

The Call Beyond



Volume 48 No.11

15 November 2023



Highlights

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An Online Publication of
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM - DELHI BRANCH

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Wake Up to the Significance of Sleep

A team of scientists has shown recently that sleep-deprived mice find it difficult to navigate through a maze, and have problems with recognising new objects. The impairment has been linked to reduction in the level of a protein, pleiotrophin, in the hippocampus, the part of the brain which plays a pivotal role in learning and memory. This might at last convince the human beings of today, who may rather be called 'human doings', that sleep is not a waste of time. So enamoured are we of science that what it discovers in mice appeals to us more than what we know happens to sleep-deprived humans!

In modern science, the understanding of sleep has grown over the last almost 100 years. It started with the experiments done in the 1930s and 1940s, which suggested that sleep is a passive process resulting from withdrawal of sensory stimuli such as light and sound. It was later found that substances that actively promote sleep are also involved in the process of falling asleep. A significant development was William Dement & Nathaniel Kleitman's electroencephalographic (EEG) studies in the 1950s which discovered that sleep consists of alternating phases of dreamless and dream sleep. Actually, all of us dream, even those who claim to have seven hours of sound dreamless sleep! Then followed studies which showed that the brain and the rest of the body are not altogether inactive during sleep, and that sleep has a role in learning and memory.

Ayurveda has emphasised not only the necessity of sleep but also when to sleep and how to sleep. Night is roughly divided into three phases of four hours each, starting at 6 pm. The first four hours are dominated by *kapha*, or the heavy *dosha*, in the atmosphere, and is therefore conducive to sleep. Hence, one should sleep at the latest by 10 pm;



the earlier the better. The next four hours are dominated by *pitta*, which favours repair and healing. The healing effect of sleep in an illness is common experience, and Ayurveda considers good sleep to be half the treatment. But repair of wear and tear is required even in health. Therefore, sleep is a requirement as much in health as in disease. However, the duration of sleep required may be longer in disease, which is ensured through known molecular mechanisms. The next four hours, from 2 am to 6 am, are dominated by *vata*, the light and mobile dosha. The *vata* period is the right time to get up, which means one should be out of bed at the latest by 6 am; the earlier the better.

We are here in the world for a reason. From the spiritual angle, the purpose of life is to know who we truly are, and to let that deeper, higher and wider awareness guide our life. Irrespective of the purpose of life, a healthy body-mind complex is a necessity. If the purpose is spiritual, staying healthy is more than a necessity; it becomes a sacred duty. To fulfil this duty, sleeping well is one of the basic requirements. Sleeping well goes beyond 'when to sleep' and 'how long to sleep'; it includes 'how to sleep'. One should sleep with a prayer, one of the elements of which could be asking the Divine for a peaceful sleep so that by the next morning 'my batteries are recharged, and my body-mind complex is ready to work' – to "do as well as I can the best thing to do" – one of the Mother's suggestions for a prayer. Then one may rest the head on the pillow, and treat the pillow as the lap of the Divine, in which alone one can sense – to use an elegant expression from Sri Aurobindo's 'Savitri' – the "sweet secure unguarded ease" required for the sleep that truly repairs and restores, and heals in the widest sense of the word.

Published earlier under the title 'Sleep Sutras' in 'Speaking Tree', which can be reached by visiting: <https://www.speakingtree.in/article/sleep-sutras>



Self-Healing

Shilpa Malik

Our life is a miracle, from the fusion of two cells to growing into a thinking, feeling, fully functional being, loaded with a conscience and highly developed cognitive abilities. Nature's intelligent programming in our bodies ensures constant building, repairing and sustenance. There are thousands of complex functions going on in our body every second - signalling systems, coordination between different cells and organs, chemical reactions and secretions, energy exchanges and much more. Amidst all this, our body maintains a state of homeostasis which enables smooth functioning of our life. This state of equilibrium is normal health, that our body naturally desires - it encompasses physical, mental and spiritual health. When such a state is disturbed due to an external or internal challenge, it leads to imbalances, creating disorders. Given the right conditions and internal environment, our body is usually able to overcome such influences and regain the stable conditions. This is our inherent ability, an important gift of nature - ability to heal and restore, ability to bring back the equilibrium. We have often experienced this by witnessing healing of wounds, joining of bones after a fracture, recovery from a fever or mental trauma and so on. However, if the challenge exceeds our system's compensatory powers, the imbalance results in diseases and disorders. These could be anything from a common cold, backache, mood swings, lifestyle diseases such as high blood pressure or diabetes to cancer, depression or psychological issues. Our inherent healing powers can go much beyond repairing a cut in the skin or a common cold; they have the capability to fix even chronic disorders such as heart disease and diabetes. There are several studies on people recovering from serious 'incurable' diseases like cancer or from lifestyle



diseases without any aggressive medical intervention. We all have heard anecdotes about cancer patients who were able to reverse their condition despite a poor prognosis given by the doctor. That is the power of self-healing.

Self-healing is the process of recovery from a physical or psychological disturbance driven by the patient himself. It is interesting to note that physical and psychological are two sides of the same coin – a physical challenge may manifest in an emotional symptom; and an emotional issue may express itself as a physical pain or disease. Undoubtedly, treatment, medicines, herbs and other external stimulants do provide critical support in overcoming the challenge. However, more often than not, they act as enablers to support body's own processes to restore and heal. For example, vaccines depend for their efficacy on the body's own immune mechanisms. This also explains why the same medical treatment does not always work equally well in every patient having the same disease. That is because everyone's ability to heal is different.

What are the type of challenges which can derail us from normal health? There can be many - excess of toxic build up in the system, consumption of abusive substances, inadequate sleep, poor diet, negative thoughts, pent-up emotions, mental stress, traumatic events, genetic predisposition, contaminated air or water, junk food, physical abuse, the list is endless. Undoubtedly, we are all exposed to such factors. However, when it is beyond our natural abilities to overcome the challenges, they may present as a disorder or disease. The innate physiological healing capabilities depend a good deal on the body-mind connection. There are enough studies and researches which indicate that our thoughts and emotions have a strong correlation with our physical well-being. Positive thoughts and feelings have the ability to create conditions in the body which are conducive to restorative



processes. In other words, creating a positive environment in the body starts with a positive mind. Positive thoughts trigger complex bio-chemical mechanisms that facilitate health and healing. It is a sort of alignment of our energies with our thoughts and feelings. We often observe that it is much more challenging for a pessimistic person to handle even the side effects of a drug compared to an optimistic person. The importance of the body-mind connection cannot be overstated in the context of self-healing.

What is the journey of self-healing all about? Going back to the basic understanding of Self-healing – a process of recovery driven by the patient himself. The “driven by the patient himself” is very important. Therefore, first and foremost, a person should really “want to” undertake this journey. He should be motivated to “self-heal”. Secondly, since the process cannot be fully quantified or rationalized, it could be very challenging for the sceptic. A sincere belief in the innate ability of the body to repair itself and restore health is obviously essential for the mind-body connection to work. Thirdly, and most importantly, self-healing gets a big boost from the spiritual view of life. Science is sometimes an explanation, sometimes a solution, but is neither of these in a fully convincing manner and at all times. Beyond logic and science, are the subtle forces of life which help us heal. And many such energies reside outside our body, part of the ever-present spirit of nature which has created us all, something from which we all have come and into which we all will merge eventually. Therefore, spirituality is an important factor in the journey of self-healing. Not to say that someone who is not spiritual or is a non-believer cannot “self-heal”; the process is mercifully not belief-dependent. However, belief in God, without which being spiritual is not possible, is a powerful catalyst for the life force to manifest better.



Let us look at some tools and techniques that can be used to support self-healing. Self-Healing – a generalized and simple perspective to a complex issue! A four-factor guide: Basic body-biochemistry, Stress, Attitude to life, Alternate Healing methods. 1. Basic body biochemistry: The first factor is to respect the basic biochemistry of the body – a sane, sensible and sustainable lifestyle. Revisit fundamentals of sleep, diet, exercise and avoid abuse and over-use. Several celebrated authors have written widely on the subject of lifestyle making it a billions-of-dollar-industry. It doesn't have to be made needlessly complex though. It's actually very simple and back to basics. Our forefathers have done it for hundreds of years, we too can! For example, haven't we all grown up hearing "early to bed and early to rise, makes a person healthy, wealthy and wise." Still we are hooked onto our smartphones and Netflix till 1 am! 2. Stress: The second factor is the common suspect – chronic stress. In fact, one of the root causes of imbalance is stress. Stress causes emotional and physical problems, and is now widely acknowledged as a leading root cause of misery across the world, transcending the borders of class, creed, race, age and gender. Stress has become a global unifier! Therefore, to aid the process of self-healing – we need to learn how to (a)manage stress, and more importantly (b) understand the root causes of stress and address the same. The first part is relatively easy; the latter is challenging. Stress management, which often does not go to the root of the problem, depends on various relaxation tools and techniques. These techniques help us get rid of the distraction, and improve our awareness of our own thoughts and feelings. Some of the techniques distract us from the issues that are troubling us. The techniques include meditation; breathing techniques; indulging in hobbies such as music, art, dance, etc; light/color/sound/laughter therapy; exercise; yogic practices; positive



imagery; daily affirmations, etc. Sometimes simply talking about and sharing our stress with a friend helps us release it. We are usually able to feel much better immediately after, at least for a short while. Repeated practice of the chosen technique helps us become more aware of the pent-up stress and helps in releasing it. Over time, it helps us become a calmer person.

Understanding, accepting and addressing the root cause of stress is often a challenging process. However, this is necessary for a long term solution. No self-healing journey can be complete without a dispassionate introspection. Root causes of stress can be mostly pinned onto dissatisfaction or distress in any of the key spheres of life – work, relationships, finances and health. Sometimes, doubts about self-healing, anxiety about the progress with self-healing, and the sense of guilt due to ‘not doing enough’ can in themselves add to the stress! Introspection, support groups, discussions with mentors, and professional help from counsellors are some of the possible ways to undertake this voyage. It helps people gain fresh and objective perspectives on their life situations and they are able to move towards taking corrective steps. In fact, being able to identify the root cause itself is a huge relief. This clarity brings about hope that now that one understands the cause of misery, he will be able to resolve it at some point. This hope aids positive sentiment, which works like a catalyst in stress alleviation and self-healing journey.

3. Attitude towards life: “To change everything, simply change your attitude”. If we live a life of gratitude and cultivate the right attitude in life, it’s the starting point of solving most of the psychological issues and problems. Spiritual wisdom emphasizes developing the right attitude towards the ups and downs of life.

4. Healing tools & techniques: Fourthly, there are various healing tools & techniques such as reiki, pranic healing, therapeutic touch,



etc., and traditional systems of medicine such as Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, etc., which can be explored. However, all these methods demand discipline and patience. They act slowly because they are based on the laws of nature. And, nature is not in a hurry to find quick fixes so that we can be back to work the next day at 9:00 am! Surely, caution needs to be exercised so one doesn't become a victim of fake healers and spurious techniques.

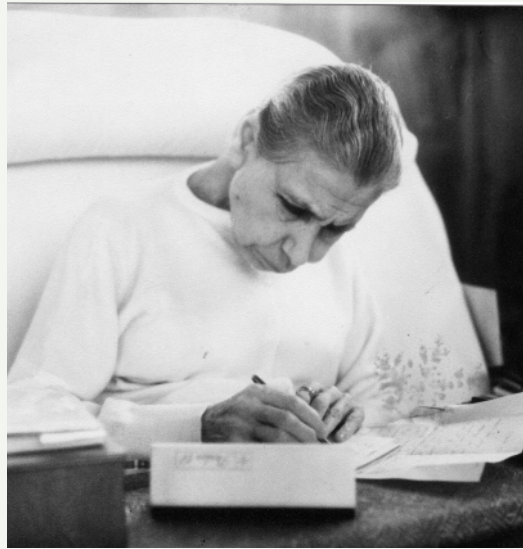
Here it is worth mentioning the practice of yoga independently. Yoga is a discipline and a way of life, a way of thinking, a way of becoming a constantly evolving human being. Yoga Practice works towards holistic health and is a tried and tested path to support the process of self-healing. Self-healing and yoga can be simultaneous and parallel journeys because both involve discovering who we are. Disease can become, thus, an opportunity that nature presents us with to focus inwards rather than outwards, to live with a positive outlook, to experience the harmony of our body, mind and spirit, and to work towards unification of different parts of the being. Unification of the body and mind with the spirit is the real gain, of which self-healing is a fringe benefit.

Shilpa Malik did a Course on Teaching Yoga at Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch in 2019. This article was submitted as an assignment, which was one of the requirements for the course.





Offer Up Wrong Movements



Instead of driving the wrong movement underground, it is to be offered. It is to place the thing, the movement itself, to **project** it into the Light. ...

... If we can project our sensation – or our activity or our perception – into that Light, that will bring the cure. Instead of suppressing or rejecting it as something to be destroyed (it cannot be destroyed), it has to be projected into the Light. ... instead of seeking to throw away far from oneself certain things (which one does not accept, and which produce an imbalance in the being), instead of doing that, to accept them, take them as part of oneself and... (**Mother opens her hands**) offer them up. They do not want to be offered, but there is a way of compelling them: the resistance is diminished in the proportion as we can diminish in us our sense of disapprobation; if we can replace this sense of disapprobation by a higher understanding, then we succeed. It is much more easy.

The Mother ('The Great Adventure', p.67)

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>



Knowledge is Incomplete Without Works and Leads to Love



Without knowledge we live blindly in him with the blindness of the power of Nature intent on its works, but forgetful of its source and possessor, undivinely therefore, deprived of the real, the full delight of our being. By knowledge

arriving at conscious oneness with that which we know,—for by identity alone can complete and real knowledge exist,—the division is healed and the cause of all our limitation and discord and weakness and discontent is abolished. But knowledge is not complete without works; for the Will in being also is God and not the being or its self-aware silent existence alone, and if works find their culmination in knowledge, knowledge also finds its fulfilment in works. And, here too, love is the crown of knowledge; for love is the delight of union, and unity must be conscious of joy of union to find all the riches of its own delight. Perfect knowledge indeed leads to perfect love, integral knowledge to a rounded and multitudinous richness of love. “He who knows me” says the Gita “as the supreme Purusha,”—not only as the immutable oneness, but in the many-souled movement of the divine and as that, superior to both, in which both are divinely held,—“he, because he has the integral knowledge, seeks me by love in every way of his being.” This is the trinity of our powers, the union of all three in God to which we arrive when we start from knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo: ('The Synthesis of Yoga', CWSA Vol. 23-24, p. 546)



Dalhousie, an Idyllic Dream...

*In solitude, as I rest and close my eyes
And walk down, down memory lane
To remember a place where my heart lies
Where flowers bloom, streams gurgle
Birds twitter in hazy afternoons
Hills in shades of green, blue and purple
Spring up vividly in front of me
As I think of them being mesmerized
Indeed it is nowhere else but in Dalhousie.*

*The sun rising with its glorious crown
Deodars splendid in their emerald green
Streams meandering and trickling down
The deep blue sky above me, sprawling valleys below
A sniff of cool mountain air
A sensation I had hardly known
Reluctant to come back to reality
A dream only if it were to never end
Is etched in my memory till eternity
And I stay for ever and ever ... in Dalhousie.*

Rashmi Tripathi

X-E, The Mother's International School

Reproduced from 'The Call Beyond', 1998, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 39





What I Can Do to Make the Lives of Others Better

This column has something for children, including something written by children, although it will do the adults no harm!

One of the best things I could do to help make the lives of others better is to increase mental health awareness. Approximately 970 million people have anxiety and depression worldwide. A lot more people developed these problems because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Anxiety and depression are a big problem. Over 30% of adults and over 25% of children in Connecticut have anxiety or depression. We can offer to support them and help them in their struggles. The first step is to have knowledge about the signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression and recognize them in ourselves and others. I will suggest that W.E.B. (a program to help incoming 6th graders adjust to middle school) address mental health awareness when talking to 6th graders. I think this will help students know what anxiety and depression actually are, and how they can help others or be helped. I can start a club, with help from others, for mental health awareness at my middle school. In the club we can make a flier and a website about mental health awareness so everyone can have a useful resource if they need it. I will request the school principal to include the flier and website in the school newsletter and encourage parents to discuss it with their children. Behind anxiety and depression are fear and helplessness. Parents and teachers can do a lot to relieve these underlying causes. Those who have anxiety and depression will find some cure in the very fact that they are not alone; support is only a click away. I believe that if we all work together, we can achieve great things.

Aaliya Lal, age 11

Connecticut, USA



Editor's note: Write-ups like this one may be looked at in at least two contrasting ways. On one hand, it is a cause of legitimate concern that children as young as age 11 are aware of mental health issues being a major problem in society. On the other hand, it is very encouraging that even at that early age, children want to do something about these issues, not just for themselves but also for others. Children being concerned with problems afflicting the society and aspiring to do something about it are a sign of the new creation with a higher level of consciousness that, as Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have assured us, is round the corner.



We function on automatic pilot so much of the time that it might well be said that we are more asleep than awake, even when we are awake.

Jon Kabat-Zinn ('Full Catastrophe Living', p. 365)

Human beings are actually remarkably resilient to stress. One way or another we manage to persevere, to survive, and to have our moments of pleasure, peace and fulfilment. We are expert copers and problem solvers. We cope through prayer and religious beliefs, through involvements and diversions that feed our needs for joy and belonging and for stepping outside of ourselves. We cope and are buoyed up by sharing love and by receiving encouragement and support from family and friends.

Jon Kabat-Zinn ('Full Catastrophe Living', p. 248)

When you feel connected to something, that connection immediately gives you a purpose for living. Relationship itself gives meaning to life.

Jon Kabat-Zinn ('Full Catastrophe Living', p. 220)



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.

Children Today Are Different, but So Are the Parents

C wants to know:

How can one explain the value of living a spiritual life to children who are glued to gadgets all the time?

Answer:

There are in this question, two interrelated questions: inculcating spiritual values, and dealing with gadget addiction. Gadget addiction makes inculcating anything difficult, be it spiritual values, or anything else that may be of some value, such as eating sensibly or being punctual.

Next is the issue of offering explanations as a justification for the values that we are trying to inculcate. The process of inculcating any type of values has to begin before children ask for an explanation, or are ready for an explanation. Rational arguments rarely make sense to children below age 7, and during teenage the child's intellect may be ready for rational discussions but teenage rebellion overrides reason.

As in case of all maladies, prevention is better than cure. There are two basic principles for preventing the twin malady of inculcating values and gadget addiction. **First, example is what works, not preaching.** The example has to be set by parents and teachers; if the social environment also reinforces



the messages delivered by what the children see these authority figures doing, so much the better. It is unrealistic to expect a child to practice spiritual values, or to restrict the use of gadgets, without the parents practicing what they expect from the child. It will not work. **Secondly, if something is denied to the child, one should also simultaneously offer something better.** If the gadget is denied to a child without offering a better substitute, the parental action comes across as 'policing' that aims at snatching away the child's happiness. This is a misinterpretation on the part of the child, but it is quite consistent with the level of maturity of the child. The parents want the child to be happy in the long run, but that is not how the child interprets their 'policing'. The child's perspective is rooted in the here and now, not in the 'long-term'. What is the better substitute than the gadget? First and foremost, time. The parents should spare time for the child, and apply their mind so that the time is spent meaningfully in a way that the parents as well as the child enjoy it. Spending time meaningfully does not mean making serious business out of it. Learning can be fun, although all fun does not lead to learning.

One has to acknowledge that the gadgets are here to stay; there is no wishing them away. The objection to the gadgets is three-fold. **First, their excessive use.** This can be corrected by restricting the time that can be spent with the gadget, together with making the child *experience* the greater joy and genuine satisfaction that alternatives such as 'non-gadget' indoor and outdoor games and person-to-person socializing can bring. **Second, the content.** Using checks and locks that make the content that is tempting but degrading is parental responsibility. Food is a necessity, but making only healthy foods available at home is parental responsibility. In the same way, gadgets have also become not only unavoidable but a necessity. But parents have to ensure that only healthy



content is available on the child's gadget, and their own gadgets. **Third, inducing passivity.** Introducing the child to the joy of active and interactive learning, with the gadget and otherwise, is also parental responsibility.

In short, good parenting is a conscious activity, and needs time, which parents are often unwilling to give. It is impossible to be a perfect parent, but it is better to try and fail, than not to try at all. The fact is that children today are different, but so are the parents. One might almost say, children today are different because the parents are different.



Rhyme is a convenience and an ornament intended to serve certain artistic purposes, to create certain sound-effects, and if the effect of a perfect rhyme is beautiful, melodious and satisfying, an imperfect rhyme has sometimes its own finer effect far more subtle, haunting and suggestive; by limiting the satisfaction of the ear, it sets a new chord vibrating in the soul. A poem with an excessive proportion of imperfect rhymes is unsatisfactory, because it would not satisfy the natural human craving for regularity & order; but the slavish use of perfect rhymes only would be still more inartistic because it would not satisfy the natural human craving for liberty & variety.

Sri Aurobindo ('Early Cultural Writings', CWSA Vol. 1, p. 249)

Self-mastery is the greatest conquest, it is the basis of all enduring happiness.

The Mother



Feedback and Encouraging Words

Feedback on Mirambika

Dear Jayanthi Ma'am and the entire Mirambika School Team,

We would like to express our deepest gratitude and heartfelt thanks for enabling an in-depth visit to the school and helping us understand the many different facets of learning that happen at Mirambika.

The whole school team has been very kind in letting us sit in the classrooms and observe the nuances of lesson delivery to students. While this has been an amazing learning experience for us, we are thrilled to see how the institution is bringing deep impact in the lives of young children and their families and society. I am truly humble about this experience and would be very keen to understand Integral Education in detail for us to learn and implement the same in our institution in Ahmedabad.

It would be an honour to stay associated with your school and mission and keep seeking your inputs during our journey of setting up the institution to bring about a change in the lives of people.

It has been truly an enriching and great learning experience for us and once again, we would like to thank you for the same.

Warm regards,

Sajas P

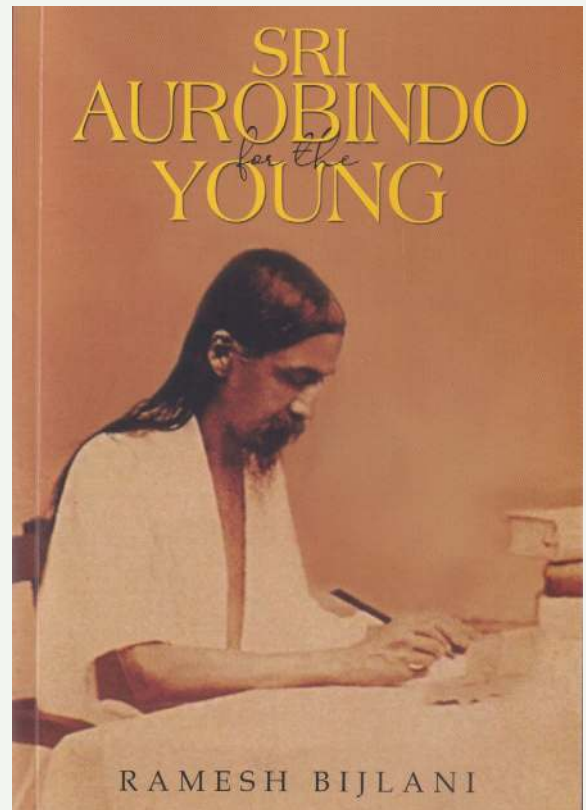
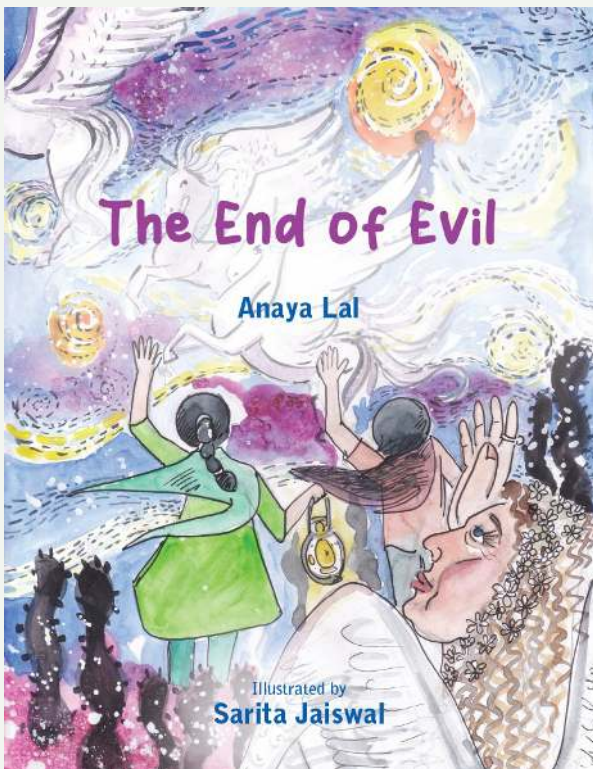
Consultant, Education & Skills, G&PS

KPMG Advisory Services Pvt Ltd

(in an email dated 25 October 2023)



Feedback on Books



Namaskar Sir,

My daughter and I got both the precious books sent by you. We have enjoyed the book written by Anaya very much. She is a very gifted writer and I wish her success as a writer.

Your book on Sri Aurobindo is excellent, and has a unique approach towards understanding of His philosophy and yoga. We pray to the Mother that you continue to write such precious books and articles for enriching us with inputs for a better understanding of Sri Aurobindo.

I still cherish the memory of the yoga session conducted by you and I am very grateful for the instructions you gave us on yoga and nutrition.

Thank you, and Warm regards,

Anuradha Chakraborty

(in an e-mail dated 12 November 2023)



[Editor's note: The two books referred to are 'The End of Evil' by Anaya Lal, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, and 'Sri Aurobindo for the Young' by Ramesh Bijlani, published by National Book Trust, India. Both the books are available at SABDA, the bookshop on the campus of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch]



The difference between what we do and what we could do would suffice to solve most of the world's problems.

Mahatma Gandhi

Essentially there is but one single true reason for living; it is to know oneself.

The Mother

The moment you feel unhappy, you may write beneath it: "I am not sincere!"

The Mother

Meaning and relationship are strands of connectedness. They weave your life as an individual into a larger tapestry, a larger whole, which you might say, actually gives your life its individuality.

Jon Kabat-Zinn ('Full Catastrophe Living', p. 220)

He who makes himself a beast gets rid of the pain of being a man.

Samuel Johnson

If one could arrive first at a conclusion, then at its exact opposite and, finally, harmonise the contradiction, one might arrive at some approach to the truth.

Sri Aurobindo



Contact us

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

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

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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.



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

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Feedback

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The Call Beyond is a publication of
Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch

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