

THE CALL BEYOND

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

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



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Which Duty?

Perhaps the best known teaching of the Gita is that we should perform our duty in a disinterested manner. This the Gita says in the second chapter. Then, it goes on to say that we should work as a conscious and willing instrument of the Divine, consider it a privilege to be picked up as an instrument, and offer the work to the Divine without insisting on the outcome that we expect from the work. All this is about how to do our duty. But Arjuna's problem was not how to perform his duty. His problem was which duty to perform. It is the answer to this question that is the most valuable teaching of the Gita. *First*, of the many things we could possibly do, how should we choose our principal occupation? The answer is that we should try to find the work that is most in keeping with our deepest Self (*swabhava*) and the situation in which we are placed (*swadharma*). Thus, our unique strengths and weaknesses, and our circumstances, should guide us towards career choice. *Secondly*, and **more importantly**, 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, official duty and patriotic duty. In such situations, the duty that we should choose is that which our divine duty is. 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. Making the right choices in life, by letting the voice and verdict of the psychic being prevail, ensures that action will lead to joy, peace of mind, and above all, 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.

Undoubtedly, the Gita is a Gospel of Works, but of works which culminate in knowledge, that is, in spiritual realisation and quietude, and of works motivated by devotion, that is, a conscious surrender of one's whole self first into the hands and then into the being of the Supreme, and not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal, social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals. ... That which the Gita teaches is not a human but a divine action; not the performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all other standards of duty or conduct for a self-less performance of the divine will working through our nature; not social service, but the action of the Best, the God-possessed, the Master-men done impersonally for the sake of the world and as a sacrifice to Him who stands behind man and Nature.

Sri Aurobindo ('Essays on the Gita', pp. 27-28)

Please see also the related article, 'A Deeper Look at Karma Yoga' on page 6

A Deeper Look at Karma Yoga

Nirankar Agarwal

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.

The Mother

Continued from the previous issue

In the previous issue, the author had shown how the teachings of the Gita go far beyond the oft-quoted verse on disinterested performance of duty. The Gita asserts that it is not proper to shun or renounce work. However, it shows the path to liberation from the bondage associated with work. Liberation comes from working consciously as an instrument of the Divine, doing what the Divine Will is, and offering the work to the Divine. In the concluding part of the article below, the author dilates upon the merit of working in keeping with one's swabhava. Further, he cites the caution given by Sri Krishna to the Karma-Yogi not to disturb the equilibrium of the ordinary person attached to his work and the outcome of the work. It is better to be attached than not to work at all.

Goal of Karma-Yoga is to be a conscious instrument of the Divine

In its last chapter, the Bhagvad Gita presents a few striking verses further elaborating Karma-Yoga. As we have seen, so far the emphasis has been on a general statement applicable to all about doing works without desire-will, with senses and mind controlled, with non-attachment, as an ordained duty,

for self purification, as an offering (sacrifice) to the highest, and with an internal renunciation of any fruits for the action. In the following verses, the emphasis shifts to works that will be most suitable for our individual growth to or perfection and realization of our individual Self:

“A man who is intent on this own natural work attains perfection. Listen thou how perfection is won by him who is intent on his own natural work.” (18:45)

“He from whom all beings originate, by whom all this universe is pervaded, by worshipping Him by his own works a man reacheth perfection.” (18:46)

“Better is one’s own law of works, though in itself faulty, than an alien law well wrought out. One does not incur sin when one acts in agreement with the law of one’s own nature.” (18:47)

“The inborn work, O son of Kunti, though defective, ought not to be abandoned. All actions (in the three Gunas) indeed are clouded by defects as fire by smoke.” (18:48)

The question naturally arises as to what are our own works, what is swabhava, and what is the work born with us? In common parlance, that is understood to mean works either associated with us through birth or family traditions, or in conformity with our liking, feeling, and inclinations. In terms of Gita’s philosophy, that is a superficial view of things. To penetrate its meaning, let us refer to its wisdom as to who in essence we really are.

In the brief description of Sankhya Yoga above, attention was drawn to the depiction of the whole executive power in the world which is Prakriti of the 24 tattwas. But Sri Krishna

says that that is an account of the lower (apara) Prakriti, not of my own higher (para) Prakriti:

“This the lower. But know my other Nature different from this, O mighty-armed, the supreme which becomes the Jiva and by which this world is upheld.” (7:5)

That is, it is this Divine Prakriti that has assumed all these multiple becomings in the lower nature as the Jiva, the individual Self. Elsewhere Sri Krishna specifically declares also that each Jiva is an eternal portion of His own Being:

“It is an eternal portion of Me that becomes the Jiva in the world of living creatures and cultivates the subjective powers of Prakriti, mind and the five senses.” (15:7)

The Divine’s nature is the Nature Divine (divya bhava) whereas the superficial nature of the individual self is bhava. Swabhava is actually the nature of the individual Self, the divine element in all beings. The Divine has manifested Himself in its Creation for His play (lila) and each individual has an explicit part in the divine symphony to make it harmonious. That is what is meant by doing one’s own specific work, doing works according to Swabhava and the work one is born with. The Lord then exhorts the devotee in the following verse:

“Devoting all thyself to Me, giving up in thy conscious mind all thy actions into Me, resorting to Yoga of the will and intelligence be always one in heart and consciousness with Me.” (18:57)

It is noteworthy that all elements of yoga are combined here: devotion (Bhakti Yoga), mind and intelligence (Jnana Yoga) and will (Raja Yoga) and all actions (Karma Yoga) are all

enjoined here to be given to the Lord who promises an eternal status to such beings at his own feet:

“And by doing also all actions always lodged in Me he attains to My grace the eternal and imperishable status.” (18:56)

Is there still work for a realized Soul?

When one has reached the summit of Karma-Yoga, has become a Self of steady wisdom (stithaprajna), has nothing more to gain by doing Karma Yoga or any yoga, it may seem that there should be nothing more for that yogi to do in this world? But it is not so, for Sri Krishna gives his own example:

“O Son of Pritha, I have no work that I need to do in all the three worlds, I have nothing that I have not gained and have yet to gain, and I abide verily in the paths of action.” (3:22)

Sri Krishna exhorts yogis to continue to do work for the welfare of the society and peoples. He even urges them to do all kinds of works so that the people will get out of the tamas guna, himself doing them from the highest consciousness and as an instrument of the Divine Will.



“He should not create a division of their understanding in the ignorant who are attached to their works; he should set them to all actions, doing them himself with knowledge and in Yoga.” (3:26)

“As those who know not act with attachment to the action, he who knows should act without attachment, having for his motive to hold together the peoples.” (3:25)

By his example of performing actions from the highest consciousness, he will become an icon which the people will strive to follow:

“Whatsoever the Best do, that the lower kind of man puts into practice; the standard he creates, the people follow.” (3:21)

Sri Aurobindo summarizes the process of sadhana of the Karma-Yoga in the following noteworthy words, “The supreme, the faultless largest law of action is therefore to find out the truth of your own highest and inmost existence and live in it and not to follow any outer standard and dharma. All life and action must be till then an imperfection, a difficulty, a struggle and a problem. It is only by discovering your true self and living according to its true truth, its real reality that the problem can be finally solved, the difficulty and struggle overpassed and your doings perfected in the security of the discovered self and spirit turn into a divinely authentic action. Know then your self; know your true self to be God and one with the self of all others; know your soul to be a portion of God. Live in what you know; live in the self, live in your supreme spiritual nature, be united with God and Godlike. Offer, first, all your actions as a sacrifice to the Highest and the One in you and to the Highest and the One in the world; deliver last all you are and do into his hands for the supreme and universal Spirit to do through you his own will and works in the world.”

(Concluded)

See the related Editorial, ‘Which Duty?’ on page 4

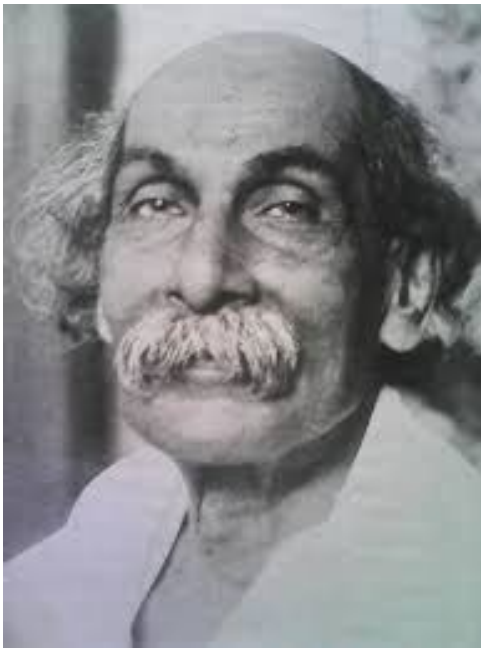
“Sri” In The Name “Sri Aurobindo”

A Letter

(This Letter of Nolini Kanta Gupta deals with a point which is frequently misunderstood, a point with a deeper significance than mere linguistic usage.

Although its opening “Soeurette: Little Sister” and part of its closing (grand frère: elder brother) are in French, the letter itself was written in English.)

Soeurette,



Mother has shown me the letter you wrote to her about the problem of “Sri” that is troubling you. She wishes me to communicate to you my view of the matter. Well, I shall be frank and forthright. It is an error to think that Sri is only an honorific prefix to Aurobindo which is the real name. It is not so. Sri here does not mean Mr. or Monsieur or Sir, etc. It is part of the name. Sri Aurobindo forms one indivisible word. This is the final

form Sri Aurobindo himself gave to his name. And I may tell you that the mantric effect resides in that form.

Sri is no more difficult to pronounce than many Indian or Euro-American syllables. And I think it is not always healthy either to come down to the level of the average European or American under the plea that that is the best way to approach and convert the many. I am afraid it is a vain illusion; better rather to oblige the average to make an effort to rise up and grapple with the truth as it is.

Mother has seen this admonition of mine to you and fully approves of it.

Begging to be excused for perhaps a highbrow tone in my letter, I remain

Your very sincere and affectionate grand frère,

Nolini Kanta Gupta

(First published in 'Mother India', February 1981; Reprinted in 'Mother India', August 2019)



We Love to Hear from You

In the August 2019 of 'The Call Beyond', the editorial 'Work and Enjoy, No Matter What The Outcome' is beautifully penned. It tactfully combines the spiritual as well as the scientific approach to understanding the essence of human life where work and karma plays an important role.

I, especially loved the article by Nirankar Agarwal emphasising Karma Yoga. The articles concludes with the shlokas of the Gita which contains the crux of human existence.

The translation of Himanshu Dalakoti's poem 'Life Divine' by Alka Kumari is a lovely tribute to the Divine Guru as we surrender ourselves at the lotus feet of the Guru.

Giti Tyagi

(in an e-mail dated 11 September 2019)

Change Yourself First



You can do nothing with others unless you are able to do it with yourself. You can never give a good advice to anyone unless you are able to give it to yourself first, and to follow it. And if you see a difficulty somewhere, the best way of changing this difficulty is to change it in yourself first. If you see a defect in anyone, you may be sure it is in you, and you begin to change it in yourself. And when you will have changed it in yourself,

you will be strong enough to change it in others. And this is a wonderful thing. *People don't realise what an infinite grace it is that this universe is arranged in such a way that there is a collection of substance, from the most material to the highest spiritual, all that gathered together into what is called a small individual, but at the disposal of a central Will. And that is yours, your field of work, nobody can take it away from you, it is your own property.*

The Mother ('The Great Adventure', p. 20)

Karma and Freedom

THE UNIVERSE in which we live presents itself to our mentality as a web of opposites and contraries, not to say contradictions, and yet it is a question whether there can be in the universe any such thing as an entire opposite or a real contradiction. *Good and evil* seem to be as opposite powers as well can be and we are apt by the nature of our ethical mind to see the world, at any rate in its moral aspect, as a struggle and tug of war between these eternal opposites, God and devil, Deva and Asura, Ahuramazda, Angrya Mainyu. *We hope always that on some as yet hardly conceivable day the one will perish and the other triumph and be convinced of eternity; but actually they are so intertangled that some believe they are here always together like light and shadow and, if at all, then only somewhere beyond this world of action, in some restful and silent eternity is there a release from the anguish of the knot of their intertwining, their bitter constant embrace and struggle.* Good comes out of evil and again good itself seems often to turn to evil; the bodies of the wrestling combatants get so mixed and confounded together that to distinguish them the minds of the sages even are perplexed and bewildered. And it would seem sometimes as if this distinction hardly existed except for man and the spirits who urge him, perhaps since he ate of that tree of dual knowledge in the garden; for matter knows it not and life below man troubles itself but little, if at all, with moral differences.

Our mind is compelled to think always by oppositions, from the practical validity of which we cannot escape, but which yet seem always in some sort questionable. We get a perception

of a law of Karma, the constant unavoidable successions of the acts of energy and its insistent stream of consequences and reactions, the chain of causality, the great mass of past causes behind us from which all future consequence ought infallibly to unroll itself, and by this we try to explain the universe; but then immediately there arises the opposite idea and the challenging problem of liberty. ... when we look round on the world as it is, everything seems to be by necessity and to move under a leaden constraint and compulsion. This is the aspect of the unthinking world of Force and Matter in which we live; and even in ourselves, in man the thinker, how little is free from some kind of present constraint and of compelling previous necessity! *So much of what we are and do is determined by our environment, so much has been shaped by our education and upbringing,—we are made by life and by the hands of others, are clay for many potters: and, as for what is left, was it not determined, even that which is most ourselves, by our individual, our racial, our human heredity or in the last resort by universal Nature who has shaped man and each man to what he is for her blind or her conscient uses?* But we insist and say that we have a will which is aware of a however heavily burdened freedom and can shape to its own purpose and change by its effort environment and upbringing and the formations of heredity and even our apparently immutable common nature. ... Granted that Nature works through our will and can create and change, can, that is to say, produce a new formation out of the stuff she has provided for her workings, is it not by a past impulsion and a continuous energy from it that the thing is done? *That is the first idea of Karma.* Certainly, our present will must come in as one though not by any means the sole element of the act and formation, but in

this view it is not a free ever-new will, but in the first place a child and birth of all the past nature, our action, our present karma the result of an already formed shape of the force of that nature, swabhava. And in the second place our will is an instrument constantly shaped and used by something greater than ourselves. Only if there is a soul or self which is not a creation, but a master of Nature, not a formation of the stream of universal energy, but itself the former and creator of its own Karma, are we justified in our claim of an actual freedom or at least in our aspiration to a real liberty.

... if man would have too a freedom of power, of participation, of companionship as the son of God in a greater divine control, he must then not only get back from mind, but must stand, in his thought and will even, above the levels of mentality and find there a station of leverage, a spiritual "where to stand" whence he can sovereignly move the world of his being. Such a station of consciousness there is in our supramental ranges. When the soul is one with the Supreme and with the universal not only in essence of consciousness and spiritual truth of being, but in expressive act too of consciousness and being, when it enjoys an initiating and relating truth of spiritual will and knowledge and the soul's overflowing delight in God and existence, when it is admitted to the spirit's fullness of assent to self and its creative liberty, its strain of an eternal joy in self-existence and self-manifestation, Karma itself becomes a rhythm of freedom and birth a strain of immortality.

Sri Aurobindo (In the Arya, Vol. 6, No.1, 15 September 1919, pp. 115-128)

The Ego's Prayer To The Self

Makarand Paranjape

*Let the mind waver, let my life be wasted,
Let me never realize you, what does it matter?
You cannot deceive me now,
I know that I am nothing but you.*

*Let the world be lost or remain as it is,
Let everyone chase fleeting pleasures, deluded;
What do I care?
I know that all this is your wish.*

*Let me never taste samadhi, let my prayers fail,
Let me be forever ignorant or bereft;
Who cares?
I know that you alone are real.*

*My fears and anxieties are only as valid
As myself; myself being an illusion,
Who is left to worry?
The Self only is; nothing else.*

Reproduced from *The Call Beyond*, Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 39, 1994

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.

Does Love Unite, or Can It Also Divide?

A has posed the following question:

Love is said to be something that unites. But love also divides. If I love one person, it means I do not love another person.

Answer:

Let us first see how love unites. Love is based on oneness. We generally love those whom we feel one with in some way or the other because they are a part of the same family, speak the same language, think along the same lines, have the same interests, belong to the same country, or have something in common with us. The greater the feeling of sameness, greater is the love. The extreme of sameness is oneness. For example, a mother feels her child is an extension of herself, and therefore feels that she and her child are one. Therefore, she loves her child.

Love is not an empty feeling. It invites expression. The expression takes the shape of giving. We can give only what we have, if the one we love needs it. The act of giving strengthens the bond between the one who gives and the one who receives. The bond makes love a mutual feeling. Both

parties love each other, although only one may be giving, or one may be giving more than the other. True love does not go into these calculations. That is how, love unites.

Now, let us see where this idea, “If I love one person, it means I do not love another person,” comes from. It perhaps comes from the love for the husband or the wife, but it applies only to the expression of love. Some expressions of love for the partner are reserved only for the partner. Love should not be expressed for anybody else in the same way. But that does not mean that love for the partner automatically means absence of love for anybody else. One can love, and may love, somebody else but the expression would be different; what one gives would be different. Similarly, if I love my child, it does not mean that I do not love any other child. But the expression of love would be different because it is beyond my capacity to take total responsibility for every child around me the way I do for my child.

Now let us move from the mental plane to a higher plane. From the spiritual point of view, we are all one because of being manifestations of the One Divine. The Presence of the Divine in an individual is the person’s soul. At the level of the soul, we are all one. Compared to this fundamental oneness, differences of race and religion, colour and gender, language and lineage, are all insignificant. That is how an awareness of spiritual oneness leads to universal love. However, universal love cannot be expressed universally in an identical manner. It is very easy to believe in universal love, and to say, “I love all humanity.” It is much more difficult to love a few real human beings, and give an expression to that love. Therefore, universal love also translates into a variety of expressions of that love for those around us. The universal

part only means that I shall not pick and choose among those around me on the basis of superficial characteristics, and certainly not on the basis of personal likes and dislikes. It is possible to love all without necessarily liking all. Thus, I can love all those around me, but the expression would be different. For those who need what I can give (e.g. time, money or knowledge); love would be expressed by giving that. Others may not need anything that I can give; for them the expression of my love may be just a smile, and a general feeling of compassion and goodwill.

I have perhaps taken the discussion beyond the scope of the question. But thank you, A, for raising the question, because it has helped me clarify (and become more clear myself) on some vital issues of general interest.

.. to feel love and oneness is to live

Sri Aurobindo ('Savitri', Book 12, p. 724



Feedback & Encouraging Words

Feedback on the Workshop on Integral Education for the new teachers of MIS, 23 & 24 August 2019 '



A very enriching experience highlighting the teaching-learning process based on The Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's teachings. The stories, a powerful resource as a part of Integral Education, were very fruitful.

Aditi Mor

The orientation conducted was very interesting and informative. It focuses on the journey of life which was an eye opener to many areas of life. I wish we could have some more sessions like this.

Mayur Bose

Thank you so much sir for enlightening us on the topic of Integral Education. This has provided us with an insight as to how we can work on the mind, body and soul. And, how also, to use in our day to day life and teachings. We also loved the stories narrated by you and the melodious songs we heard and sang.

Thank you again. Looking forward to more such interesting sessions with you.

Saryu Bhutani

From this two-day orientation program, I learnt that if body, mind and soul are in sync with each other, we surely make the right choices and reach our goal of life. Joy of giving is greater than the happiness of getting. I feel that I am on a different journey altogether now.

Nilanjana Chatterjee

It was a very unique session as part of orientation, and I enjoyed it a lot. The way we can use stories, to evoke the thinking pattern and connect with the students was very good. I look forward to having more such sessions, if it organised again in future.

Madhuri Kumari

I am so lucky to be a part of this Ashram and The Mother's International School. I felt really good and positive after coming here for two days. I would love to come here again and be a part of this beautiful place.

Nibha Gulati

It was an enlightening experience. It is quite often that we indulge only the mind and the body but totally forget about the soul. Education that takes note of the soul for transforming the other two is essential. I hope to put all my learnings from here into practice.

Charu Saraswat

The sessions made me aware of the ideas of Integral Education and how to be a better facilitator while with the students, so that we together become better human beings.

Chhavi Khurana

Feedback on the book 'How Many Ice Creams, One or Two?'



The kids love reading your story books, specially the ice cream one. It is so helpful in helping build empathy in kids, specially those who hit others, etc. Thanks on the behalf of them too.

Jahnavi (Pandya)
(in an e-mail dated 20 August 2019)

Contact us

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