

# The Call Beyond



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Cover picture, Courtesy: Sri Aurobindo Society



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## From Duty and Responsibility to Opportunity

We feel a certain degree of moral compulsion to do something that we are supposed to do, something that is called our duty. The obligation to doing our duty is further enhanced if we are paid for it. Doing our duty, and doing it well, is an ethical idea, almost a social norm, which is contested by none. But spirituality goes beyond morality and ethics. To a person aspiring for spiritual progress, the duty becomes an opportunity for taking a few steps towards realising her aspiration.

The job of a parent is not easy, and not all parents do it happily. Hardly any parent is not exasperated once in a while, and regrets why he opted to become a parent at all – be it while the child is going through the terrible twos, the rebellious teens, or turbulent romantic relationships. But still the parent continues with parenting as a responsibility he cannot and should not try to scape, because “After all, I brought these children into the world. Therefore, it is my responsibility to take care of them, to provide for them.” To a person aspiring for spiritual progress, the responsibility also becomes an opportunity for taking a few steps towards realising his aspiration.

The job of the sandwich generation is perhaps the most difficult of all. On one hand, their responsibility towards their children continues to be there; on the other, they also feel a certain commitment towards their aging parents. The commitment to parents may become a cumbersome chore, specially if one of the parents is bedridden or has a severe form of senile dementia, such as Alzheimer’s. To a person aspiring for spiritual progress, the crushing commitment of the sandwich generation also becomes an opportunity for taking a few steps towards realising her aspiration.

That raises two questions. How can all these roles be an opportunity for spiritual progress? Secondly, why looking at the duty or responsibility as an opportunity is important.



The role of a parent, or that of the child of an aging parent, involves giving: giving time, giving care, giving money, and so on. The best motivation for giving comes from love; rather, love is best expressed by giving. Giving as an expression of love is rooted in a weak barrier that separates the lover from the loved one. The barrier is further weakened when the love is expressed by giving. Thus, a weak barrier is both the cause and the consequence of giving. As a result of this cascading effect, the barrier may eventually collapse, and the range of the weak barrier may expand. A simpler way would be to say that not only the love deepens, the circle of loved ones also expands to include more and more. The process is nothing but a greater expression of the oneness that is a direct corollary to the spiritual worldview. Organising one's life more and more around the feeling of oneness is spiritual progress.

Now, coming to the second question, 'why looking at the duty or responsibility as an opportunity is important'. The shift in outlook and awareness as one moves from perceiving the task as a responsibility towards an opportunity makes the work easier, the work is done happily, the work is done better, and the work brings a sense of fulfilment. However, the shift does not mean that the person neglects herself. Unless the person is herself healthy, she does not have the energy to do the work required for giving a practical expression to her love.

The drain on the physical and mental energy involved in giving a practical expression to love calls for constant inner work. The inner work essentially involves getting into a meditative poise frequently enough during the day, specially in moments of desperation and exasperation, in order to recover and reinforce the sense of gratitude to the Divine for the opportunities available for spiritual growth. Without this continual inner work, there is a real risk of a reverse movement – from perceiving the task as an opportunity towards looking upon it as a duty, as a responsibility one wants to escape but cannot.



# The Primary Purpose of Life

Mrinal

What is the purpose of life? What is the meaning of life? The purpose of life is to be. But the mind wants a clearer, a deeper, a better answer, or an answer which one is able to fit in one's mental model. Such questions mostly arise after basic survival needs have been fulfilled, and such moments do arise where one feels lost and is not sure why one is doing what one is doing; what is the ultimate aim of it all?

All goals, desires, rational formulae to success, accumulating wealth, building relationships, manifestation of happiness, prove to be transient in nature. A life spent in accumulation and attachment to object goals is one of the main reasons why one suffers. **And confusing what brings suffering with the main purpose of life, one is trapped in a loop, and goes on suffering through cycles of birth and death.**

So, what is the purpose of life?

There is no easy answer to this big question, but perhaps the act of finding a meaningful life is simpler than we think.

Living a meaningful life is to be aware of the consciousness which is free from the bondage of birth and death, and the awareness of that consciousness, is itself liberating. This tells us that there is not a singular purpose but layers of purposes above mere survival. Thus, the question of finding the purpose of life is best approached by realising that there is a primary and a secondary purpose. And they differ remarkably in their nature.

It is probably easiest to relate to the secondary purpose. This is perhaps also why it is that concept which is being discussed, debated and written about most of the time. Secondary purpose has to do with finding your "mission" or your life's "calling". And for this reason, it is also primarily concerned with where you want





“to go” in your life. Many books and articles have been written on how to find out what it is that you truly want in life. The problem with this type of purpose, however, is that it implies future. Or put simply, we basically need time to get there. And this is where the secondary purpose differs from the primary purpose.

**The primary purpose does not involve time. In fact, and as simple as it may sound, the primary purpose of life is to be, exactly where, how and who you are, right now, in this very moment.** What could be easier than that? On the surface, this is not a very exciting concept. And it is highly likely that your mind will object to this kind of “life purpose”. But dig a little deeper, and see if you can discover the immensity of being where you are, right now. Indeed, everything has come together, in this very moment, and placed you right here, right now. And your primary purpose in life is to wake up, or align yourself, to that truth. You are here, right now, because it cannot be otherwise. Whereas you will have to look for, and hopefully find, your secondary purpose, your primary purpose is with you all the time, the entire day, every day of your life, and in everything you do, only if you are aware. To be fully aware one has to be totally present. Thoughts of the past or future steal that presence, consume the person, keep the person trapped.

If we are not aware of the present moment, our actions have the tendency to become a means to an end, and we miss the preciousness of the current moment. For instance, when we get up in the morning, we think about going to work. At work, we want to go home. When we get home and are cooking dinner, we want to eat. When we are eating, we want to relax with a movie. When we are relaxing with a movie, we start thinking about tomorrow. And so on. If we live this way our primary purpose is not fulfilled, and we are essentially living in a conceptual world, with our mind wanting to be somewhere different. Instead, we can give our lives purpose by being here. Right now. Fully.



Awakening from this conditioned mindset and unconsciousness is a shift in consciousness in which thinking and awareness are separate. For most people it is not an event but a process they undergo. Even those rare beings that experience a sudden, dramatic, and seemingly irreversible awakening will still go through a process in which the new state of consciousness gradually flows into and transforms everything they do and so becomes integrated into their lives. Instead of being lost in your thinking, when you are awake you recognize yourself as the awareness behind it. Thinking then ceases to be a self-serving autonomous activity that takes possession of you and runs your life. **Awareness takes over from thinking.** Instead of being in charge of your life, thinking becomes the servant of awareness. **Awareness is conscious connection with Universal Intelligence.** Another word for it is Presence: consciousness without thought.

This awareness of consciousness is a personal journey. To live with this primary purpose, one's task is to bring spacious stillness into this world by being absolutely present in whatever one does. There is consciousness and therefore quality in what one would do, even the simplest task. One's purpose is to do everything in a sacred manner. As each human being is an integral part of the collective human consciousness, each one of us affects the world much more deeply than is visible on the surface.

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The views expressed are the author's own. The author, Mrinal, did a course on Teaching Yoga at Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch in 2019.

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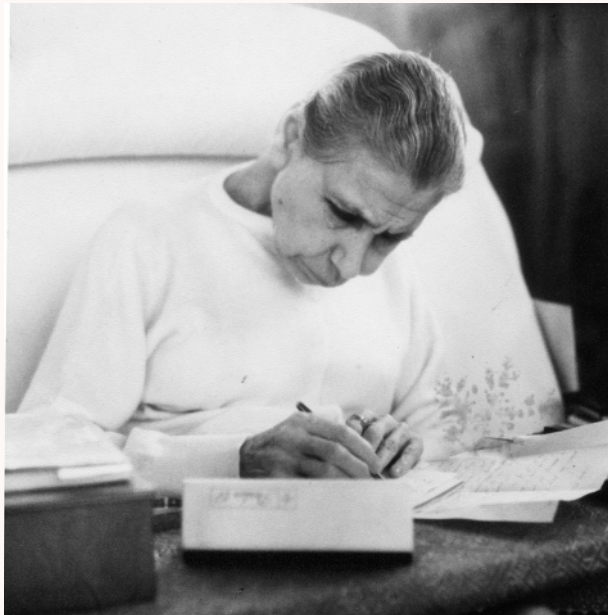
*A subject nation does not prepare itself by gradual progress for liberty; it opens by liberty its way to rapid progress.*

*Sri Aurobindo (Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p. 31)*





## Someone Who Knows Very Little



It is not necessarily someone with experience who is most advanced. He lacks an element of simplicity, modesty, and the plasticity that comes from the fact that one is not yet totally developed. As one grows, something crystallizes in the head; it gets more and more fixed and unless you try very hard you finish by becoming fossilized. That is what usually happens to people, particularly those who have tried for some realization and succeeded in it or those who have come to believe they have reached the goal.... For me personally, I admit I prefer for my work someone who knows very little, has not laboured too much, but who has a great deal of aspiration, a great goodwill and who feels in himself this flame, this need for progressing. He may know very little, may have realized still less, but if he has that within him, it is good stuff with which one can go very far, much further.

*The Mother ('The Great Adventure', p. 55)*

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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 channel is: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcmF6JzAOsBMdqJjZbnmyng>

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## In India, Rishis Were Not a One-Time Miracle\*



There are many who, lamenting the by-gone glories of this great and ancient nation, speak as if the Rishis of old, the inspired creators of thought and civilisation, were a miracle of our heroic age, not to be repeated among degenerate men and in our distressful present. This is an error and thrice an error. Ours is the eternal land, the eternal people, the eternal religion, whose strength, greatness, holiness may be overclouded but never, ever for a moment, utterly cease. The hero, the Rishi, the saint, are the natural fruits of our Indian soil; and there has been no age in which they have not been born.

*Sri Aurobindo (Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p. 9)*

*\*Title added by the editor*

*The leader of men in war or politics will always distrust petty and episodal gains which, while giving false hopes, are merely nominal and put off or even endanger the real issue, but will always seize on any advantage which brings decisive victory definitely nearer.*

*Sri Aurobindo (Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p. 35)*





## Sri Aurobindo and the Earthly Destiny

Dr. Alok Pandey

Of all the dreams cherished by mankind there is none more persistent in seizing his thought and imagination as the dream of earthly perfection. This pursuit has however usually taken two or three principal forms. *The one form with which we are familiar is the mundane perfection through human means. It is the modern misreading of the idea of perfection to mean a life where all kinds of desires of all human beings are fulfilled.* There is luxury and abundance for all and enough room for indulgence in the name of freedom. The means is technological science and machinery which is put at man's service to provide him with every possible comfort. **Such a perfection, if it were possible at all, would only mean a slavery to the principle of desire and a life of ignorance.** Evidently, such a perfection is not intended by Nature for it would mean that the fire that leads the upward march of human civilisation would sink and collapse. All such attempts in the past, whether the mythical Atlantis or Lanka or the city of Troy or Rome were doomed to failure. By its very nature, a life of intense rajasic activity leads to fatigue and recoil, a lapse into *tamas*, a fall into stupor.

*Then there is the notion of a superterrestrial perfection.* Here, we find the idea of an earth that is condemned to perpetual suffering, ignorance and imperfection. The only hope of a perfect life is in the Unseen Beyond. The highest good for man, it is asserted, is to lead a moral or religio-ethical life, doing his duties while he is here. Thus, it is said, that he would prepare himself for sojourn in a heaven of joy. **This in many ways appears an exaggerated version of all that man desires but gets not readily upon earth. It is a kind of sattwic, regulated life.**

*Beyond the religio-ethical is the spiritual impulse which arrives at a spiritual perfection in its own right. A spiritual perfection means*



that we are stripped of all the dross and grossness of earthly elements. The distortions of life like fear, lust and anger are removed and replaced by their divine equivalents of oneness, delight, strength, beauty, love, knowledge by identity and other divine attributes. One goes beyond the three gunas and principles of Nature. One has done away with the painful coils of birth and death, and shedding the mortal body, the spiritual entity in man takes a final plunge, a last exit out of earth and its strife. **Such a perfection, high and glorious though for an individual, does little good for the earth. Its last word is 'escape', its action is spiritually selfish.**

*Now, where does the Supramental Perfection that Sri Aurobindo brings figure in this?* Sri Aurobindo accepts man's aspiration for a terrestrial perfection. He accepts the reality of matter even as he accepts the reality of the Spirit. Revealing the Word of the ancient seers, Sri Aurobindo declares once again that 'All this that exists is the Brahman', but it is Brahman manifesting Itself in Time and Space. Manifestation in terms of Time and Space necessarily means a gradation of consciousness, a hierarchy of planes that appear at different points in the evolutionary progression. **Just as the seed contains the whole tree in itself but gradually unfolds it in time, so too Brahman, the Unmanifest, holds in itself all the possibilities. The manifestation of these possibilities is the secret cause of evolution. It is here that Sri Aurobindo equally admits the essential truth of a Spiritual Perfection but in another sense.** *So far, the earth and the race have not been ready for a collective spiritualisation.* The human journey has indeed progressed from the mere physical man preoccupied with his physical needs to a kinetic and dynamic man, the man of action and the hero. Out of this intensely rajasic man has arisen the thinking, mentalised, intellectual man. Of course, in all ages there have been some individuals exceptionally ahead of the masses, as a beacon light and guide. Also, perhaps, there have been several cycles before this which have served





as a preparatory movement. In any case, mind is not the last summit and mental, thinking man not the last possibility of the manifestation. Evidently, man's nature is far from being the divine nature. **Man has yet to rise above his limitations. But this last stride is not an escape into the skies but a spiritual victory over earth and matter. The same material principle which became living matter in plant and thinking matter in man will become spiritualised matter in the coming race. Such an evolution will be indeed a radical transformation and then earth itself will change because a divine race will inhabit and govern it. Such a race will naturally express and manifest the Divine Perfection. That which is as yet abnormal and rare will become normal and common.**

Thus, we find in Sri Aurobindo a grand synthesis of the earthly life and the spiritual life. The seemingly opposed and irreconcilable truths of matter and spirit harmoniously become fused into each other. The marriage of Earth and Heaven, for which the Vedic seers aspired, is coming towards its fulfilment.

Sri Aurobindo reveals this prophetic vision of a new and perfect world in his mantric poem Savitri :

*When superman is born as Nature's king  
His presence shall transfigure Matter's world:  
He shall light up Truth's fire in Nature's night,  
He shall lay upon the earth Truth's greater law...  
The Spirit's tops and Nature's base shall draw  
Near to the secret of their separate truth  
And know each other as one deity.  
The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze  
And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face...  
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,  
The Spirit shall take up the human play,  
This earthly life become the life divine.*

*Reproduced from The Call Beyond, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1998, pp. 11-12*



## A Proverbial Conversation

A member of *The Call Beyond* team recently had an online chat with Anaya Lal, a 12-year-old girl of Indian origin born and brought up in the US. The conversation went something like this.

CB: 'Well begun is half-done' is a well-known proverb. Do you think it is true?

AL: Yes.

CB: 'All is well that ends well' is also a well-known proverb. Do you think it is true?

AL: Yes.

CB: So, what matters is the beginning and the end. Does it mean the middle does not matter?

AL: No, the middle matters because it is the middle that determines the end.

*Editor's Note: In life on earth, birth is the 'beginning', and the 'end' is what we call death. The middle is the whole life of the individual. And, it is the way the middle is used that determines the 'end', and what follows the 'end'.*



*No nation can develop a living enthusiasm or accept great action and great sacrifices for a goal that is lost to its eye in the mist of far-off centuries; it must see it near and distinct before it, magnified by a present hope, looming largely and actualised as a living aim whose early realisation only depends on a great, sustained and sincere effort.*

*Sri Aurobindo (Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p. 33)*





## The Signature: Sri Aurobindo

Amal Kiran

*Sharp-hewn yet undertoned with mystery,  
A brief black sign from the Incommunicable  
Making the Eternal's Night mix with our day  
To deepen and deepen the shallow goldenness  
We hug to our heart! Laughing whip-lash of love  
That leaves a wonder-weal holding bright secrets  
Within its snake whose coils are centuries*

*But whose straight sweep is the backbone of One Bliss!  
The characters go flaming up and down  
With all time's venture twixt two ecstatic ends.  
Clutching with gentle finger our dumb desire  
A slanting full-bodied soar loops a firm loop  
Of light around some lone invisible peak —  
Followed by steady twin strokes toward the same goal,  
Yet smooth and statured close to the human heart.  
Then one curve-straightening gracefully girdled stance,  
A peace and pulchritude and potency,  
A slender pyramid chasing a viewless line  
Within, to an upright noon that knows all truth.  
Soon from the girdle a quick smiling leap  
Across, spaced with a pair of vertical dreams  
Still hinting unfallen heights, and then the term  
Of all this labour and rapture in a full sweet circle,  
Lackless, complete with godhead boundless in a point.  
But, never a stagnant splendour, it casts a hook  
Answering the curl before, with which the Name  
Of the Nameless unwound in the hours, by a curl behind  
Downward to dig and drag the dark Divine  
Out of some heaven made hell, the Abyss that is All!*

Source: <http://overmanfoundation.org/amal-kirans-poems-on-sri-aurobindo-and-the-mother/>



## Feedback and Encouraging Words

### Feedback on Yoga Classes

This is Monica Basterra. I was staying for 9 days at Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch in December 2022. One of my favourite parts of the day was the yoga class at 11 am with Vidya. Her classes were professional and focused, allowing the attention to go inward and be conscious of my body and breath easily during the sequence of asanas and movements.

During that time we worked a lot in hips opening, and I felt as if my body had opened up, overstepping the limits of its outline. We also did strengthening in vital parts so we could hold the asanas well. The pranayama and relaxation made the class very complete. I could feel a beautiful shift in my state of being by the end of the class.

I hope to come very soon again to repeat the experience.

*Monica Basterra*

*(in a WhatsApp message dated 15 December 2022)*

I am Vandana Mehta, a yoga enthusiast, practicing yoga for the past 25 years. I truly enjoy the classes at Sri Aurobindo Ashram - Delhi Branch. I started coming for classes here around 2007, and have never stopped, except during the pandemic. The earnestness of the teachers and the incomparable atmosphere of the Ashram is such a unique combination that it is difficult to get it anywhere else. Gratitude to the Ashram for running the Health Centre, and our wonderful present teacher, Vidya.

*Vandana Mehta*

*(in a WhatsApp message dated 23 December 2022)*



## Feedback on the YES.03 course

Hello Dr. Aditi and Dr. Bijlani,

I would like to thank you both for an amazing Yes.03 course. My gratitude to Sir for teaching a complex subject in such a unique way. It has definitely helped me to complete the Anatomy/Physiology course at my college. I am eagerly waiting to attend the next Yes course with you both.

*Divya Shridhar*

*(in an e-mail dated 15 Dec 2022)*



*To bring in the mass of the people, to found the greatness of the future on the greatness of the past, to infuse Indian politics with Indian religious fervour and spirituality are the indispensable conditions for a great and powerful political awakening in India.*

*Sri Aurobindo (Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p. 22)*

*... wish and will are not the same thing, but divided by a great gulf: the one, which is all most of us get to, is a puny, tepid and inefficient thing and, even when most enthusiastic, easily discouraged and turned from its object; the other can be a giant to accomplish and endure.*

*Sri Aurobindo (Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p. 36)*

*A great worker and creator is not to be judged only by the work he himself did, but also by the greater work he made possible.*

*Sri Aurobindo (Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p. 41)*

*... the repetition of known facts has its use when they are important and highly significant.*

*Sri Aurobindo (Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p. 36)*





## 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)

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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.*



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## Feedback

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