims of the mind and vital.

The freedom I speak of is an austere truth which strives to surmount all the weaknesses and desires of the lower, ignorant being.

The freedom I speak of is the freedom to consecrate oneself wholly and without reserve to one's highest, noblest, divinest aspiration.

Who among you sincerely follows this path? It is easy to judge, but more difficult to understand, and far more difficult still to realise. (M16: 274)

\*

Each man has to grow into the Divine Reality within himself through his own individual being, therefore is a certain growing measure of freedom a necessity of the being as it develops and perfect freedom the sign and the condition of the perfect life. But also, the Divine whom he thus sees in himself, he sees equally in all others and as the same Spirit in all. Therefore too is a growing inner unity with others a necessity of his being and perfect unity the sign and condition of the perfect life.

(S25: 259)

\*

*All studies — sciences or mathematics, philosophy, history or art — bring us nearer to the true Knowledge of the Truth concealed behind appearances.*

*They gradually give us a new perception of the “why” of things. They lead us to the discovery of the Principle of all principles, the Law of all laws.*

Science, art, philosophy, ethics, psychology, the knowledge of man and his past, action itself are means by which we arrive at the knowledge of the workings of God through Nature and through life. At first it is the workings of life and forms of Nature which occupy us, but as we go deeper and deeper and get a completer view and experience, each of these lines brings us face to face with God. Science at its limits, even physical Science, is compelled to perceive in the end the infinite, the universal, the spirit, the divine intelligence and will in the material universe. Still more easily must this be the end with the psychic sciences which deal with the operations of higher and subtler planes and powers of our being and come into contact with the beings and the phenomena of the worlds behind which are unseen, not sensible by our physical organs, but ascertainable by the subtle mind and senses. Art leads to the same end; the aesthetic human being intensely preoccupied with Nature through aesthetic emotion must in the end arrive at spiritual emotion and perceive not only the infinite life, but the infinite presence within her; preoccupied with beauty in the life of man he must in the end come to see the divine, the universal, the spiritual in humanity. Philosophy dealing with the principles of things must come to perceive the Principle of all these principles and investigate its nature, attributes and essential workings. So ethics must eventually perceive that the law of good which it seeks is the law of God and depends on the being and nature of the Master of the law. Psychology leads from the study of mind and the soul in living beings to the perception of the one soul and one mind in all things and beings. The history and study of man like the history and study of Nature lead towards the perception of the eternal and universal Power and Being whose thought and will work out through the cosmic and human evolution. Action itself forces us into contact with the divine Power which works through, uses, overrules our actions. The intellect begins to perceive and understand, the emotions to feel and desire and revere, the will to turn itself to the service of the Divine without whom Nature and man cannot exist or move and by conscious knowledge of whom alone we can arrive at our highest possibilities. (S23: 513-14)

*(To be continued)*

*(A New Education for a New Consciousness,*  
published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 1992)

## “BIRD-REVERIES” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

Another lyric.

Does the inspiration seem rather frail — the expression more of fancy than true insight?

### BIRD-REVERIES

Voices of large-eyed day  
Have fallen now:  
The birds in a huddle of sleep  
Their small heads bow.

~~worship quiet — hangs~~  
A worshipping quiet broods — <sup>1</sup>  
Until the moon  
Presses a silver call  
Through lids of swoon.

Kindling with nameless joy,  
Answers each throat:  
From neither night nor day  
The strange cries float —

As if bird-reveries climbed		
Unearthly skies,	<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup>	
Their wings the <del>moon-white</del>	moonlight	tremble
		flicker
		quiver
		flutter
Of tranced eyes.		} <sup>3</sup>

[*Amal's questions:*]

1. Please cancel the rejected version.
2. Does “a” mislead by a numerical suggestion?
3. If “moonlight” is chosen, should there be a hyphen between it and the next word

to avoid grammatical ambiguity? What about “moonlit”? Too many “li-” sounds in the stanza? The word is too common, besides — isn’t it?

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

1. [*Sri Aurobindo crossed out “worship quiet hangs”*]
3. [*Sri Aurobindo crossed out “moon-white”, “tremble”, “quiver”, “flutter”*]

It is a very beautiful and delicate fancy in any case. The last stanza is admirable, but there is a subtle suggestive beauty throughout.

31 May 1937

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[Version from *The Secret Splendour — Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran)*, 1993 edition, p. 515:]

### BIRD-REVERIES

Voices of large-eyed day  
Have fallen now:  
The birds in a huddle of sleep  
Their small heads bow.

A worshipping quiet broods —  
Until the moon  
Presses a silver call  
Through lids of swoon.

Kindling with nameless joy  
Answers each throat:  
From neither night nor day  
The strange cries float —

As if bird-reveries climbed  
Unearthly skies,  
Their wings a moonlight flicker  
Of tranceful eyes.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

## WITHIN, THERE IS A LIGHT

Within, there is a dazzling light  
Where, even with my eyes shut  
I behold and adore that which my eye,  
Open without, pines to perceive.

Within there is a dazzling light  
Where we plunge, and  
As we go deeper deeper down  
We find we are in bliss afloat  
Breathing brilliance,  
The way the divers gather their fill of pearls.  
And then, one by one open all the doors  
Bearing not even a hint to latch or lock.

Within there is a dazzling light.  
We dissolve in the sun, we get lost in the shell,  
We are in our own selves so rapt  
That we cherish the prick we give ourselves,  
Feeling as the flower feels perhaps  
Greeting the first tender tingle of its own fragrance.  
This unique moment of splendour lived,  
Granted once to me, I treasure for ever.

MADHAV RAMANUJ

*(Translated by Dhanavanti from the original Gujarati)*

## NOLINI-DA'S STYLE

### Background Music

For about twenty years, I was a member of Nolini-da's Sunday morning French class. I used to call it Nolini-da class because I went there more to study Nolini-da than to learn French. One week he would lead us in translating *Savitri* into French, the next week he would read out his latest essay in English. So it went, week after week, year after year.

One Sunday, I arrived fifteen minutes early and took a seat on the floor towards the back. A dozen people were already there, then more came in. About ten minutes to nine, the quiet air suddenly exploded with sound. Loudspeakers from the Foyer du Soldat — the French veterans' club next door — started blaring out a medley of raucous, high-pitched Tamil film songs. It was quite deafening. Somewhat in shock, we looked at one another with bewildered faces. Nolini-da was due to arrive soon and this music would not do. But no one got up to go next door to ask the veterans to lower the volume. Like sheep we waited meekly for our shepherd, wondering what he would do.

Promptly at nine Nolini-da shuffled up the steps with a sweet little smile on his face, surrounded by a solid wall of sound. Unfazed, he stepped onto the dais, sat down cross-legged before a little podium and quietly arranged his papers. Then he took his reading glasses out of their case and put them on. At last he looked up and smiled. Breathlessly we waited as his eyes wandered here and there, drinking in the scene. At last his lips parted and he said, "Ah, background music!" We all broke out laughing.

Nolini-da then proceeded, as usual, to read out his latest essay slowly and steadily in an even voice, moderate in volume. I was unable to hear him at first, but by focussing on his face I could create a kind of tunnel of concentration allowing me to catch his words by closing out the invading sound. For forty minutes Nolini-da read to us, for forty minutes I listened intently, and that was that. The master had done it his way, barely, but he had done it.

### Inconsistencies

In the late 1970s I was editing the Mother's conversations of 1929 for inclusion in her Collected Works. Nolini-da had already transferred to the Archives his collection of manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Among them we had found his own handwritten reports of the fifteen 1929 conversations. These reports had been meticulously revised by Sri Aurobindo, with hundreds of alterations large and small,

improving the sense and style; a few new sentences had been added as well. In editing the talks, I followed the revised manuscript and sent the text to the Press for printing.

Our final proof-readers for the book were Sutapa and Amal, both of them superb at the work. And both felt strongly that we should correct the inconsistencies of capitalisation in the text of the talks. Nolini-da had treated the matter of capitalisation casually. Take, for instance, the words 'Divine Will'. In any given place Nolini-da might write 'Divine Will', 'Divine will', 'divine Will' or 'divine will'! There were dozens of these inconsistencies, but Sri Aurobindo had rarely revised them. I was reluctant to introduce dozens of little editorial changes by adopting a rigid policy for capitalising the 'Divine' compounds, especially since Sri Aurobindo had revised the text with care.

But Amal and Sutapa were adamant that the inconsistencies should be eliminated. As a result, one morning Jayantilal took me to the Ashram to settle the matter with Nolini-da. We found him in his front room, comfortably ensconced in a chair with his feet up, buried in the Rig-Veda. As he peered at the book, probing its mysteries, Jayantilal and I stood by docilely, unwilling to disturb his concentration. After two or three minutes Nolini-da raised his head and looked at us. By then — such is the power of his room — I was tranquil, drenched in the tangible Presence there, and whatever happened was okay with me — or so I thought.

Jayantilal and I explained the problem to him, showing examples from the manuscripts, then asked him what to do. Nolini-da sat back at ease and gazed straight ahead. Ten seconds, twenty seconds, thirty — the pressure built up. Unable to bear it any longer, I blurted out, "Nolini-da, how can we make so many changes? Sri Aurobindo himself has seen this text and revised it meticulously!"

Nolini-da smiled, then returned to his musing. More silence, more pressure, but we waited. At last he looked up with a big smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. "Let us leave the text as it is!" he exclaimed. "The readers will not understand — their minds will be baffled!"

We all broke out laughing, delighted by this decisive and spirited reply. Jayantilal and I took our leave, completely satisfied.

BOB ZWICKER



## POEMS FROM AUROVILLE

### IN THE SILENCE OF A MOONTIDE

In the silence of a moontide  
    That streaks the midnight sea  
There dwells a deep fulfilment  
    That calls alluringly;  
With whispers lent unspoken  
    To touch the witness Soul,  
A fullness deep unbroken  
    That hints a Mystic whole.  
And the waves they break in rhythm  
    Upon the sandy shore,  
Each one at last effacing  
    The one that went before.  
And the heart it knows one answer  
    To all that is no more.  
In the silence of that moontide  
    The waves break to adore.

### AUTUMN TWILIGHT

A season now draws to its end  
The unforeseen approaches,  
A guardian goddess comes to lend  
What body to our voices?  
The autumn now across the sky  
Is stained a blood-deep red,  
The wind it whispers in the trees  
The leaves fall to earth's bed.  
The twilight whispers in the wind  
A mood that seems to say,  
That all our loves have come to weep,  
But none have come to stay.  
And all our lives at last have come  
And gathered to her breast,

All lives at last have come  
At last have come to rest.

ROGER HARRIS

**BANYAN TREE AMMA<sup>1</sup>**

Banyan tree *Amma* at the open door  
fixes me with scaly eye  
demanding her weekly due.  
What use are you old village lady  
but to call down a curse?  
Why do we give you food?

What is it anyway, *Amma*,  
that brings us together?  
You squatting on the doorstep,  
nailed there never to rise,  
and I in my wicker chair  
trapped by your baleful eyes.

Was it like this in the early days  
when you lived alone by the banyan tree?  
You had a power, they said, and strange sons;  
you were the owl-eyed guardian  
of the temple of the city of dawn.  
Then your eldest boy committed suicide.

Now you carry those memories  
with a body bent in pain  
groaning outside my door for rupees.  
I listen to your creaky dirge,  
staring at your old boniness,  
wondering at this bizarre siege.

But then my own grandmother  
was worse than you, *Amma*.  
She held us so fiercely  
in her matriarchal debt,

1. *Amma* means mother in Tamil and is also a form of address for any woman.

harping, wrangling, complaining all day —  
we silenced her with a TV set.

We are the Auroville neo-colonials,  
the latest wistful white folks  
to sip tea under the tropical sun  
and think that we are different  
from the chaps who ruled Rangoon,  
until you, old *Amma* come along.

Then from the club veranda  
I seem to faintly hear  
the sly boasts of British ghosts  
sniggering over their gin and beer  
about the way to handle the natives  
when they come a bit too near,

when like a sudden squall  
comes the carrier of skulls,  
comes Kali the glutton of worlds  
calling out of old *Amma*  
for some kind of fit response  
before her terrible, sacred face.

I stare stupidly at the fiery eyes,  
for I do not know the words  
to speak to that fatal presence  
smouldering under her wrinkled skin.  
I close my book, lose the place,  
And rise up to fetch her rice.

GORDON KORSTANGE

### IN THE CITY OF LOST . . .

City of Lost, streets of bodies  
Rain of acids, wind of hopes,  
Look at me, give me a glance!  
I'm child of narrow filthy lane,  
Don't see my torn cloths, cracked skin and barefoot  
Don't measure with class, I'm just soul.

Your small touch can shape me — ignore and destroy me.  
 I'm future of lost.  
 Stop and give me a glance, chasers of light!

Look at me . . . I'm old lady, whom you see daily  
 In corner of street, selling tea.  
 This wrinkle not sign of age, condition not poverty  
 It's blindness and greed.  
 I used to be past hoping good future.  
 Your touch still can shape me — ignore and destroy me,  
 O chasers of light!  
 Every small drop of rain brought dancing inside me,  
 I followed a breeze and became like her,  
 Now plastic around me, I'm dying daily.  
 Look at me — your touch still can shape me,  
 Ignore and destroy me, O chasers of light!

Give me a glance in the streets of bodies  
 In the City of Lost, O chasers of Light. . . .

VIVEK

### AND THINK ONLY OF THIS

Someday, someday  
 I will take my eldest son,  
 before he has begun to  
 lisp worn-out nursery rhymes  
 or think his way through numbers,  
 by his pudgy little hand,

And together, we will walk back  
 to the farthest corner  
 of the vegetable-garden patch,

And there, as we kneel  
 amongst rows of rooted potatoes,  
 I will scoop out  
 and pour a moist handful of soil  
 into his tiny cupped palms,

Rejoicing  
 in the clutched dampness of freshly-broken earth  
 and the truth of things that cannot be told.

BINDU

### OBSERVATIONS IN AUROVILLE

Seven babblers move through the scrub  
 Pecking the dead leaves with modest attention,  
 Butterflies like brilliant abstract miniatures  
 Float through the silent tree-space,  
 The lizard, the drongo, the mongoose  
 And the small chipmunk  
 That runs with intermittent  
 But graceful sure-footedness  
 Among all these innumerable perfections  
 Of foliage and flower, fruit and seed-pod —  
 All, all are your bodies of temporal delight.  
 And I? Perhaps the eighth babbler,  
 Watching you, turning over some words.

### THE MEETING PLACE

This what time has led to —  
 A courtyard of sunflowers, zinnias,  
 And a queue of silent people  
 Moving past a petal-covered tomb.  
 Dawns, noons, sunsets,  
 Days, months, lives.

This is what time has led to —  
 A path that goes to a staircase  
 And men and women of different countries  
 Leaving their sandals at its foot.  
 Dawns, noons, sunsets,  
 Days, months, lives.

This is what time has led to —  
 A gallery behind mahogany shutters,

A picture of a man's head, life size.  
 They pass it and mark its gaze.  
 Dawns, noons, sunsets,  
 Days, months, lives.

This is what time has led to —  
 A chair set before a gold-patterned cloth  
 And a still, frail woman  
 Who smiles and has the eyes of God.  
 Dawns, noons, sunsets,  
 Days, months, lives.

This is what time has led to —  
 See each figure before her  
 Is not what he thought, felt or looked like  
 But an inner immortal come through  
 Dawns, noons, sunsets,  
 Days, months, lives.

### THE YOGI

Speleologists and mountaineers  
 Overcome their secret fears,  
 Match their muscles against the rocks  
 Test their nerves and risk their necks.  
 Some aspire and some descend;  
 Up or down they seek their end  
 Adventuring with all their will.  
 How brave a man, though, who sits still  
 Wholly intent on sounding, for his part,  
 The cavernous deep system of the human heart.

### HERACLITUS AND MATRIMANDIR

The silence is not the same silence twice  
 The one who enters is not the same person twice  
 Nor the one who leaves.  
 Perhaps there will be no miracle  
 Perhaps no discovery or awakening,

Only the biggest crystal ball  
In a sun-illuminated chamber  
With twelve tall pillars  
And the pressure of a white stillness.

DICK BATSTONE

*(50 Poems from Auroville, edited by Vikas Vickers, Auroville, 2018)*



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