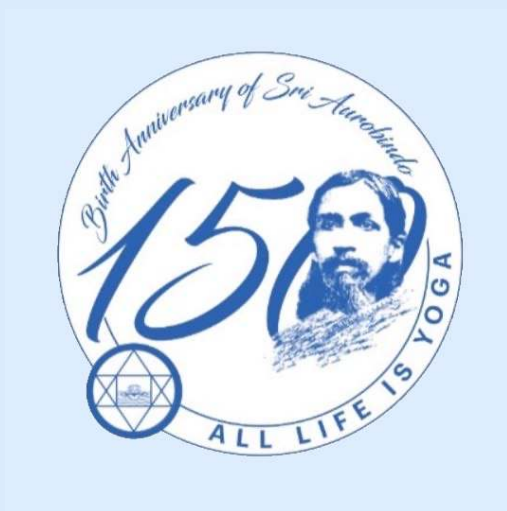
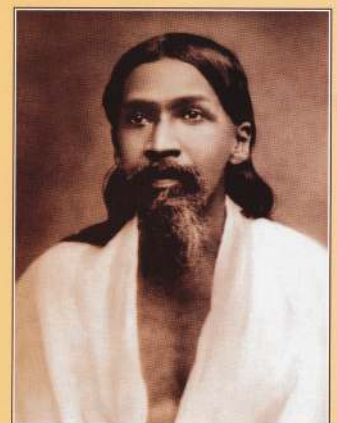




# The Call Beyond



## Essays on the Gita



*Sri Aurobindo*



## *Highlights*

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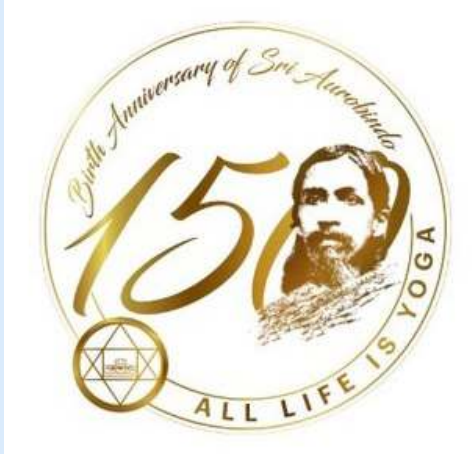
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## Celebrating 150 Years of Sri Aurobindo (1872-2022)



Who was Sri Aurobindo? **A freedom fighter**, who shook the British Empire within five years? **A poet**, who could give poetic expression to whispers from the heavens? **A writer**, who would have honoured the Nobel Prize for Literature, if it had been conferred on him? **A linguist**, who raised the level of the English language to that of Sanskrit, and deciphered the symbolism of the Veda? **A yogi**, who gave the world Integral Yoga, a powerful synthesis that incorporated the major traditional systems of yoga, and went beyond all of them? **A rishi** (a seer) and **a muni** (a thinker) rolled in one? Or, **a spiritual master**, radical, rational and revolutionary, far ahead of his times, who is today the Guru to millions in the world?

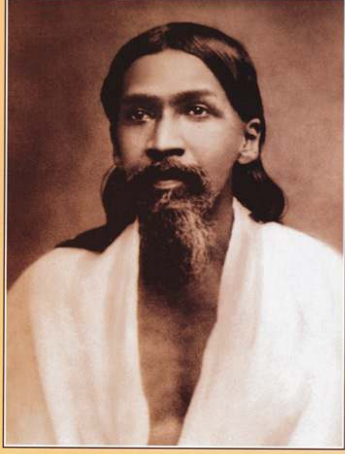
Sri Aurobindo was all this, and more. Due to our limitations, *The Call Beyond*, however, will concentrate on Sri Aurobindo, the writer. In the category of spiritual literature rooted in the Indian tradition, the original of which was written in the English language, Sri Aurobindo's works belong to a class apart, both in quantity and quality. In his works, Sri Aurobindo has given nothing short of a prescription for sculpting humanity into a new shape that would be beyond recognition. Even through the works that have their origin in the *Arya*, which were written over a period of just six years (1914-1920), he has created enough homework for the world to stay busy with for several centuries.

The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA) run into 36 volumes. The humble offering of *The Call Beyond*, however, would be limited to bringing you every month just the glimpses of one of the works of Sri Aurobindo.



## Essays on the Gita

### Essays on the Gita



*Sri Aurobindo*

There is no dearth of commentaries on the Gita, but Sri Aurobindo's commentary, *Essays on the Gita* stands out among them as something completely unparalleled. For Sri Aurobindo, writing these essays was not a literary or philosophical exercise, not an exercise involving the translation of the Sanskrit original into English and adding to the literal translation his own interpretation. **First**, he had, as in the case of any other subject that he touched upon, a global view of the subject. Therefore, even while looking at a part of the Gita, he never lost sight of what the Gita as a whole says. **Secondly**,

he had not just read the Gita, he had experienced the Gita. When Sri Aurobindo was in jail from 1908-1909, he had seen Sri Krishna all around in everyone and everything. That was the phase in his life when he faced the dilemma whether to continue his active involvement in the freedom movement, or to respond to his inner calling which seemed to lie elsewhere. His dilemma was quite like that of Arjuna in the Gita. Like Arjuna, Sri Aurobindo asked Sri Krishna what was expected of him. He received the answer, and did as he was told. The voice that resolved his dilemma was the voice that he came to trust, the voice that he decided to obey without asking any questions. It was in obedience to the same voice that early in 1910 he left Calcutta (now Kolkata) for Chandernagore, and about a month later left Chandernagore for Pondicherry (now Puducherry).

The Gita starts with Arjuna's dilemma whether or not to fight; it ends with Arjuna becoming a devotee of Sri Krishna, and therefore happily doing what Sri Krishna expected of him. Sri Aurobindo,





in the course of his inner journey in 1908-1909 seems to have gone through the entire span of the Gita – starting with a dilemma, and ending with total surrender. The result of Sri Aurobindo experiencing the Gita in his own life was that *Essays on the Gita* is not a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita; it is another Gita in itself. Although the 48 chapters of *Essays on the Gita* follow roughly the same sequence as the Gita itself, Sri Aurobindo has taken the liberty of going back and forth, so that the overall message of the Gita is never lost sight of. Each chapter consists of about ten pages of scintillating prose, and is sheer delight to read.



*The unconscious or half-conscious wresting of fact and word and idea to suit a preconceived notion or the doctrine or principle of one's preference is recognised by Indian logicians as one of the most fruitful sources of fallacy; and it is perhaps the one which it is most difficult for even the most conscientious thinker to avoid.*

**Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 26)**

*Finite bodies have an end, but that which possesses and uses the body is infinite, illimitable, eternal, indestructible. It casts away old and takes up new bodies as a man changes worn-out raiment for new ; and what is there in this to grieve at and recoil and shrink ?*

**Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 57)**

*The enlightened man does not mourn either for the living or the dead, for he knows that suffering and death are merely incidents in the history of the soul.*

**Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 56)**



## **Selections from ‘Essays on the Gita’**

The world abounds with Scriptures sacred and profane, with revelations and half-revelations, with religions and philosophies, sects and schools and systems. To these the many minds of a half-ripe knowledge or no knowledge at all attach themselves with exclusiveness and passion and will have it that this or the other book is alone the eternal Word of God and all others are either impostures or at best imperfectly inspired, that this or that philosophy is the last word of the reasoning intellect and other systems are either errors or saved only by such partial truth in them as links them to the one true philosophical cult. Even the discoveries of physical Science have been elevated into a creed and in its name religion and spirituality banned as ignorance and superstition, philosophy as frippery and moonshine. And to these bigoted exclusions and vain wrangling even the wise have often lent themselves, misled by some spirit of darkness that has mingled with their light and overshadowed it with some cloud of intellectual egoism or spiritual pride. Mankind seems now indeed inclined to grow a little modester and wiser; we no longer slay our fellows in the name of God’s truth or because they have minds differently trained or differently constituted from ours; we are less ready to curse and revile our neighbour because he is wicked or presumptuous enough to differ from us in opinion; we are ready even to admit that Truth is everywhere and cannot be our sole monopoly; we are beginning to look at other religions and philosophies for the truth and help they contain and no longer merely in order to damn them as false or criticise what we conceive to be their errors. But we are still apt to declare that our truth gives us the supreme knowledge which other religions or philosophies have missed or only imperfectly grasped so that they deal with subsidiary and inferior aspects of the truth of things or can merely prepare less evolved minds for the heights to which we have arrived. And we are still prone to force upon ourselves or others



the whole sacred mass of the book or gospel we admire, insisting that all shall be accepted as eternally valid truth and no iota or underline or diaeresis denied its part of the plenary inspiration.

*(Sri Aurobindo: 'Essays on the Gita', CWSA Vol. 19, pp. 3-4)*

We must remember that duty is an idea which in practice rests upon social conceptions. We may extend the term beyond its proper connotation and talk of our duty to ourselves or we may, if we like, say in a transcendent sense that it was Buddha's duty to abandon all, or even that it is the ascetic's duty to sit motionless in a cave! But this is obviously to play with words. Duty is a relative term and depends upon our relation to others. It is a father's duty, as a father, to nurture, and educate his children; a lawyer's to do his best for his client even if he knows him to be guilty and his defence to be a lie; a soldier's to fight and shoot to order even if he kills his own kin and countrymen; a judge's to send the guilty to prison and hang the murderer. And so long as these positions are accepted, the duty remains clear, a practical matter of course even when it is not a point of honour or affection, and overrides the absolute religious or moral law. But what if the inner view is changed, if the lawyer is awakened to the absolute sinfulness of falsehood, the judge becomes convinced that capital punishment is a crime against humanity, the man called upon to the battlefield feels, like the conscientious objector of today or as a Tolstoy would feel, that in no circumstances is it permissible to take human life any more than to eat human flesh? It is obvious that here the moral law which is above all relative duties must prevail; and that law depends on no social relation or conception of duty but on the awakened inner perception of man, the moral being.

*(Sri Aurobindo: 'Essays on the Gita', CWSA Vol. 19, pp. 34-35)*

The argument of the Gita resolves itself into three great steps by which action rises out of the human into the divine plane leaving the bondage of the lower for the liberty of a higher law. First, by the renunciation of desire and a perfect equality works have to





be done as a sacrifice by man as the doer, a sacrifice to a deity who is the supreme and only Self though by him not yet realised in his own being. This is the initial step. Secondly, not only the desire of the fruit, but the claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced in the realisation of the Self as the equal, the inactive, the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force, of the Nature-Soul, Prakriti, the unequal, active, mutable power. Lastly, the supreme Self has to be seen as the supreme Purusha governing this Prakriti, of whom the soul in Nature is a partial manifestation, by whom all works are directed, in a perfect transcendence, through Nature. To Him love and adoration and the sacrifice of works have to be offered; the whole being has to be surrendered to Him and the whole consciousness raised up to dwell in this divine consciousness so that the human soul may share in His divine transcendence of Nature and of His works and act in a perfect spiritual liberty.

The first step is Karmayoga, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the Gita's insistence is on action. The second is Jnanayoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world, and here the insistence is on knowledge; but the sacrifice of works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. The last step is Bhaktiyoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion; but the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues; the double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, is attained, union with the divine Being and oneness with the supreme divine Nature.

*(Sri Aurobindo: 'Essays on the Gita', CWSA Vol. 19, pp. 37-38)*

The mind of the rajasic man drinks of a more fiery and intoxicating cup; the keen, mobile, active pleasure of the senses and the body



and the sense-entangled or fierily kinetic will and intelligence are to him all the joy of life and the very significance of living. This joy is nectar to the lips at the first touch, but there is a secret poison in the bottom of the cup and after it the bitterness of disappointment, satiety, fatigue, revolt, disgust, sin, suffering, loss, transience. And it must be so because these pleasures in their external figure are not the things which the spirit in us truly demands from life; there is something behind and beyond the transience of the form, something that is lasting, satisfying, self-sufficient. What the sattwic nature seeks, therefore, is the satisfaction of the higher mind and the spirit and when it once gets this large object of its quest, there comes in a clear, pure happiness of the soul, a state of fullness, an abiding ease and peace. This happiness does not depend on outward things, but on ourselves alone and on the flowering of what is best and most inward within us. But it is not at first our normal possession; it has to be conquered by self-discipline, a labour of the soul, a high and arduous endeavour. At first this means much loss of habitual pleasure, much suffering and struggle, a poison born of the churning of our nature, a painful conflict of forces, much revolt and opposition to the change due to the ill-will of the members or the insistence of vital movements, but in the end the nectar of immortality rises in the place of this bitterness and as we climb to the higher spiritual nature we come to the end of sorrow, the euthanasia of grief and pain. That is the surpassing happiness which descends upon us at the point or line of culmination of the sattwic discipline.

*(Sri Aurobindo: 'Essays on the Gita', CWSA Vol. 19, pp. 505-506)*

I demand of you not a passive consent to a mechanical movement of Nature from which in yourself you are wholly separated, indifferent and aloof, but action complete and divine, done as the willing and understanding instrument of the Divine, done for God in you and others and for the good of the world. This action I propose to you, first no doubt as a means of perfection in



the supreme spiritual Nature, but as a part too of that perfection. Action is part of the integral knowledge of God and of his greater mysterious truth and of an entire living in the Divine; action can and should be continued even after perfection and freedom are won. I ask of you the action of the Jivanmukta, the works of the Siddha. Something has to be added to the Yoga already described, - for that was only a first Yoga of knowledge. There is also a Yoga of action in the illumination of God-experience; works can be made one spirit with knowledge. For works done in a total self-vision and God-vision, a vision of God in the world and of the world in God are themselves a movement of knowledge, a movement of light, an indispensable means and an intimate part of spiritual perfection. "Therefore now to the experience of a high impersonality add too this knowledge that the Supreme whom one meets as the pure silent self can be met also as a vast dynamic Spirit who originates all works and is Lord of the worlds and the Master of man's action and endeavour and sacrifice. This apparently self-acting mechanism of Nature conceals an immanent divine Will that compels and guides it and shapes its purposes. But you cannot feel or know that Will while you are shut up in your narrow cell of personality, blinded and chained to your viewpoint of the ego and its desires. For you can wholly respond to it only when you are impersonalised by knowledge and widened to see all things in the self and in God and the self and God in all things.

*(Sri Aurobindo: 'Essays on the Gita', CWSA Vol. 19, pp. 585-586)*

The mind of knowledge and the will of action are not all; there is within you a heart whose demand is for delight. Here too in the heart's power and illumination, in its demand for delight, for the soul's satisfaction your nature must be turned, transformed and lifted to one conscious ecstasy with the Divine. The knowledge of the impersonal self brings its own Ananda; there is a joy of impersonality, a singleness of joy of the pure spirit. But an integral knowledge brings a greater triple delight. It opens the gates



of the Transcendent's bliss; it releases into the limitless delight of a universal impersonality; it discovers the rapture of all this multitudinous manifestation: for there is a joy of the Eternal in Nature. This Ananda in the Jiva, a portion here of the Divine, takes the form of an ecstasy founded in the Godhead who is his source, in his supreme self, in the Master of his existence. An entire God-love and adoration extends to a love of the world and all its forms and powers and creatures ; in all the Divine is seen, is found, is adored, is served or is felt in oneness. Add to knowledge and works this crown of the eternal triune delight; admit this love, learn this worship: make it one spirit with works and knowledge. That is the apex of the perfect perfection.

*(Sri Aurobindo: 'Essays on the Gita', CWSA Vol. 19, pp. 588-589)*

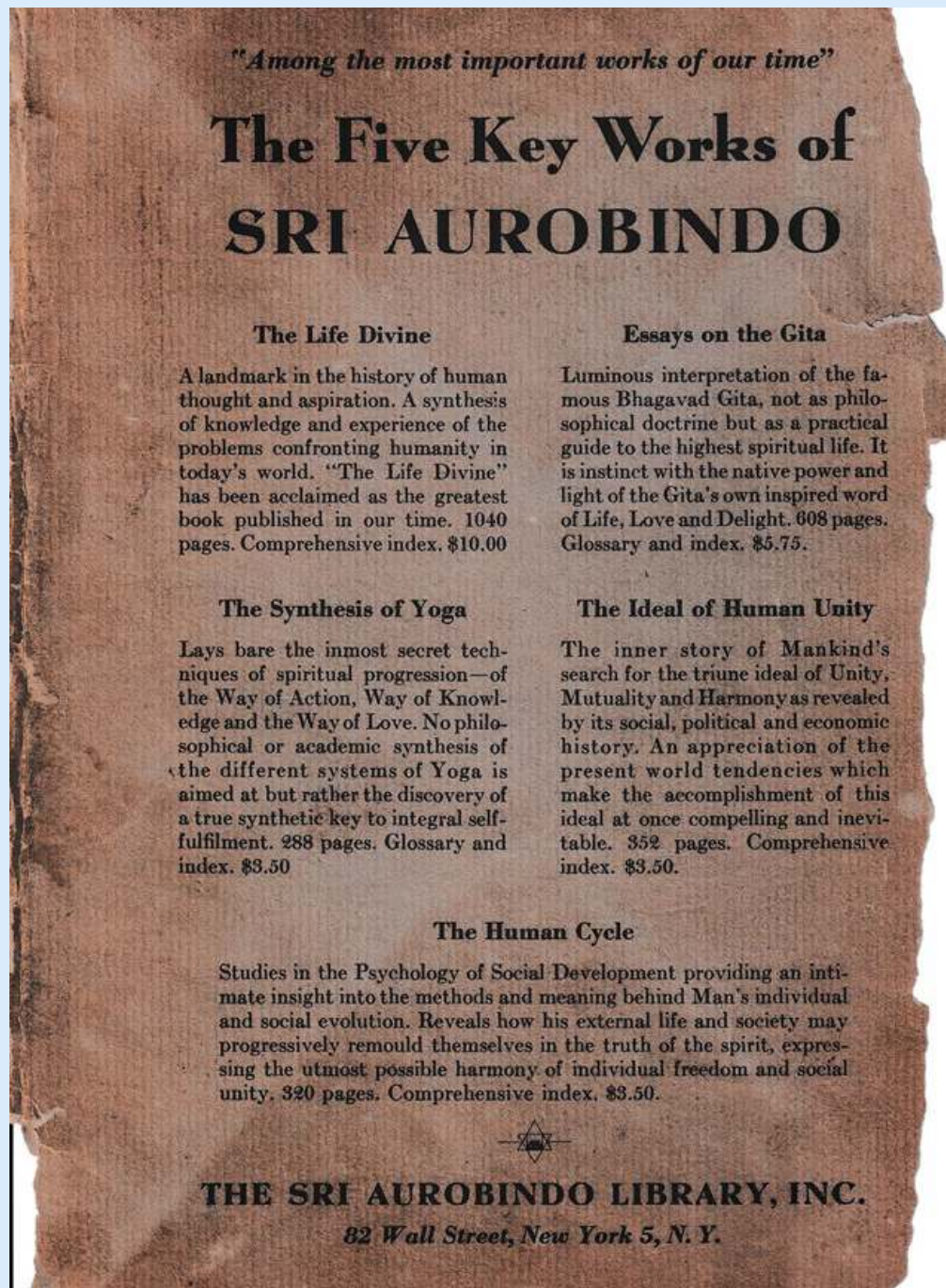
This Yoga of love will give you a highest potential force for spiritual largeness and unity and freedom. But it must be a love which is one with God-knowledge. There is a devotion which seeks God in suffering for consolation and succour and deliverance: there is a devotion which seeks him for his gifts, for divine aid and protection and as a fountain of the satisfaction of desire : there is a devotion that, still ignorant, turns to him for light and knowledge. And so long as one is limited to these forms, there may persist even in their highest and noblest Godward turn a working of the three Gunas. But when the God-lover is also the God-knower, the lover becomes one self with the Beloved; for he is the chosen of the Most High and the elect of the Spirit. Develop in yourself this God engrossed love ; the heart spiritualised and lifted beyond the limitations of its lower nature will reveal to you most intimately the secrets of God's immeasurable being, bring into you the whole touch and influx and glory of his divine Power and open to you the mysteries of an eternal rapture. It is perfect love that is the key to a perfect knowledge.

*(Sri Aurobindo: 'Essays on the Gita', CWSA Vol. 19, p.589)*





## How It Was Seen in 1949



This is how The Sri Aurobindo Library, New York, described *Essays on the Gita*, when they published it in 1949:

"Luminous interpretation of the famous Bhagavad Gita, not as philosophical doctrine but as a practical guide to the highest spiritual life. It is instinct with the native power and light of the Gita's own inspired word of Life, Love and Delight."





*Many a bud never bloom for want of care. The country is full of budding young people handicapped by the environment in which they grow up, which prevents them from realizing their full potential. Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch has had the privilege of nurturing thousands of such boys and girls, and also the joy of seeing them bloom. In this column, we shall bring you stories of the difference that the Ashram made to their lives.*

## How A Teacher Began Her Learning Journey



*Minati enjoying an outing with her students*

In October 2009, Minati Sahu joined the computer and typing department of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch as a Vocational Trainee for six months. Her time there was spent on learning typing and how to operate the basic programs like Word and Excel. But it was not just the learning at work, the overall

Ashram environment slowly grew on to her. She experienced a change in her personality and was becoming more aware of herself, and this new-found quest led her to ask that she be allowed to continue staying in the Ashram. Seeing her interests and inclination, she was given an opportunity to learn about integral education, primarily by observing and doing, in the Mirambika Free Progress School. In Mirambika, she spent most of her time with the pre-primary students. Along with learning the skills of reading, writing, and communicating in English, the community set up gave her an opportunity to work on developing other personality attributes such as sharing, co-operation, discipline and hard work. In her own words, “I got to know my strengths and weaknesses through different introspective activities and became more conscious about my inner movements. I got many opportunities to be more responsible and self-confident carrying different responsibilities.” Her stay in the Ashram also introduced



her to the life and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, which stayed with her on the onward journey she made after completing the course at Mirambika. After leaving Mirambika in 2013, she spent six years at Kechla, a remote village in the tribal belt of Odisha, where Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch has an outreach centre, which includes a school called Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir(AMVM). AMVM also follows the philosophy of integral education, and has implemented the free progress model. At AMVM, Minati acquired experience in teaching children of the age group 4-8 years. Since 2019, she has been working at Sri Aurobindo Integral Education and Research Center, Rajgangpur, Sundergarh, Odisha, as a Primary School Teacher. She is grateful for the opportunity that the Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch provided her, which facilitated her all-round development as well as helped her embark on a fulfilling career.



*The love of the world spiritualised, changed from a sense experience to a soul-experience, is founded on the love of God and in that love there is no peril and no shortcoming. Fear and disgust of the world may often be necessary for the recoil from the lower nature, for it is really the fear and disgust of our own ego which reflects itself in the world. But to see God in the world is to fear nothing, it is to embrace all in the being of God; to see all as the Divine is to hate and loathe nothing, but love God in the world and the world in God.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, pp. 233-234)*

*... self-pity is among the most ignoble and un-Aryan of moods.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 54)*



## The Triune is One

Shishu

The modern tendency is to consider the Gita to be a gospel of action. Some commentators, however, consider the Gita to be a scripture that considers either knowledge or devotion to be the best path. To support their conclusion, they quote chapter and verse from the Gita. Thus, they end up finding in the Gita support for their personal bias. Sri Aurobindo stands out in deducing the message of the Gita by looking at it in its entirety. He has brought out what the Gita as a whole is trying to say, not what a few verses here, or a few verses there say. Looking at the entire Gita in one sweep, he illustrates how the three streams of the yoga of the Gita offer flexibility in terms of how the seeker might begin. But a sincere seeker will not be able to restrict himself to any one stream for long.

### The sequence of the three paths in The Gita

The Gita is a lesson taught by the Divine Teacher, Sri Krishna, to a human disciple, Arjuna. The eighteen chapters of The Gita may be roughly divided into three parts of six chapters each. The first part concentrates on karma yoga, the middle part on jnana yoga, and the last part on bhakti yoga. The student, Arjuna, is basically a man of action. He is well-versed in the code of right conduct for persons of his calling, and he has lived a life scrupulously in keeping with the code. But when faced with the prospects of the Kurukshetra war, all the principles that have so far guided his life fail him, and he cannot decide what to do. He knows well that as a *kshatriya* (the warrior class) it is his duty to fight, if necessary, to protect good from evil, justice from injustice. But he also feels that it is not proper to kill, specially his near and dear ones, all the more so because they include his teachers and elders. To enable him to take a decision, the divine teacher, Sri Krishna, starts with lessons in karma yoga. The teacher's choice



to begin with karma yoga takes into account the temperament of the student. To begin with, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that he has a right to choose his actions but not the outcome of his actions (The Gita, 2:47). The implication is that he should choose the action which befits a *kshatriya*, regardless of the expected outcome. The advice is clear, but it seems irrational. If I do something, I may not expect any benefits from it, but how can I escape feeling responsible for the outcome of my actions? The explanation comes in Chapter 3. We are not the doers of our actions, it is only those bewildered by their ego who think so (The Gita, 3:27). This goes one step further: renounce not only the fruit but also the action because you are not the doer. This can be very confusing indeed. The teacher creates the confusion deliberately so as to arouse the curiosity of this man of action. The curiosity is further stimulated by telling him that knowledge can see him through even the most deadly sins (The Gita, 4:36). Now the stage has been set. The student's motivation to learn has been taken to its peak. Like a good teacher, Sri Krishna knows that it is no use beating cold iron with a hammer.

The knowledge is then given to Arjuna in a systematic way in chapters 7 onwards, and direct experience of the knowledge in Chapter 11. The knowledge reveals the true identity of the teacher. Arjuna now knows for sure that Krishna is the Master of the universe; everything happens only through His will; and that His unseen hand is behind everything that we think we are doing. Based on this knowledge comes the explanation for the earlier verses which seemed contrary to ordinary understanding. Says Sri Krishna, "for all practical purposes, the Kauravas are already dead because I have decided that they have to die. I want you to be the channel or instrument to carry out the action, and through that earn glory and enjoy a prosperous kingdom" (The Gita, 11:33). Now the advice given in Chapter 2 becomes intelligible. Everything falls in place because Arjuna now knows that all events are a part of His design. Not only that, once





Arjuna has learnt, and experienced, the supreme secret behind the universe, he is overwhelmed by the glory of the teacher. Now **he does not have to** obey the teacher, **he wants to** obey the teacher. That is exactly what devotion is. Therefore, when Sri Krishna talks about bhakti yoga in the last few chapters of The Gita, to Arjuna it is a natural corollary to the knowledge he has received. Arjuna, who had already become a devotee as a result of learning who his teacher truly is, is only too eager and pleased to do whatever Sri Krishna asks him to do (The Gita, 18:73). **To do happily what the Divine expects of us without letting the intellect introduce any ifs and buts is what devotion is about.**

In short, in the Gita, the demands made by karma yoga arouse curiosity. Jnana yoga satisfies the curiosity. The knowledge gained through jnana yoga inspires devotion, leading the disciple to the path of bhakti yoga. This is the sequence of the three streams of yoga in The Gita, and is appropriate for an action-oriented disciple like Arjuna. But, as discussed below, the end result is no different if the disciple begins somewhat differently.

### **Alternative sequences in the triple path**

Suppose the seeker is an intellectual, and is primarily motivated by curiosity. Through jnana yoga, he is likely to experience glimpses of the Divine, which become more and more vivid and constant as he progresses. It will be difficult for him to remain emotionally unmoved by the grandeur and glory of the Divine, and this will add the element of bhakti to his sadhana. Bhakti remains sterile without service. The addition of service will put the seeker on the path also of karma yoga.

A simple-minded seeker might get drawn to bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga is, in a way, the easiest path to start with because it does not call for great intellectual ability or book learning. But, in another sense, bhakti yoga is also extremely difficult because it demands





total surrender, which is far from easy. The devotee soon realizes that devotion is incomplete unless translated into service to the object of devotion. That leads to karma yoga. Finally, long enough pursuit of devotion leads to direct realization of supreme knowledge as an experience. Thus, the one who started with bhakti eventually becomes a jnana yogi. Just as knowledge can inspire devotion, devotion can lead to experiential knowledge, which is higher than bookish knowledge.

### Closing Thoughts

We have seen how, starting with any of the three streams of the triple path of The Gita, the seeker may end up walking all the three. The three paths for approaching the Divine use the three principal instruments of action available to us: hands, head and heart. Using the hands to serve the Divine is karma yoga; using the head to know the Divine is jnana yoga, and using the heart to adore the Divine is bhakti yoga. However, the division into the three paths is only to make it easier for the seeker to make a beginning in keeping with his temperament. As Sri Aurobindo brings out in *Essays on the Gita*, for the seeker who follows any of the three paths long enough and sincerely enough, the three paths fuse into one; the fusion may be described as work enlightened by knowledge and lubricated by devotion. Thus, the triune is, in fact, one.



*A strong one-sided truth, when set forth as the whole truth, creates a strong light but also a strong confusion ; for the very strength of its element of truth increases the strength of its element of error.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 135)*



## Work and Its Outcome

Matrisevak

We live in a no-nonsense result-oriented world that has no time for niceties and frivolities. Hence, there is a marked tendency to optimize the link between work and its outcome. The spiritual aspect of this link is generally deduced solely from the verse of the Gita that tells us that we have a right only to action, not to its fruit, and that the fruit should not be the motive of our action (The Gita, 2:47). However, the Gita has a lot more of great importance to say about work than just disinterested performance of duty. The Gita does not prevent us from expecting a particular outcome from our work. Even before the work is begun, any thinking person predicts what the consequences of his action are likely to be. Unless the consequences are likely to be as he would like them to be, he does not even begin the work. What is important to realize is that what we predict is not necessarily what the consequences will actually be, and that the work should not be motivated primarily by what we stand to gain from the work. Our intelligence, hard work, and dedication notwithstanding, the outcome of our work may be quite different from what we expect. The justification for detaching myself from the fruit of action is that the ability to do the work, and the circumstances under which the work can be done, have been given to me by the Divine. These have been given to me because the Divine has chosen me to be the instrument for that action. If I am a mere instrument of the Divine, I am neither the doer nor the one who has the right to determine the outcome of the action. The practical implications of the spiritual approach to work are threefold. **First**, it avoids the stress associated with the uncertainty regarding the outcome of the work. **Secondly**, the work is done as an instrument of the Divine, and therefore for the Divine. Hence, the worker puts his heart and soul into the work. **Finally**, even without insisting on a particular outcome, the worker is happy.



The psychologist B.F. Skinner constructed a box, known by his name. In the box could be placed a rat. The box had a device for delivering a food pellet to the rat, if the rat pressed a lever in the box. When the rat discovered the association, it was strongly motivated to press the lever again and again. However, the device could be so programmed that it delivered a pellet either every time the rat pressed the lever or only some of the time in a random and unpredictable fashion. It may be assumed that the rat was happy with the outcome of its action (pressing the lever) when it got food, and unhappy when it did not. In the real world, the reward that we reap from our work also follows an irregular and unpredictable schedule. But unlike rats, we have the choice of adopting in our work the attitude of karma yoga inculcated by the Gita. If we do that, we are mentally prepared to accept any outcome from our work. That happens because we have renounced our right to the fruit of the action. **Dispassionate acceptance of every outcome is rooted in surrender to the Divine.** The surrender, as Sri Aurobindo says, is not only to the Divine will but also to the Divine wisdom. Surrender to the Divine wisdom means that we believe that the real outcome of the work is better than the outcome that we expected. Even if we cannot see how exactly it is better, we know that there is at least one positive feature in every outcome: it can serve as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Hence, we can accept any outcome whatsoever with equal delight. That is how spiritual equality (*samattva*) goes one step beyond mere philosophical equanimity. Since the reward of spiritual growth is guaranteed with every outcome, working in the spirit of karma yoga ensures a reward irrespective of the outcome! Thus, the irregular and unpredictable schedule of the work leading to a reward is converted by karma yoga into a predictable schedule. All actions of the one who works for the Divine are rewarded with spiritual growth.

**The Gita of course teaches us how to do our duty. But even more importantly, it tells us which duty to perform. When we**



find ourselves faced with the dilemma of two or more conflicting duties, each of them important in its own way, which duty should we choose? For example, there may be a conflict between two or more out of domestic duty, social duty, moral duty, official duty and patriotic duty. In such situations, the duty that we should choose is that which is our divine duty. We know what our divine duty is by making a conscious contact with our divine essence, which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother call the psychic being. When we make that contact, our psychic being tells us instantly what we should do. There can, however be a difficulty in identifying the voice of the psychic being. The most dependable way to identify that voice is by asking ourselves a simple question, and answering it with total sincerity. The question is: which choice will leave us in lasting mental peace? Only our divine duty leaves us in lasting mental peace. That is how Buddha decided to go in search of finding the solution to pain and suffering rather than look after his wife, child and the kingdom. **Which duty to choose from among conflicting duties is an even more important message of the Gita than how to perform our duty.** Making the right choice, by letting the voice of the psychic being prevail, ensures that the action chosen will lead to joy, peace of mind and spiritual growth, which is the very purpose of life. That is how our actions can make our life meaningful to us and useful to others. A better formula for combining action with the best possible outcome one hundred percent of the time is yet to be written.

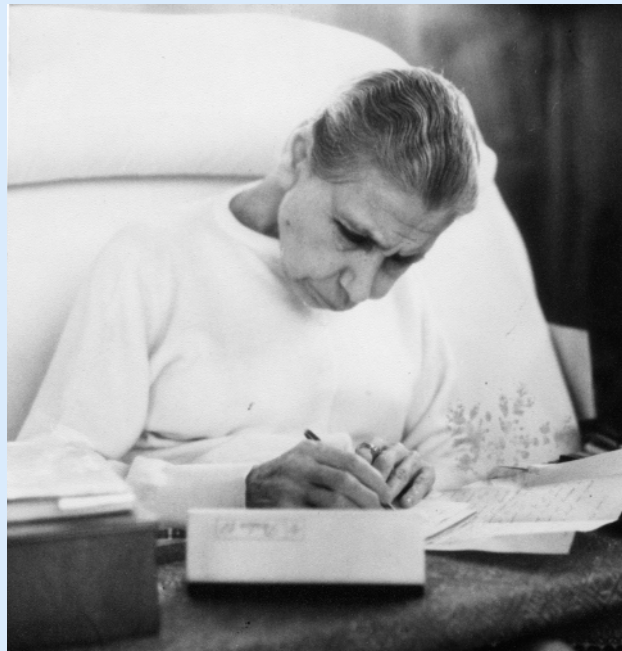


*Where sacrifice is not willingly given, Nature exacts it by force, she satisfies the law of her living.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 119)*



## The Significance of the Gita



Sri Aurobindo considers the message of the Gita to be the basis of the great spiritual movement which has led and will lead humanity more and more to its liberation, that is to say, to its escape from falsehood and ignorance, towards the truth.

From the time of its first appearance, the Gita has had an immense spiritual action; but with the new interpretation that Sri Aurobindo has given to it, its influence has increased considerably and has become decisive.

*The Mother*



*The soul that fails to get faith in the higher truth and law must return into the path of ordinary mortal living subject to death and error and evil : it cannot grow into the Godhead which it denies.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, pp. 295-296)*





## Descend Deep into Thyself

Partho

*Descend deep into thyself  
where sleeps God in thee,*

*deeper than the world's noise  
deeper than the beats  
of thy own heart,*

*where no passing thought nor feeling  
leaves behind a trace,  
where even memory is a distant shape  
fading into eternal night.*

*There: concealed from thy human sight  
the splendour waits,  
the Love that devours all universe in its Bliss,*

*the single tremendous kiss  
that transfigures life,  
and night changes  
into an explosion of light.*

*And then shall thee  
love no more the night and its mystical dark,  
forever shall thee break free from rest and sleep,  
and thou shall die no more...*

*My voice still echoes  
in the dark still of night  
caressing your sleeping eyes,  
the night is unreal,  
there is no waking,  
only dream figures swim through mystic haze,*

*the light is enclosed  
in the bud you hold  
clenched in your palm.*

*You tremble, the stillness breaks...*

*Reproduced from 'The Call Beyond', Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 35, 1997*



*Whether it is the disciple who chooses the Guru, or it is the Guru who chooses the disciple may be debatable, but fascinating and often incredible are the stories behind their being brought together. This column will bring you the circumstances under which some of the foremost disciples of Sri Aurobindo felt his unmistakable magnetic pull.*

## Amal Kiran: A Clear Ray

Aditi Kaul



*Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna)*  
(26 Nov 1904 – 29 June 2011)

A young man, around age 20, once bought a shoe at the Crawford market in Bombay. The shoe was handed over to him wrapped in an old newspaper. Little did he know that this pair of shoes will make him walk a path for the rest of his life, a path he had never imagined. It was not really the shoe but the wrapper that did it. The wrapper had an article titled ‘A Visit with Aurobindo Ghose.’ The article caught his eye because a few days before this incident, a Theosophist had mentioned Sri Aurobindo’s name to him during a conversation around intellectual dilemmas and intense seeking for answers; the name had stayed with him. What intrigued him the most was Sri Aurobindo’s mastery over many languages, and that made him write a letter to the Ashram in Pondicherry, seeking permission for a visit.

The permission came, and there he was in Pondicherry in 1927 at the age of 23. Sri Aurobindo was in seclusion; so, he met the Mother. Sharing his first meeting with The Mother in his diary, K.D. Sethna, as the young man’s name was, wrote, “When I was talking with her I felt as if from her face and eyes some silver radiance were coming out. I am very critical and sceptical, you know, but I could not make out how this was happening – nor could I doubt that



it was happening. Apart from this impression of light, there was another – of something out of ancient Egypt.” At another place in his notes, he recounts the darshan day of 21 February 1928, where he got the first glimpse of Sri Aurobindo. The very first glimpse made him feel that Sri Aurobindo was impressive and grand, and he accepted Sri Aurobindo as his Guru.

Like any highly evolved young man, who is ecstatic when he has found his Guru, Sethna made a quick decision to stay back in the Ashram for the rest of his life because, as he told the Mother, he had seen everything that was there to be seen in ordinary worldly life. But the Mother knew that it was too early for him; he needed to see some more of life outside the Ashram. So, he had to go back to Mumbai.

To cut a long story short, he did return to Pondicherry but several years later – in 1954. On asking for a spiritual name, Sri Aurobindo gave him the name Amal Kiran, which means a clear ray. Amal Kiran went on to become one of the foremost disciples of Sri Aurobindo, a disciple who was besides, also an intellectual genius. His literary outpourings began at a very young age with book reviews in newspapers and magazines. His first book, titled *Parnassians*, appeared when he was just twenty. In Pondicherry, he devoted his free time to developing his poetry, regularly sending his numerous creations to Sri Aurobindo for getting his opinion and corrections. His poetic genius was recognized and nurtured under the guidance and inspiration of Sri Aurobindo. He was probably the only disciple to whom Sri Aurobindo was revealing parts of his epic poem, *Savitri*, and was also allowing him to comment on them. Sri Aurobindo seldom made any changes in response to the questions raised by Amal Kiran, but replied to all his queries, and explained why Sri Aurobindo had written what he had written and why a change suggested by Amal Kiran had been rejected. Such interactions have a powerful purifying influence on an intellectual, being both humbling and uplifting at the same time.



Amal Kiran had strong spiritual leanings. He had an out-of-the-body experience before finally coming to Pondicherry. He took it as a concrete proof of an existence beyond the physical body, but his intellectual mind could not accept it. The conflict between his experience and his rational mind led him deeper into the philosophical and religious works from all around the world. His westernized intellect found its ultimate unshakable peace with his opening of the psychic being through the touch of The Mother. He described his sadhana as sadhana of the opening of the heart center by the touch of The Mother. Remember and offer, take refuge in The Mother was his message to all the seekers. His passion for the awakening of the psychic being and its role in transforming humanity into a living expression of the Divine became his sadhana.



*All creatures and all objects are becomings of the one divine Being ; all life is a working of the power of the one Lord; all nature is a manifestation of the one Infinite.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 329)*

*He is the Being, all are his becomings.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 333)*

*We cannot get beyond the three Gunas, if we do not first develop within ourselves the rule of the highest Guna, Sattwa.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 267)*

*To serve ego and desire without aspiration to a higher nature and a higher law is to have the mind and the temperament of the Asura.*

*Sri Aurobindo (In: 'Essays on the Gita', SABCL edition, p. 267)*





## A Great New Force

### The London Times Literary Supplement

This internationally renowned weekly introduced Sri Aurobindo to its readers in an important editorial message as a great new force in world thought, thus:

"Of all modern Indian writers Aurobindo—successively poet, critic, scholar, thinker, nationalist, humanist—is the most significant and perhaps the most interesting. Yet few have heard of him in England or America. This is a pity, for he should make a special appeal to the intelligent Anglo-Saxon. He is not an arm-chair philosopher, but a man who, having led a life of intense activity, has retired to brood over it, if one may say so of a Hindu, in the dim light of a Gothic cathedral. In fact, he is a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge.

"... He gave up everything, and withdrew to Pondicherry—to follow the new light that had been vouchsafed to him. What was this light? To be of active help to the new world which, in his opinion, was struggling to be born. To achieve this aim he had, first, to make of his body, mind and spirit a delicate and precise instrument, and then to learn to draw from this instrument the maximum of its possibilities. Aurobindo cannot be dismissed as one who happens to have written a few fine books. He ... writes as though he were standing among the stars, with the constellations for his companions.

"That he is a great idealist goes without saying; but he is not an idealist in the Shankaran or Berkeleyan manner. He has achieved a reconciliation between matter and spirit. They are, in his opinion, one and indivisible. It is not necessary, he says, to prove the existence of God. He is: in Him we live and move and have our being. The world is His manifestation, and so is as real as God. If it is a dream, it is a dream in Reality and made of the same stuff as this Reality. If the gold is real, Aurobindo tells us, the vessel of gold is as real and can never be a figment of the brain.

"Aurobindo is no visionary. He has always acted his dreams. 'Truth of philosophy,' he has said, 'is of a merely theoretical value unless it can be lived' ... an internationalist, not in a dreamy nor yet in a conventional manner, but by inner compulsion—the compulsion of thought! leading to an inevitable conclusion. Long before others he spoke of 'one world.' His fine word is that we are, whether we like it or not, 'members one of another.' Unless we realize this, and act upon it, we shall never have peace and goodwill on earth."

*The blurb of 'Essays on the Gita', published by The Sri Aurobindo Library, New York, in 1949.*

The internationally renowned weekly, The London Times Literary Supplement, introduced Sri Aurobindo to its readers in an important editorial message as a great new force in world thought, thus:

"Of all modern Indian writers Aurobindo – successively poet, critic, scholar, thinker, nationalist, humanist – is the most significant and perhaps the most interesting. Yet few have heard of him in England or America. This is a pity, for he should make a special appeal to the intelligent Anglo-Saxon. He is not an arm-chair philosopher, but a man who, having led a life of intense activity, has retired to brood over it, if one may say so of a Hindu, in the dim light of a Gothic cathedral. In fact, he is a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge.





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## Astonishing and Amazing

Sweet Children of the Sweet Mother,

We do hope you have made some, and will make many more, new beginnings – for the better – in this new year that is not just new but also significant in ways more than one. The year 2022 is one in which August 15 is the day on which Independent India will be seventy-five, as well as the day on which the world will celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. In your ‘corner’ in *‘The Call Beyond’*, this year we will bring you, month after month, some interesting anecdotes from the life of Sri Aurobindo. Here is the first in the series.

When Sri Aurobindo was in Vadodara (then called Baroda), he had living with him for more than two years Shri Dinendra Kumar Roy, who had been sent there to teach him Bangla, but ended up learning more from him than he could teach Sri Aurobindo. When Roy went to meet Sri Aurobindo for the first time, he went with a sense of awe and trepidation. He made a mental picture of Sri Aurobindo, as we generally do when we go to meet somebody special about whom we have heard a lot, even if we have never seen him. Roy did not have the benefit of seeing images of Sri Aurobindo on Google! He thought he was going to meet a scholar who has returned to India after a fourteen-year stay in England. So, his mental image of Sri Aurobindo was that of a bespectacled scholar in a suit and necktie. But instead, he met an unassuming person in a dhoti! On living longer with him, he discovered that Sri Aurobindo was indeed a scholar, and also exceptionally intelligent, but was a perfect illustration of the greatness summed up in the expression ‘simple living and high thinking’.

In Vadodara, Sri Aurobindo used to teach English and French in the College run by the Maharaja of Baroda. One of Sri Aurobindo’s students, Shri R.N. Patkar, has made a few interesting observations about the teacher. He says that Sri Aurobindo was completely



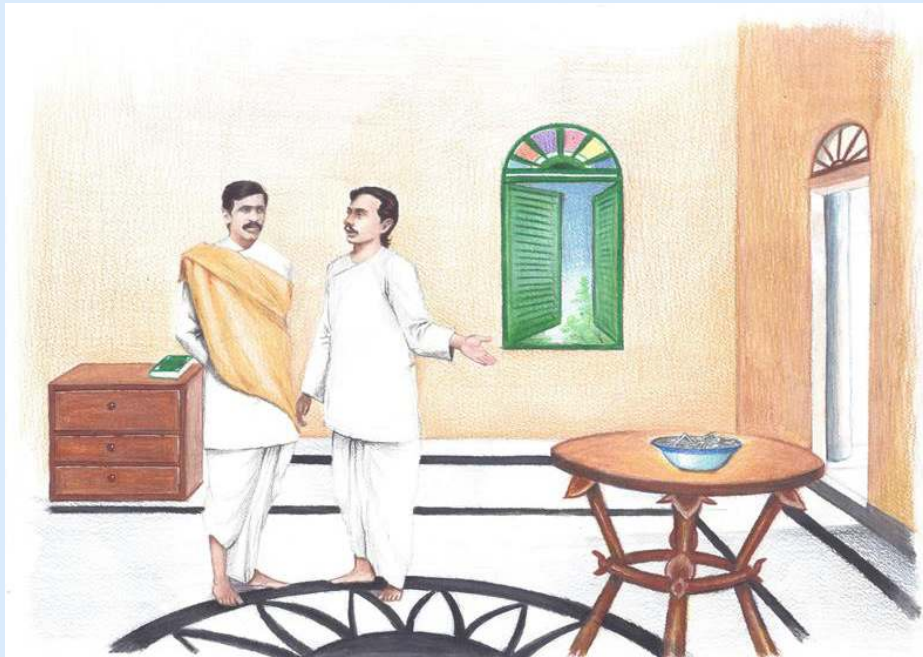
indifferent to the taste of food. He could be given anything to eat, and he would always eat it without complaining. Sri Aurobindo was completely indifferent also to his dress. He had only a few simple clothes, and never went to the market to buy more. Going to buy clothes one wants but does not need, selecting from a large variety available, is not only waste of money, but also a waste of time. Seems funny, but so true is what Oscar Wilde has said, "Time is a waste of money." If one has no time to spare, one would also save a lot of money! And there is no spare time available to a person who enjoys creating work for himself, as Sri Aurobindo did. In Vadodara, Sri Aurobindo was not only teaching, but also reading the ancient Indian scriptures in their original in the Sanskrit language, and also writing a lot, specially to galvanize the youth of the country to participate in the struggle for the freedom of the country. So, what Sri Aurobindo did, when a dhoti was worn out, perhaps was to simply tell someone to bring him a white dhoti from the market! Patkar also says that Sri Aurobindo used to sleep on a hard bed. When asked why he did so, Sri Aurobindo once told Patkar that it was because he was a 'Brahmchari'. A popular meaning of 'Brahmchari', that is, someone who is unmarried, is at least rather narrow, even if not altogether wrong. A wider and better meaning of 'Brahmchari' is someone who is not attached to sensory pleasures such as food, sex and a soft bed.

What is the implication of simplicity and non-attachment to sensory pleasures, which are just two of the several qualities of Sri Aurobindo highlighted above? Two major implications of these two qualities are non-attachment to money, and freedom.

If a person is simple, he has very few needs; and therefore, needs very little money. Sri Aurobindo received every month at Baroda a sum of about Rs. 500, which was a princely amount around the year 1900. But he had little need for it, and even more important, he was not attached to it. That is why he used to leave the money in a tray, from where anybody who needed money, could pick up



some. It is only if one does not need much money that one can afford to be unattached to it.



*Sri Aurobindo left the money that he received in a tray.  
When asked by R.N. Patkar why he maintained no account,  
he said, "It is God who keeps account for me."*

*(Drawing: Subhash Chandra)*

If a person is not attached to sensory pleasures, such as food, he is **not dependent on** getting palatable food of a particular type for his happiness. If a person cares not whether it is hot or cold, whether the bed is hard or soft, he is **not dependent on** any material object for his happiness. A person who is simple and is not attached to sensory pleasures, is **not dependent on** money for his happiness. ABSENCE OF DEPENDENCE IS FREEDOM.

We do hope you would enjoy this series on anecdotes from the life of Sri Aurobindo. If you have any questions, please drop an e-mail to [callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in](mailto:callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in).

With love, CB

*(Based on 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi'  
by Manoj Das, pp. 103, 109)*





## Feedback and Encouraging Words

### Feedback on Launching the Online Course on Yoga, YES.01

Dear Prof. Bijlani,

I would like to congratulate you for coming up with this great initiative on Sri Aurobindo's 150th Birth Anniversary.

My good wishes from Montreal.

*Abhishek*

*(Abhishek Ghosh, PhD, MBA)*

*Montreal, Canada*

*(in an email dated 15 Dec 2021)*

Wow Bhaiya, that's an amazing experience/gift you are offering to the seekers.

Heal the world. Make the world a better place for you and for me.

*Preeti (Bhardwaj)*

*(in an email dated 15 Dec 2021)*

### Feedback from a Volunteer

I come from a nuclear family with working parents. This was my first experience of community living. It took me time to understand the people and practices, and one month is certainly not enough to explore all the units of such a large institution. There are many activities lined up all throughout the day. Still, everything is managed very smoothly.

What I liked about the Ashram: everyone had a story to tell. The interactions with people helped me understand why people have been staying there for years. Spiritual knowledge for me



was about how people treated each other. Since each person has analysed himself so deeply, he can relate to the other person on various aspects and there is an environment of mutual respect and understanding. It is important to maintain this ambience.

Inspired by Khanna-ji's sessions, and hearing recordings of other talks, I started reading about the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. To read it on paper is different but to see those words being put to practice in the Ashram was the real learning.

Also, the meditation sessions helped me calm my thoughts.

I observed a couple of online classes at Mirambika school as well. I hope the pandemic situation eases and the children can physically attend the classes.

Apart from it, I enjoyed the learning opportunities at the studio and I also learned some farming skills through Shramdaan.

The New Year's cultural program put together by the Ashram youngsters is worth mentioning. At the same time, I was happily surprised at the way Ashram celebrates the new year by holding on to our aspirations and lighting a lamp.

To conclude, I realized that my coming to the Ashram did not happen by chance. It was the right time for me to gain this experience and I am grateful to everyone who was a part of this journey with me. I got a sense of belongingness in the place, and I will be keeping in touch and looking for opportunities where I can provide any services.

*Anuj (Chaturvedi)*

*(in an email dated 9 January 2022)*



## 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](http://www.sriaurobindoashram.net).*

*For a free subscription to 'Sri Aravind Karmadhara', please send an e-mail to [sakarmdhara@gmail.com](mailto:sakarmdhara@gmail.com)*

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

*Please follow a simple two-step process:*

- 1. Subject: Subscribe*
- 2. Click on Send*

*If you subscribe either to 'Realization', or to 'The Call Beyond', you will start receiving, month after month, both the magazines.*

*For information about Auro-Mira Service Society and the Kechla project, please visit the website [www.auromira.in](http://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.*



**Get in touch with Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch on:**

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**YouTube:** <https://youtube.com/sriaurobindoashramdelhibranch>

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## Feedback

Please send your feedback to  
[callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in](mailto:callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in)

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