

THE CALL BEYOND

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*Heaven's call is rare, rarer the heart that heeds;
The doors of light are sealed to common mind,
And earth's needs nail to earth the human mass,
Only in an uplifting hour of stress
Men answer to the touch of greater things:
Or, raised by some strong hand to breathe heaven-air...*

*-Sri Aurobindo
(Savitri, Book 11, Canto 1, p. 689)*



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*Cover picture: A painting by an Italian artist, Aghni, inspired by
Sri Aurobindo's 'Savitri', Book 1, Canto 2*

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Three Dangerous Distortions – I

... everywhere is the impress of the three great formulas, the chain of Karma, escape from the wheel of rebirth, Maya.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 416)

The Indian psyche is dominated by a life-negating interpretation of three great Vedantic ideas: 'karma, moksha and maya'. Sri Aurobindo laments this because of the degeneration of worldly life that such interpretation has led to. This month, we take up the first of these ideas, Karma.

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players”, wrote Shakespeare. With millions of actors participating for millions of years, the complexity of the play going on in the world is indeed beyond human imagination, leave alone understanding. However, seers and mystics down the ages have been able to give us a glimpse of what the play is about, and what the rules of the game are. **For each individual alive today, Act I, Scene I began long ago, and the concluding scene will be ‘lived happily ever after’. Between the beginning and the end, there may be thousands of lives. The play in each life begins with a pre-conceived plot, but there is no pre-determined script.** How the play proceeds is at least partly in our hands. The part that is in our hands is known as karma. Karma consists of not just our actions but also our thoughts and words. Each soul accumulates a lot of positive as well as negative karma over thousands of lives. Every time the soul is enshrined in a body-mind complex on earth, it carries a fraction of the accumulated karma for being exhausted during this life. Exhausting the karma means engaging with the type of thoughts, words and actions that

would let the soul evolve in the right direction. That is not exactly and entirely the same as neutralizing bad deeds of the past lives in the present life, either by good deeds or by suffering. What is nearer the truth is somewhat as follows. There are two extremes in the evolutionary journey of the human soul – ‘not at all evolved’, and ‘fully evolved’. We are generally born somewhere between these two ends of a very broad spectrum. The purpose of human life on earth is to take a few steps towards the ‘fully evolved’ end. Positive karma enables us to take those few steps in the right direction. Each step in the right direction exhausts part of the baggage of karma that we brought with us when we were born. Whether we are able to exhaust the entire baggage depends on how many steps we take in the right direction. We can, however, do better than merely exhausting the baggage of the past. We can, through positive karma, go beyond the promise with which we started on this life. A few rare individuals are even able to reach the ‘fully evolved’ end of the spectrum by the end of the present life. These are individuals who have perhaps done a lot of homework in their previous lives, and need only a few finishing touches in this life.

In contrast with positive karma, negative karma takes us a few steps towards the ‘not at all evolved’ end of the spectrum. Thus there is a possibility of finishing at a level lower than the one at which we are born. That is a terrible waste of the opportunity we have as human beings on earth. Where we are at the end of life is the net result of our positive and negative karma. The soul carries the essence of the experiences of this life to its resting abode, and returns to earth again for further evolution. When returning to earth, the embodied soul gets certain circumstances, such as the country, family, education, etc., as well as the unique blessings, such as physical strength,

intelligence, talent for music, etc. It is believed that the circumstances and blessings a person gets are those that are best suited for further evolution of his or her soul.

It is quite common to talk in terms of good karma leading to rewards, and bad karma leading to punishment, without going into the controversial idea of rebirth. However, unless we go into rebirth, the simple relationship between karma and its consequences in this life defies many common observations. **As Sri Aurobindo has said, "... the meaning and necessity of what happens in a particular life cannot be understood except in the light of the whole course of many lives"**. For example, the middle chapter of a long novel may make no sense if we do not know the previous and the following chapters. Let us see how adding the complexity of rebirth helps explain many apparent discrepancies. Why does an infant die? It could not have committed any sins to deserve the 'punishment'. One explanation for such an event is that the infant embodied a highly evolved soul that did not have to suffer for long in this world. The brief appearance that it makes in the world is to help the spiritual growth of the parents. The fact is that many parents who 'suffer' such a tragedy unwittingly use the 'opportunity' provided by the departure of the 'guest', and evolve more through this single event than in several decades prior to it. Why do bad things happen to good people? One explanation is that the 'bad things' are their opportunities for spiritual growth. We do not always get what we want, but we get what we need for spiritual growth. Why do good things happen to bad people? Good things can also be opportunities for spiritual growth. Wealth, success and fame lead to spiritual growth if used for helping others. But those who do not use their good fortune in this way may not necessarily face failures in the world.

This apparent paradox is possibly because their soul has given up on them in this life, and lets them work towards their downfall through excess of worldly success. In such cases, worldly success gets coupled with spiritual failure. Excess of worldly success, however, is not synonymous with a peaceful life. In spite of the worldly success such people enjoy, generally they lose peace of mind on one hand, and fall in consciousness on the other. By leaving the world at a level of consciousness lower than they were born with, they waste the precious opportunity they had in this life. In the next life, they have to start at the lower level at which they left the world in this life. Hence, **the consequences of the karmas in this life on earth are three fold. First, getting or losing peace of mind in this life; second, the conditions under which a person's soul dwells in some other world after death; and third, how and where the soul continues its journey in the next life on earth.**

Thus, the idea of karma is very logical when viewed in terms of the long series of lives that each individual soul goes through. How can such a logical and neat arrangement lead to degeneration of worldly life? That can happen if the idea of karma is not seen in its totality. A person may attribute all his suffering in this life to the karma of previous lives. Since he can do nothing about the past karmas, he simply accepts the suffering with a fatalistic attitude. He may sometimes complain and grumble, but he does nothing to improve his life because he feels helpless in changing his past karma. Fatalistic acceptance can thus lead to sloth, indolence and inaction. While it is true that suffering in this life may be due to the karma of previous lives, what one forgets is that every good karma from now onwards becomes a part of the past karmas in future. **While our past is destiny, we are contributing to**

the way the future will shape up through the choices we are making in the present. For making the choices, we have a free will. For making the right choices, we have the Inner Guide, the Psychic Being. Thus, the idea of Karma does not tell us to do nothing about difficulties, obstacles or suffering. It only offers us an explanation and some consolation for otherwise inexplicable hardships. But it also encourages us to improve our future by making our free will coincide with the Will of the Divine, as communicated to us by the Psychic Being.

The psychic being is the representative of the Divine in the human being.

The Mother ('The Great Adventure', p. 187)

Next month, we shall discuss the validity of 'Moksha', as well as its pitfalls if given a life-negating tilt.



Yoga Is Not a Religion

Ritisha Nadia James

To seek Thee constantly in all things, to want to manifest Thee ever better in every circumstance, in this attitude lies supreme peace, perfect serenity, true contentment.

The Mother ('Prayers & Meditations', p. 96)

When I chanced upon the opportunity of enrolling into a course on Integral Yoga, I was extremely elated, but soon caution threw in a wind of doubt – is this going against my religion? We have to chant mantras which is not a part of my religion; would that be ok?

Despite this dilemma, I did enroll, and through my time in this course, and with the help of my teachers and classmates, I have begun to understand what Yoga really is, and am now able to dispel this confusion for myself and for those near me.

Unfortunately, to understand the true meaning of yoga, one has to start practicing it. While Yoga is gaining popularity in the West, it is also being modified in ways acceptable to them so that they can still be religiously right. Chanting of mantras is not insisted upon, and the Sanskrit terms are replaced with their translations into local languages.

One must look closely at what they consider as religious, and then try to find its true meaning. The main conflict that other religions have with Yoga is the chanting of 'Om' and the mantras. Some non-Hindus hesitate to chant OM (including me at first), because they think that it is a Hindu word. This is wrong. It is a symbol found of the Divine, the

one God we all believe in. The mantras chanted in yoga are in Sanskrit. **Sanskrit is an ancient Indian language, and hence ancient Indian religious scriptures were written in Sanskrit. Language is only a means of communication. It has no religion. When the Sanskrit mantras are translated, one finds that they have a meaning that would be acceptable across religions.**

Sadhguru has aptly explained this in one of his blogs: “Why the yogic sciences have gotten labeled as Hindu is because this science and technology grew in this culture. And because this culture was dialectical in nature, naturally they delivered the science in a dialectical manner, involving the cultural strengths of the land, which is essentially the Hindu way of life. The word ‘Hindu’ has come from the word ‘Sindhu,’ which is a river. Because this culture grew from the banks of the river Sindhu or Indus, this culture got labeled as Hindu. Anybody who is born in the land of Indus is a Hindu. It is a geographical identity, which slowly evolved into a cultural identity.”

In fact, recent studies in quantum physics have given much importance to OM. Nikola Tesla said, “If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration.” In terms of spirituality and evolution of the universe – if at first there was nothing, the very first thing was a sound vibration, and from there everything sprang into existence and the material world was born. OM was that primal sound vibration. The very foundations of our Universe, of matter and thought, appear to lie in sound vibration. Considered to represent the primal or primordial sound of the Universe, OM connects us to and carries the Divine in vibrational form, making our prayers and mantras more effective.

According to Paramahansa Yogananda, author of the classic text 'Autobiography of a Yogi', "Om or Aum of the Vedas became the sacred word Hum of the Tibetans, Ameen of the Moslems, and Amen of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians." The syllable has been translated into many different languages, cultures, and religious traditions, but the creative and transformative power of the sound remains the same.

Some religious people also have an issue with the name of the postures. The Sanskrit names of the yoga postures are changed suitably in other languages to take care of such objections. For example, Surya Namaskar, literally salutation to the Sun, is not acceptable to some people. While honouring the sun seems quite innocuous, one of my teachers said that the practice could be called 'dwaadashaasana' ('dwaadash' in Sanskrit means twelve), because Surya Namaskar is a set of twelve postures that flow harmoniously from one into another, and give a good top to toe workout.

However, is something religious if you don't have the intention there? With reference to kneeling – is one in a position of prayer, or is that person just kneeling? Kneeling is visible; prayer during kneeling is invisible and optional.

On the other hand, for some Muslims, Christians and Jews, yoga is attractive precisely because it supplies a mystical element, which they feel is not sufficiently emphasized in their own religion.

In a BBC article, 'Does doing yoga make you a Hindu?', an Iranian yoga teacher told the BBC that her religious students sometimes report that they pray with more concentration after practicing yoga. "They say, 'when we go to Mecca, we

feel we are able to make a deeper pilgrimage because of the yoga. Our minds and our bodies move closer to our faith.', she said."

The co-founder of Yoga London, Rebecca French, says, "Something that is interesting about yoga is that whilst it is spiritual, it doesn't stipulate a specific religion. Even in the devotional forms of yoga, it says you can use any object of devotion you like, be it Ganesha, Krishna, Jesus or Allah. Even atheists can practice yoga. They can fix their attention on the 'wonder of the universe' or perhaps the complexity of the DNA helix."

Whilst there is a constant debate amongst non-Hindus on the acceptance of yoga, they tend to ignore the real essence of Yoga. In 'The Synthesis of Yoga', Sri Aurobindo says that while Hatha Yoga works towards physical perfection, Raja Yoga focuses on mental perfection. Raja yoga is based on the eight limbs of Patanjali's yoga. The first two of these limbs are Yamas (restraints) and Niyama (rules), which are essentially common to the ethical codes of all religions.

The Yamas are:

- Ahimsa (Non-violence)
- Satya (Not telling a lie)
- Asteya (Not stealing)
- Brahmacharya (Moving towards the Divine)
- Aparigraha (Not adding to one's possession)

The Niyamas are:

- Shauchha (Cleanliness)
- Santosh (Contentment)

- Tapas (Concentration of effort)
- Swadhyaya (Self-study)
- Ishwar pranidhana (Surrender to the Divine)

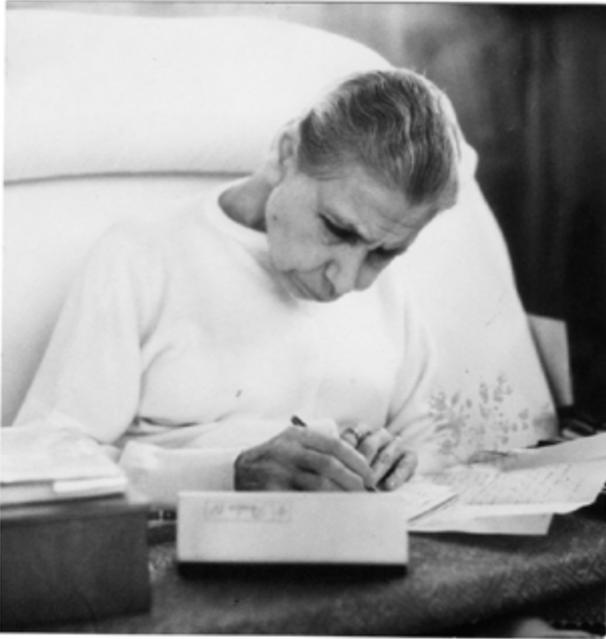
Aren't these the precepts to becoming a better human being? In today's times of moral decline and religious conflicts, aren't such precepts really the need of the hour?

Yoga is not a religion; it is instead a spiritual path. Yoga is a quest for self-perfection; perfection of the mind and the body, so that these instruments become one with the spirit. The aim of Yoga is to help our ascent towards a higher spiritual being, to take us closer to the Divine. What else is the true meaning, or purpose, of human life?

Ritisha Nadia James was a student in the Course on Teaching Yoga conducted at Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch in 2018. This article was an assignment submitted by her as one of the requirements for the course. The topic of the article was her choice, and the views expressed are personal views of the author.

Yoga
is not
religion

A Desire Of A Higher Kind



When a child is full of desires, if one could give him a desire of a higher kind ... if one could awaken in him the desire to know, the desire to learn, the desire to become a remarkable person... in this way, begin with that. As these things are difficult to do, so gradually, he will develop his will for these things. Or even, from the material point of view, the desire to do something difficult,

as for example, construct a toy which it is difficult to make – or give him a game of patience which requires a great deal of perseverance.

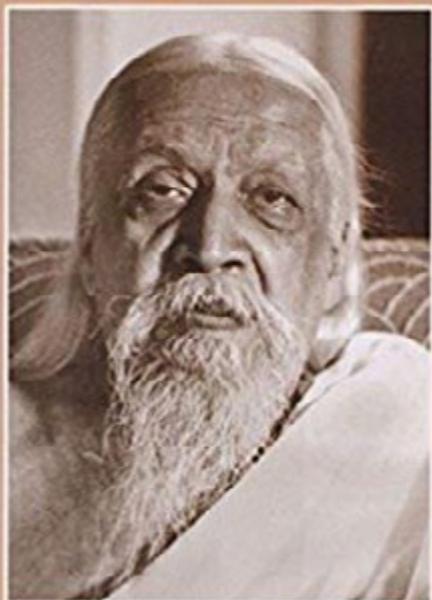
If one can orient them – it requires much discernment, much patience, but it can be done – and if one can orient them towards something like this, to succeed in very difficult games or to work out something which requires much care and attention, and can push them in some line like this so that it exercises a persevering will in them, then this can have results: turn their attention away from certain things and towards others.

The Mother ('Great Adventure', p. 15)

The Synthesis of Yoga

The Instruments of the Spirit

The Synthesis of Yoga



Sri Aurobindo

If there is to be an active perfection of our being, the first necessity is a purification of the working of the instruments which it now uses for a music of discords. The being itself, the spirit, the divine Reality in man stands in no need of purification; it is forever pure, not affected by the faults of its instrumentation or the stumblings of mind and heart and body in their work, as the sun, says the Upanishad, is not touched or stained by the faults of the eye of vision. Mind,

heart, the soul of vital desire, the life in the body are the seats of impurity; it is they that must be set right if the working of the spirit is to be a perfect working and not marked by its present greater or less concession to the devious pleasure of the lower nature.

A total purification of all the complex instrumentality in all the parts of each instrument is demanded of us by the integral perfection. The Siddha of the active integral perfection will live dynamically in the working of the transcendent power of the divine Spirit as a universal will through the supermind individualised in him for action. His works will therefore be the works of an eternal Knowledge, an eternal Truth, an eternal Might, an eternal Love, an eternal Ananda; but the truth,

knowledge, force, love, delight will be the whole essential spirit of whatever work he will do and will not depend on its form; they will determine his action from the spirit within and the action will not determine the spirit or subject it to a fixed standard or rigid mould of working. His perfection will not be a sattwic purity, but a thing uplifted beyond the gunas of Nature, a perfection of spiritual knowledge, spiritual power, spiritual delight, unity and harmony of unity; the outward perfection of his works will be freely shaped as the self-expression of this inner spiritual transcendence and universality. For this change he must make conscient in him that power of spirit and supermind which is now superconscient to our mentality. But that cannot work with him so long as his present mental, vital, physical being is not liberated from its actual inferior working. This purification is the first necessity.

Two kinds of defect, *wrong form of action* and *illegitimate mixture of action*, **belong to each instrument** and to each combination of their functionings. They pervade the whole economy of our nature. They are fundamental defects of our lower instrumental nature, and if we can set them right, we shall get our instrumental being into a state of purity, enjoy the clarity of a pure will, a pure heart of emotion, a pure enjoyment of our vitality, a pure body. That will be a preliminary, a human perfection, but it can be made the basis and open out in its effort of self-attainment into the greater, the divine perfection.

Mind, life and body are the three powers of our lower nature. But they cannot be taken quite separately because the life acts as a link and gives its character to body and to a great extent to our mentality. Our body is a living body; the life-force mingles in and determines all its functionings. Our mind too

is largely a mind of life; a mind of physical sensation; only in its higher functions is it normally capable of something more than the workings of a physical mentality subjected to life. We may put it in this ascending order. We have first a body supported by the physical life-force, the physical prana which courses through the whole nervous system and gives its stamp to our corporeal action, so that all is of the character of the action of a living and not an inert mechanical body. Prana and physicality together make the gross body, *sthula carira*. This is only the outer instrument, the nervous force of life acting in the form of a body with its gross physical organs. Then there is the inner instrument *antahkarana*, the conscious mentality. This inner instrument is divided by the old system into four powers; *chitta* or basic mental consciousness; *manas*, the sense mind; *buddhi*, the intelligence; *ahankara*, the ego-idea. The classification may serve as a starting point, though for a greater practicality we have to make certain farther distinctions. This mentality is pervaded by the life-force, which becomes here an instrument for psychic consciousness of life and psychic action on life. Every fibre of the sense mind and basic consciousness is shot through with the action of this psychic prana, it is a nervous or vital and physical mentality. Even the *buddhi* and ego are overpowered by it, although they have the capacity of raising the mind beyond subjection to this vital, nervous and physical psychology. This combination creates in us the sensational desire-soul which is the chief obstacle to a higher human as well as to the still greater divine perfection. Finally above our present conscious mentality is a secret supermind which is the proper means and native seat of that perfection.

Chitta, the basic consciousness, is largely subconscious; it has, open and hidden, two kinds of action, one passive or receptive, the other active or reactive and formative. As a

passive power it receives all impacts, even those of which the mind is unaware or to which it is inattentive, and it stores them in an immense reserve or passive subconscious memory on which the mind as an active memory can draw. But ordinarily the mind draws only what it had observed and understood at the time, at the same time there is a power in consciousness to send up to the active mind for use what that mind had not at all observed or attended to or even consciously experienced.

Our emotions are the waves of reaction and response which rise up from the basic consciousness, *chitta-vritti*. Their action too is largely regulated by habit and an emotive memory. They are not imperative, not laws of Necessity; **there is no really binding law of our emotional being to which we must submit without remedy; we are not obliged to give responses of grief to certain impacts upon the mind, responses of anger to others, to yet others responses of hatred or dislike, to others of liking or love.**

This nature of the emotive mind as a reaction of *chitta* with a certain close dependence upon the nervous life sensations and the responses of the psychic *prana* is so characteristic that in some languages it is called *chitta* and *prana*, the heart, the life soul; it is indeed the most directly agitating and powerfully insistent action of the desire-soul which the immixture of vital desire and responsive consciousness has created in us. And yet the true emotive soul, the real psyche in us, is not a desire-soul, but a soul of pure love and delight; but that, like the rest of our true being, can only emerge when the deformation created by the life of desire is removed from the surface and is no longer the characteristic action of our being. To get that done is a necessary part of our purification, liberation, perfection.

The nervous action of the psychic prana is most obvious in our purely sensational mentality. This nervous mentality pursues indeed all the action of the inner instrument and seems often to form the greater part of things other than sensation. The emotions are especially assailed and have the pranic stamp; fear is more even of a nervous sensation than an emotion, anger is largely or often a sensational response translated into terms of emotion. Other feelings are more of the heart, more inward, but they ally themselves to the nervous and physical longings or outward going impulses of the psychic prana. **Love is an emotion of the heart and may be a pure feeling**, – all mentality, since we are embodied minds, must produce, even thought produces, some kind of life effect and some response in the stuff of body, but they need not for that reason be of a physical nature, – **but the heart's love allies itself readily with a vital desire in the body**. This physical element may be purified of that subjection to physical desire which is called lust, it may become love using the body for a physical as well as a mental and spiritual nearness; but love may, too, separate itself from all, even the most innocent physical element, or from all but a shadow of it, and be a pure movement to union of soul with soul, psyche with psyche. Still the proper action of the sensational mind is not emotion, but conscious nervous response and nervous feeling and affection, impulse of the use of physical sense and body for some action, conscious vital craving and desire. There is a side of receptive response, a side of dynamic reaction. These things get their proper normal use when the higher mind is not mechanically subject to them, but controls and regulates their action. But a still higher state is when they undergo a certain transformation by the conscious will of the spirit which gives its right and no longer its wrong or desire form of characteristic action to the psychic prana.

Manas, sense-mind, is the activity, emerging from the basic consciousness, which makes up the whole essentiality of what we call sense. Sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch are really properties of the mind, not of the body; but the physical mind which we ordinarily use, limits itself to a translation into sense of so much of the outer impacts as it receives through the nervous system and the physical organs. Mind is able to alter, modify, inhibit the incidence, values, intensities of sense impacts. These powers of the mind we do not ordinarily use or develop; they remain subliminal and emerge sometimes in an irregular and fitful action, more readily in some minds than others, or come to the surface in abnormal states of the being. They are the basis of clairvoyance, clair-audience, transference of thought and impulse, telepathy, most of the more ordinary kinds of occult powers, – so called, though these are better described less mystically as powers of the now subliminal action of the Manas. The phenomena of hypnotism and many others depend upon the action of this subliminal sense-mind; not that it alone constitutes all the elements of the phenomena but it is the first supporting means of intercourse, communication and response, though much of the actual operation belongs to an inner Buddhi.

Buddhi is a construction of conscious being which quite exceeds its beginnings in the basic chitta; it is the intelligence with its power of knowledge and will. Buddhi takes up and deals with all the rest of the action of the mind and life and body. It is in its nature thought-power and will-power of the Spirit turned into the lower form of mental activity. Beyond this elementary understanding, which we all use to an enormous extent, there is a power of arranging or selecting reason of will-force of the intelligence which has for its action and aim an attempt to arrive at a plausible, settled, sufficient ordering of knowledge and will for the use of an intellectual conception of life.

Buddhi is really an intermediary between a much higher Truth-mind not now in our active possession, which is the direct instrument of Spirit, and the physical life of the human mind evolved in body. Its powers of intelligence and will are drawn from this greater direct Truth-mind or supermind. **Buddhi centres its mental action round the ego-idea, the idea that I am this mind, life and body or am a mental being determined by their action.** It serves this ego-idea whether limited by what we call egoism or extended by sympathy with the life around us. An ego sense is created which reposes on the separative action of the body, of the individualised life, of the mind-responses, and the ego-idea in the buddhi centralises the whole action of this ego's thought, character, personality. The lower understanding and the intermediary reason are instruments of its desire of experience and self-enlargement. But when the highest reason and will develop, we can turn towards that which these outward things mean to the higher spiritual consciousness. The "I" can then be seen as a mental reflection of the Self, the Spirit, the Divine, the one existence transcendent, universal, individual in its multiplicity; the consciousness in which these things meet, become aspects of one being and assume their right relations, can then be unveiled out of all these physical and mental coverings. When the transition to supermind takes place, the powers of the Buddhi do not perish, but have all to be converted to their supramental values. **But the consideration of the supermind and the conversion of the buddhi belongs to the question of the higher siddhi or divine perfection. At present we have to consider the purification of the normal being of man, preparatory to all such conversion, which leads to the liberation from the bonds of our lower nature.**

Sri Aurobindo (In the Arya, Vol. 5, No.9, 15 Apr 1919)

Short Cut to Quick Money

Prof. M.V. Nadkarni

Customer: I would like to buy the book 'How to Become a Millionaire Overnight'.

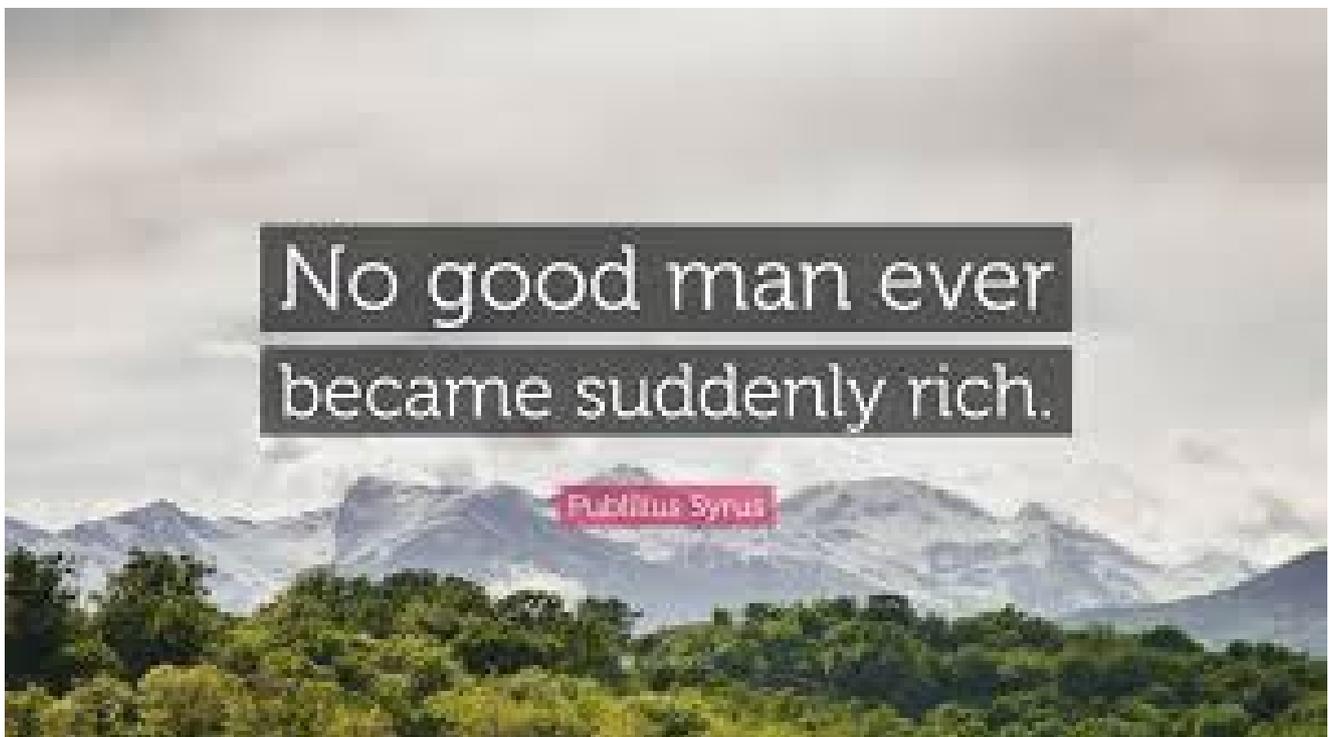
The clerk went to the back of the shop, returned with two books, and started wrapping them.

Customer: I had asked for only one book.

Clerk: I know. The other one is 'The Indian Penal Code'. We always sell them together.

No good man ever became suddenly rich.

Publilius Syrus



Reproduced from *The Call Beyond*, Vol. 19, No. 2, p. 56, 1994

The Power of Love

... to feel love and oneness is to live

Sri Aurobindo ('Savitri', Book 12, SABCL Edition, p. 724)

This is the story of a poor elderly couple, working in farms on daily wages, living in a remote rural area of Maharashtra, far away from decent healthcare facilities. The husband fell ill, and the local doctor referred them to a hospital in the nearby city, Baramati. Using up almost their savings and some borrowed money, they reached Baramati, where the doctor recommended a few tests that would cost a few thousand rupees. Worried about where the money for the tests would come from, they started walking back towards the bus stop. As they walked, they realized that they had eaten nothing since the morning. They stopped by near a vendor, who was selling samosas. They bought two samosas, which were served to them on a piece of newspaper. As they were having the samosas, the woman, Lata Khare, noticed on the oily newspaper an ad for a marathon in Baramati the next day. The prize for winning the marathon was five thousand rupees. The 65-year old Lata Khare said that she would run, win the prize, and use it for the tests that the doctor had asked for. Her husband told her that he was going to die soon anyway, but asked her why she also wanted to die. But she insisted. They stayed overnight in Baramati, and there she was at the site, in the only dress she had, a saree.

The organizers had never faced such a situation. They told her that she would not be allowed to participate in the 42-kilometre race. But she pleaded with them, and told them why she wanted to run. Finally, they gave in, perhaps to avoid trouble with some troublesome activists later on. There she was, with her saree hitched up to the knees, bare foot, with an emaciated



body making her look even older than she was, running with youngsters half her age in track suits and sports shoes. Years of preparation that the participants would have put in was pitted against Lata Khare's motivation

fuelled by her love for her husband. You would have guessed by now the result. Love triumphed, and Lata had the money for her husband's medical tests.

While Lata would inspire many to heroic deeds, it raises a few important questions. Why couldn't the organizers of the race think beyond the immediate event on hand? Why couldn't they announce why she wanted to run, or at least why she was running, and appeal for contributions from the spectators? Does love have to be confined to the immediate family? Why did Lata have to be the only person whose love was indispensable for raising a relatively meager sum of five thousand rupees? But even in this difficult world, true love invites divine intervention. Wasn't the piece of newspaper on which samosas were served such an intervention. The Divine always has a way out to help out those who want to help themselves.

From the time we started and everyday more and more, in all things we can see Thy divine intervention, everywhere Thy law is expressed, and I need all my inner conviction to feel that this is perfectly natural, so that I do not pass from wonder to wonder.

The Mother ('Prayers and Meditations', Prayer dated 28 March 1914)

*Based on an e-mail from Om Swami dated 3 November 2018
Source of the story: 'Life's Amazing Secrets' by Gaur Gopal Das.
Image source: steemitimages*

This column shall carry advice, practices or exercises which can make it a little easier for the spiritual seeker to walk on the path of spiritual progress. Contributions from readers are welcome, and may be printed at the editor's discretion after editorial revision.

The Essence of Spiritual Life

To overcome one's ego, to live only in the service of the Divine – that is the ideal and the shortest way towards acquiring the true consciousness.

The Mother



In this column, we try to answer three types of questions: those related to spiritual quest ('aspiring high'); those related to psychological issues ('feeling low'); and those related to physical health ('frailties of the flesh'). It is needless to say that the identity of the person asking the question is kept confidential if the question is about a sensitive issue. The questions may be sent to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in.

Self-Assessment in Spirituality

Prof. Vishva Dev Gupta wants to know how a person may assess whether his consciousness is rising or falling.

The best person to assess it is the person himself through honest introspection. For example, the person may:

1. Introspect whether in a recent situation he responded or acted, or decided to act, in a way that is better than he would have done ten years ago,
2. Introspect whether his equality (samatva) in good fortune / misfortune, success / failure, insult / praise, etc. is more than it would have been ten years ago,
(Here 'equality' has been used in the sense in which Sri Aurobindo uses it, that is, to mean 'acceptance with equal delight')
3. Introspect whether the person finds it easier than he did ten years ago to have positive feelings of love even towards those whom he does not like,
4. Introspect whether the person finds it easier than he did ten years ago to forgive someone who has hurt him, and
5. Introspect whether the person finds it easier than he did ten years ago to apologize to someone whom he has hurt, even if it happened unintentionally.

Feedback & Encouraging Words

Feedback from Madhuban



Dear Tara didi,

We stayed at Madhuban for 2 days, and it was an incredible experience. The place is out of the world, and the ashram is so peaceful and serene. Thanks so much to Anju-ji for making a space for us at a moment's notice when we arrived in

Madhuban and decided we wanted to stay there if possible. She and everyone else has created such an amazing energy at Madhuban that it is so hard to leave once you arrive there.

Please let me know if there is anything we can do for the ashram.

Vigyan (Singhal)

(in an e-mail dated 25 March 2019)

Dear Tara-di,

It is strange that my vocabulary refuses to help me if I wish to thank you. It seems that a spontaneous trust leads me to take for granted all your affection, help and guidance. The pictures you took whisked me back through those sublime moments spent at that spiritual abode of mine. It was a feeling that combined thrill, Ananda and gratitude.

Warm regards,

Manoj da

(in an e-mail dated 16 April 2019)

Just returned from a short but wonderful trip to Madhuban. The way the place has come up since I had last been there more than four years ago is simply stunning. All your dedicated work shows loud and clear in the new buildings, garden landscape, the wonderful maintenance, and everything. I was thrilled to see the profiled roofs of the Relics Hall (Prabhu Sthal) and the Multipurpose Hall (Prashanti).

Tara didi's unstoppable energy, and Anju's steadfast dedication and all your highly skilled contributions have all led to Madhuban's present impressive status. It was also great to meet the ever smiling Subhash, Munna, and of course the indefatigable Nalinji.

It was a homecoming of sorts after a gap, but once there, felt no gap at all. Looking forward to my regular participation with this wonderful team.

Smiles,

Naresh (Modi)
(in an e-mail dated 21 March 2019)

Feedback on the Course on Teaching Yoga, Aug-Dec 2018

The course was very informative and intense. Besides the asanas, the theory part of the course is very vast and imparts a lot of knowledge about various aspects of life.

Alpa Dedhia

The experience I had cannot be expressed in words. It can be only felt or experienced. After doing this course my perspective on difficult situations and obstacles of life is totally changed. Now an obstacle seems an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Pardeep Kaur



Inauguration of the course on 14 August 2018

This course has changed my perspective towards life. It is much more than I had expected. It has changed the way I see different situations and react to them. The spiritual world view taught to us was really life changing.

Also the anatomy and physiology that we studied has really helped us in understanding a lot of issues related to the body. The examination part was an excellent way for us to revise and retain the knowledge.

Overall, the course was awesome and it got over very fast; missing it already. I am full of gratitude to the Divine for inspiring me to do this course at the Ashram.

Neelima Kapoor

When this course started, I had only practical sessions in my mind. Integral yoga has changed my views and some ways of working in my life. From being an emotional person and taking on responsibility for all, it has helped me to be little calm and composed. Initially, I thought why so much of spirituality, when we have to learn asanas? But now I know why. I have I think improved a little as a person.

Anita Balasubramanian

Contact us

Our quarterly magazine in Hindi, *Sri Aravind Karmadhara*, is also available on-line now, and may be viewed on our website www.sriaurobindoashram.net.

For a free subscription to *Sri Aravind Karmadhara*, please send an e-mail to sakarmdhara@gmail.com

To get *The Call Beyond* online regularly, month after month, please send an e-mail to: callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

To learn about the recent and forthcoming activities through the Ashram's e-magazine, *Realization*, send an email to: callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

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Feedback

Please send your feedback to
callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

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