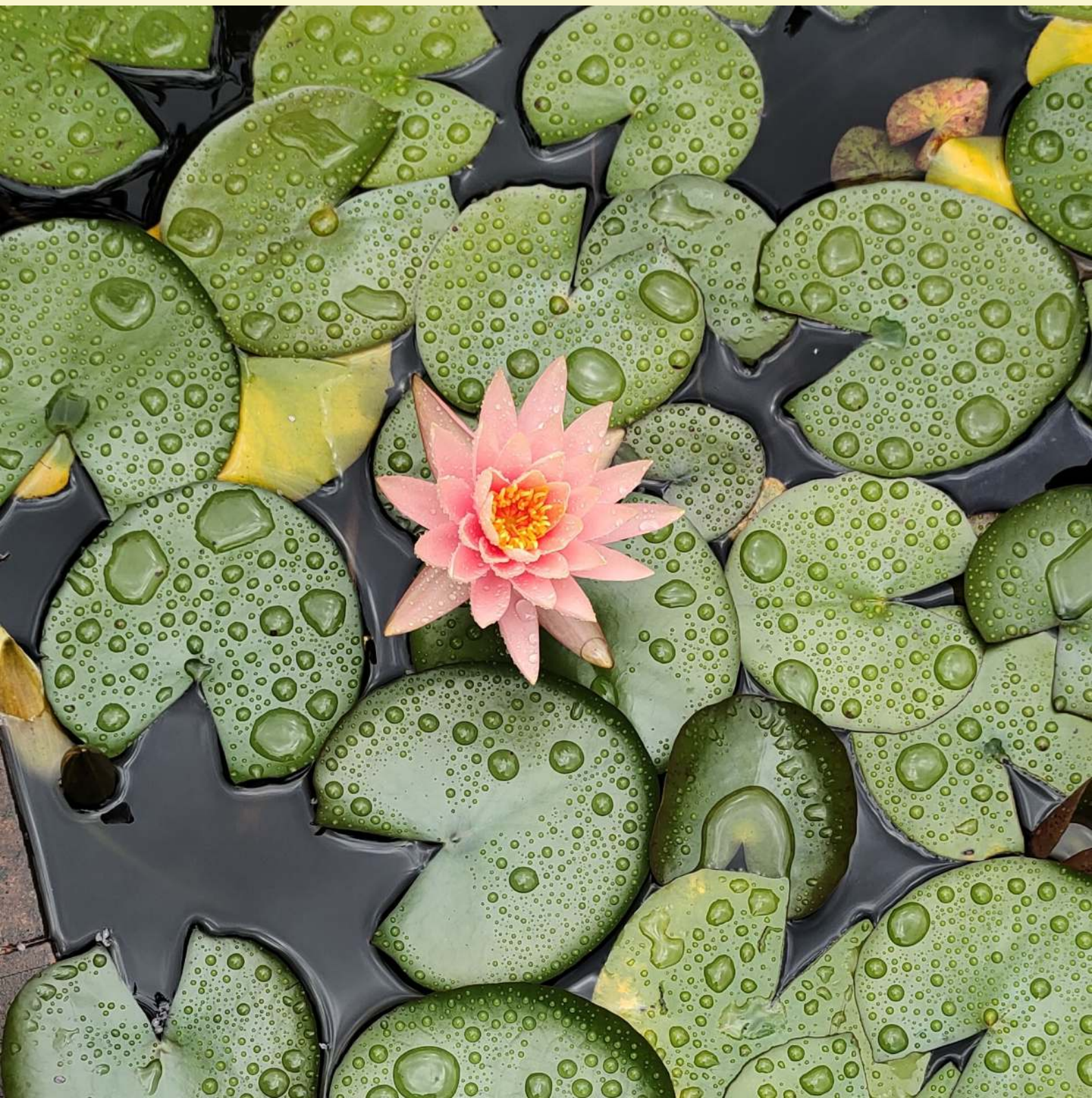


The Call Beyond



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Highlights

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* Cover Picture: Prof. Sehdev Kumar *



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The World is a Work-in-Progress

Hardly any human being realises that he is a unique creature living on an extraordinary planet. Living on a planet on which alone is it certain that life exists, human beings are a relatively recent product of the evolutionary process that began billions of years ago. The emergence of life on earth was a major step that revealed a bit more of the Supreme Consciousness than matter did. The next major step was the arrival of creatures that had a mind, a mind that could feel and think. The latest to arrive were human beings, with a mind that could think through complexities at a level that no other creature on earth had so far come anywhere close to. There is no reason to believe that the evolutionary process, which has essentially been a step-by-step unfoldment of the Consciousness of the Creator, has ended with the emergence of human beings. However, we humans go beyond animals in one fundamental way. Unlike animals, we have an urge to evolve, and the capacity to evolve. And, earth is the only planet on which this urge finds a fertile soil for realization. This raises a few basic questions. First, how do we know that the urge exists? Second, how can a person satisfy this urge? Third, why is the earth the right place for this work? Finally, what are the practical implications of further unfoldment of the divine consciousness?

We know that the urge exists because even after a person lives in bodily comfort, his basic emotional needs are satisfied, and he is engaged in work that is intellectually challenging and satisfying, he does not feel fulfilled. The emptiness that he still feels cannot be filled by catering to the greed of the body and the mind, but only by addressing the needs of his deepest Self, the Soul. The need of the Soul, which is his divine essence, is greater expression of the divine nature of the soul in the activities of the body and the mind.



How can a person take care of the need of the soul? By listening to the voice of the soul. The soul is our ultimate and best guide when it comes to choosing between right and wrong, good and evil. Its voice, commonly called the inner voice, is quick and clear. But it is faint and non-assertive, unlike the loud, persistent and persuasive voices of the mind. Although somewhere deep within we know that doing what the soul is telling us is the only right thing to do, due to various temptations and worldly considerations we let the mind hush up the soul. There is no 'how' to take care of the need of the soul. Just do it.

Why is the earth the right place for evolving, or in simpler words, leaving as a better person than as we arrive? It is because it is only on earth that extremes of good and evil co-exist with a lot in-between. That is what opens up the possibility of choosing consciously between right and wrong. Depending on the choice made, the outcome is either climbing up or sliding down. In the absence of such choices, the outcome of life would be walking on a level path, dying exactly as we are born.

Finally, coming to the practical implications, further evolution of human consciousness would change human nature. It would change the typical human personality from being ego-driven to that which is love-driven. That would be the radical solution to problems of human existence, such as inequality, cruelty, injustice, misery and suffering. That is the vision of the future world that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gave us. When is it going to happen? Not in too distant a future, they said. Is it sure to happen? Yes, they gave us the assurance. What is our role in it? Our role is to work consciously towards the evolution of our individual souls. The larger the number that does it, faster will the critical mass of love-driven individuals be achieved, and hence, faster would the world change. Thus, we the human beings, and the world in which we live, are works-in-progress. When will the finished products be ready? We can leave that question to the Divine, with relief and pleasure!



Letters from Madhuban, the Abode of Gods

Prof. Sehdev Kumar

Prof. Sehdev Kumar, a professor from Canada, discovered Madhuban, one of the Himalayan centres of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, in 2017. He was so mesmerised that he gave vent to his galloping mind through a letter to his near and dear ones. Recently, during a 2023 visit to Madhuban, he wrote another letter, in which although the novelty of the experience is lost, the intensity is intact. This article is an edited version of excerpts from the two letters.

Hello Dear Ones:

I send you my love and greetings from Madhuban, near the village called Talla Ramgarh in the state of Uttarakhand in the Himalayas, in India. I came here, to Madhuban, on the suggestion of my very dear Russian friend Amrita in Auroville, for the first time in 2017. Within a couple of weeks, I found myself submerged in the beauty and grandeur of this extraordinary place, feeling as though I had found a home for my wandering and restless steps and soul in these mountains.

Madhuban, one of the Himalayan centres of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, is a very special place at a height of some 5500 feet above sea level. From here, one can look more than a thousand feet down into a beautiful green and sumptuous valley, see and hear a river flowing through it, and enjoy the sounds and laughter of the children in a nearby school in the village of Ramgarh.



At the same time, one can also see the mountains soaring a thousand feet above, covered with pine trees, sometimes drenched in the thunderous



Monsoon rains, and sometimes wrapped in drifting clouds and mist, creating a mesmerizing drama of a thousand new and scintillating patterns. Being here, one can feel the sanctity of Mother Earth, of Gaia, and its grandeur and unique singularity in the vast universe of 20 trillion galaxies; and yet no less, its fragility and its vulnerability!



Madhuban is an ashram – a sacred abode. But there are no monks or priests here. There is no formal worship, no rituals – only a celebration of life in all its rich and awesome

fecundity. This is not a ‘religious’ place, as religions have come to mean and establish themselves; Madhuban is a spiritual place. This place has been inspired by the vision and philosophy of Integral Yoga of the great Indian spiritual master, sage and poet, Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) and his spiritual collaborator, a French artist and visionary, Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973), known as The Mother. The Mother was the architect of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Puducherry, and She was also the spirit behind the vision and creation of the international township, Auroville, near Puducherry. Like all institutions inspired by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, Madhuban is meant to be a place for the exploration and realization of the immense spiritual potential of each one of us, through the celebration of our intellectual and artistic faculties, through our commitment to life in all its myriad expressions, and through spiritual practices and insights.

In an ongoing retreat with participants from Japan, Australia, Germany, and the USA , which I also attended, I discovered the immensity of philosophical insights of Indian seers, as well as the musical beauty of the Sanskrit language. There is a continuous stream of seekers and scholars, musicians and



philosophers, coming here. So, there is much to keep one's mind and soul engaged in many nourishing ways.

I am back to Madhuban, a little piece of heaven on our precious earth, six years after I discovered it quite by 'chance'. Since then, I have been coming here, for short and long stays, as often as my various distractions would permit me. Every time I make new discoveries, feel a new transformation; hear some new whispers.

Madhuban and the village of Ramgarh, where it is located, feel like a very special home to me. So many people – working in the orchards and tea stalls and in a barber shop, the students and teachers in the school, and the people living and working here in

Madhuban – all of them welcome me with love and great warmth. It is indeed very touching. Having conversations with some of the local people in their homes over a cup of tea, or at a street corner, about their children and their everyday struggles, about a devastating storm that destroyed much of the village a year ago, about the local politics, and about the vast and complex country that India is, and about the world at large, beyond the mountains, beyond and beyond, I feel overwhelmed. I feel as though I know so little of the intricacies and complexities of life here in India, or indeed anywhere else. I feel all the books I have read over the years and decades, all the theories and ideas that seemed to explain it all away, now suddenly – and often – feel flimsy. Soon I give up. And just cherish the grandeur of these beautiful creations that so dot every corner of Madhuban.



Nights here are utterly heavenly. There are stars. There are clouds. There is rain. In Canada, from the 19th floor of my condo, I used to see cars and more cars, and airplanes from the nearby Pearson International airport. At night, the landscape was densely dotted with the lights of the well-lit city. Here, in Madhuban, there are a few stray lights in some homes in the valley below, but all of a sudden, almost miraculously, appears the hypermobile twinkle of a firefly (Hindi, *jugnoo*). Then, for a moment or two, or longer, in spite of all the chaos and grief in the world, I feel that the universe is a beautiful and sacred place, and I am blessed to be alive for another day, grateful to be part of this magnificent *lila*, this cosmic drama.

Madhuban is a gift from a very simple and remarkable man, Kurban Hussain. After he handed over his creation to Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, over the years, with her inspiration and guidance, Tara Didi, and with her care and love, Anju Didi, a former professor of English literature, with the help and dedication of hundreds of volunteers from all over the world, have developed Madhuban into a unique and most welcoming place for everyone, from everywhere, for retreats, for workshops, for reflection, for contemplation, for creation, for discovery. For Transformation.

Discovering the beauty and wonder of Madhuban – of Himalaya, of India – is almost always a unique and transformative experience. But I have to always remind myself – wherever I am, and wherever I go – of the words of the American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Though we go all over the world to find the beautiful, we find it not till we take it with us.” Indeed, to find the beauty at Madhuban, in Himalaya, in India, anywhere, one must come with beauty in one’s own heart!

Eighteenth-century English artist, John Constable, once observed: “I never saw an ugly thing in my life. Let the form of an object



be what it may – a different light, and a different perspective makes everything beautiful.”

Here, in Madhuban, in Himalaya, in India, among the drifting clouds and in the fierce rains, among the hyacinths and the glow-worms, under the rocks and above the pine cones, indeed everywhere, if you just dare to open your eyes, you are quite likely to be blessed with that slightly different light, and a different perspective that makes everything beautiful.

Here, in Madhuban, a few years ago, standing in front of a little lotus pond, with lotus flowers bursting forth so enchantingly, I was moved to tears of joy and wonder, and was inspired to write:



*If such a tiny seed
In such dark dingy waters
Can rise to become
Such a beautiful lotus
What might not you and I,
Become in our journey to the Sun.*

Dear Ones: Come to Madhuban one day. It is a magical place in the Himalayas!

With beauty... with generosity...
with love.

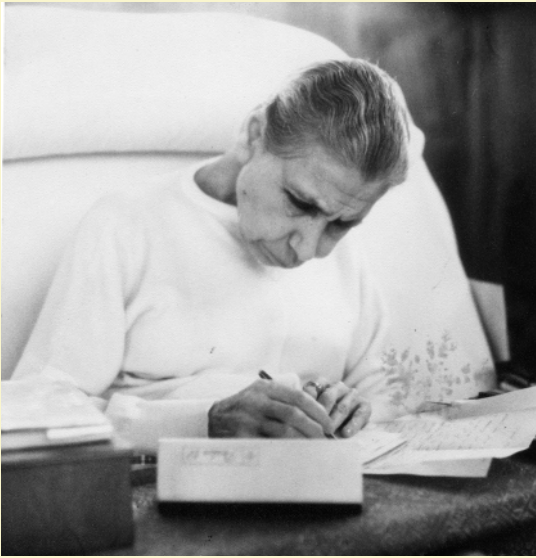


*The greatest obstacle to the
transformation of one's own
character is hypocrisy.*

The Mother



Face Yourself



Every time you are afraid to face yourself and hide carefully from yourself what prevents you from advancing, well, it is as though you were building a wall on the way; later you must demolish it to pass on. It is better to do your task immediately, look yourself straight in the face, straight in the face; not try to sugar-coat the bitter pill. It is very bitter: all

the weaknesses, uglinesses, all kinds of nasty little things which one has inside – there are, there are, there are, oh! lots of them.

“What petty meanness, small stupidity, little vanity, ignorance, bad will is still there, hidden in the corner, preventing me from crossing the threshold, the threshold of this new discovery? Who is there in me, who is so small, so mean and obstinate, hiding there like a worm in a fruit so that I may not be able to see it?”

If you are sincere you find it; you always sugar-coat the pill. The sugar-coating is a kind of what is called mental understanding of oneself. So one coats as thickly with sugar as possible in order to hide well from oneself what is there, the worm in the fruit.

The Mother ('The Great Adventure', p.65)

All the pages of The Mother's work, 'The Great Adventure', in Tara Didi's voice, have been uploaded on the YouTube channel of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. The link to the playlist is: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbJ59iL6vu-UXeufBeKQlUTwGf3GhZ9LJ>



The Hour of God



There are moments when the Spirit moves among men and the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being; there are others when it retires and men are left to act in the strength or the weakness of their

own egoism. **The first are periods when even a little effort produces great results and changes destiny; the second are spaces of time when much labour goes to the making of a little result.** It is true that the latter may prepare the former, may be the little smoke of sacrifice going up to heaven which calls down the rain of God's bounty. Unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment; for them is irreparable loss or a great destruction. **In the hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it.** All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow. Even if thou conquer for the moment, it is the worse for thee, for the blow shall come afterwards and cast thee down in the midst of thy triumph. But being pure cast aside all fear; for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again, even though he seem to pass on the



wings of the wind, he shall return. Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear; for it is the hour of the unexpected, the incalculable, the immeasurable. Mete not the power of the Breath by thy petty instruments, but trust and go forward. But most keep thy soul clear, even if for a while, of the clamour of the ego. Then shall a fire march before thee in the night and the storm be thy helper and thy flag shall wave on the highest height of the greatness that was to be conquered.

Sri Aurobindo ('Essays Divine and Human', CWSA Vol. 12, pp. 146-147)



It requires a much greater quality not to be attached to the things one possesses than to be without any possessions or to reduce one's possessions to a strict minimum.

The Mother

There is a kind of inner communion with the psychic being which takes place when one willingly gives up a desire, and because of this one feels a much greater joy than if he had satisfied his desire.

The Mother

To choose without preference and execute without desire is the great difficulty at the very root of the development of true consciousness and self-control.

The Mother

There is a kind of inner communion with the psychic being which takes place when one willingly gives up a desire, and because of this one feels a much greater joy than if he had satisfied his desire.

The Mother



Try Softer

A young boy travelled across Japan to the school of a famous martial artiste. When he arrived at the dojo he was given an audience by the sensei (master).

“What do you wish from me?” the master asked.

“I wish to become your student and become the finest karateka in the land,” the boy replied. “How long must I study?”

“Ten years at least,” the master answered.

“Ten years is a long time,” said the boy. “What if I studied twice as hard as all your other students?”

“Twenty years,” replied the master.

“Twenty years! What if I practice day and night with all my effort?”

“Thirty years,” was the master’s reply.

“How is it that each time I say I will work harder, you tell me that it will take longer?” the boy asked.

“The answer is clear. When one eye is fixed upon your destination, there is only one eye left with which to find the Way.”

Reproduced from The Call Beyond, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1998, p. 7.



When you come to the Yoga, you must be ready to have all your mental buildings and all your vital scaffoldings shattered to pieces. You must be prepared to be suspended in the air with nothing to support you except your faith.

The Mother

Reason is the master of the nature of mankind.

The Mother



Lifestyle Today

Jeevant

*Drive to work,
Driven by work.*

*Sit and slog,
Tweet and blog.*

*Speed is all,
Take a call.*

*Head reeling,
Boss screaming.*

*Forget the rules,
Recipe for fools.*

*Eating and texting,
Dreaming and surfing.*

*Hurry and worry,
Chicken and curry.*

*Pretty dress,
Life a mess.*

*Smoke and dope,
With life, can't cope.*

*Walk no more,
Pray? What a bore.*

*A full night's sleep,
A distant dream.*

*Conscience dead,
Always in the red.*

*That is the lifestyle today,
Even if it means going astray.*



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.

Is Science Value-Neutral?

A wants to know:

How can value education be imparted by a science teacher?

Answer:

Let me start with something tangential before taking on your question headlong. Science is supposed to be value-neutral. Value-neutrality in science means that the scientist keeps his personal opinions, beliefs and expectations aside while making observations, interpreting the data, and presenting the data to the public. The outcome of the research should stick to the truth irrespective of what the scientist would have liked it to be. **Thus, value-neutrality is itself a value!** However, value-neutrality does not apply to the choice of the subject of research. For example, if a scientist thinks that animal experiments involve unjustified cruelty to animals, which he is against, he can choose to pick up for his research a topic that does not need animals. And, if he chooses to do human research, the acid test of ethical research is that the scientist should be willing to let that research be done on himself. Discussions of this type, although they would be digressions from the topic that the science teacher is teaching, would in themselves bring value education into science education.

Now let me come to your question directly. The teacher can go into examples from the history of medicine, wherever relevant. For example, insulin was discovered together by a surgeon, Frederick Grant Banting, and a medical student,



Charles Herbert Best. But the Nobel Prize was awarded only to Banting. Banting was unhappy that the contribution of Best had been ignored. He could not change the decision of the Nobel Prize Committee, but he shared the Nobel Prize money with Best. Using this example, the teacher can initiate in the class a reflective exercise.

- What would have happened if Banting had done nothing?

At least some students would come up with the answer that he would have felt guilty. To use the language of integral education, the voice issuing from his psychic being would have made him uneasy.

- Could Banting have done something else to act against the injustice done to Best?

At least some students would come up with the answer that he could have refused to accept the Nobel Prize, and made the reason public.

Similar reflective exercises can be set up to elucidate the choices that the student should make. For example, what would be the voice of the psychic being in the following situations:

- To come up with a 'perfect' project which has been bought, or a project the student has himself made to the best of his ability?
- To write an assignment by the 'cut and paste' method, or to write something original?
- To quote somebody's words without acknowledging the source, or giving a reference to the original?

These are just examples. The teacher who is conscious of the significance of psychic education can introduce that element unobtrusively, without sermonizing, into any subject, including science. The important thing is that the teacher should be conscious of the need for psychic education, and she should be herself on the spiritual path.



Feedback and Encouraging Words

Feedback from Guests

To the beautiful Ashram family,
Tara didi, thank you so much for taking your precious time out
and taking me through. I learnt so much more about the great
work that the family is doing.

Blessed to be part of this family.

With affection,

Divya Miglani

(in an e-mail dated 23 August 2023)

Dear Dr. Bijlani,

I can't express all my gratitude to God, The Mother, Sri Aurobindo
and all amazing people I met in ashram during my stay. These
10 days of my life was so special to me.

I truly believe that the messages I got on my last night in the
Ashram were the messages from God. I feel like God sent me to
India to awaken my dream and to activate my gift of giving love.

Each day I meet Indian people here, I make them laugh when
I greet them with a Namaste, asking how their souls feel and
asking them sincere questions how they survived in the cold
world of the UK?

Also I distributed your books to my friends and I really want the
book about Ice cream to be translated into Ukrainian. Just to tell
you... my kids love all your books.

I will drop the pictures of cookies and some other activities
we do daily. I saw these activities in Mirambika and do them
with my kids.

Have a good day

Very kindly,

Nataliia (Gubanova)

from Cambridge, UK

(in an e-mail dated 25 August 2023)



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

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For information about Auro-Mira Service Society and the Kechla project, please visit the website www.auromira.in



Note

In view of the Hundred and Fiftieth Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo on 15 August 2022, the Ashram is expanding its mailing list to reach out to more and more who may benefit from the teachings of the Master and the Mother. To get included in the Mailing List, please go to <http://erp.saaonline.net.in/addcontacts.cfm> to fill in a form, which will take you only a few minutes.



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