

INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE WELL-BEING

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Introduction

Well-being may be understood as a state of an inner peace and calm by which one is able to concentrate on the moment, be it an involvement in a leisurely activity or undertaking a critical task. Being in a state of well-being is crucial for being able to absorb, assimilate and appreciate all that is around, which forms the basis of harmony with the outer world. It is generally accepted that it is the personal state of the mind of a person by which he or she feels to be in a state of well-being or otherwise. To an extent this is true but an individual is not a separate entity but a unit in the corporate collective life. Each such unit has an important role in the well-being of another unit. This article seeks to explore some ways towards achieving corporate well-being.

Understanding Man as a Unit

Man is most essentially a soul, a divine element which has worn the garb of the sheaths of the physical, the vital, and the mental for an earthly existence. The soul in itself is in a state of perpetual peace and an undisturbed calm but the physical, the vital, and the mental sheaths have their own personal agendas, based more on the outward view of the world. The nature of the physical is to be in a state of inertia; the vital strives towards fulfillment of desires through its passions and impulses; and the mind works out the plans, designs and strategies to take man ahead towards fulfillment of his motives. We note an interesting fact here that the very nature of the vital is pulling out the physical from its cherished mode of inertia and the mental nature is aiding the vital to give shape and applicability to its strivings. We find that these three sheaths that comprise 'man' are working for the well-being of one another in their own capacities and their collective functioning comprises what we know as the 'human life'. It seems to be as smooth as the mechanical functioning of a few units put together to dish out some useful work. But as we know pretty well, man is different from a machine. The nature of man as a unit which he takes to be the whole, is to seek personal satisfaction and gratification. And it is here that his own well-being takes priority and precedence over those of his counterparts. Ignorant to the harmony in his own nature he begins to have an objective view of himself and the world around which may comprise his colleagues, the company that he is working for and other connected entities like customers and suppliers. There begins in him a sense of insecurity.

His energies start getting converged to his own self whether it is in the form of amassing wealth or becoming popular and earning a reputation by fair

or unfair means. It is at this point that man as a unit starts interfering with and affecting the personal, that is, the individual well-being of his counterparts, the company, the society and the nation.

Maintaining Well-being in the Work Chain

It is often felt and said that it is the corporate which is responsible for the well-being of its people. But for a group to ensure the well-being of its people, it is more important that its people realize the need of an interpersonal well-being because they are the units who have to interface well towards realizing the corporate well-being.

It is not very difficult to do so. If one is conscious about one's place in the work chain one will be very effectively contributing towards the well-being of the collective. But to be able to see or realise the connection with the other, one needs to realise or simply open up to the fourth dimension of one's being which is the 'soul'. If man is able to view himself as a collective entity it will become clearer to him that the physical, the vital, and the mental though perfect in their own capacities and nature need the guidance of the 'soul' to take them towards a refinement for the growth of their present natures to a higher level of a greater well-being. And once man is able to take cognizance of the soul within, he gets an element within him which is the best and the truest light guiding his existence in the collective. The understanding or realisation of the inner becomes a foundation towards realizing the harmony in the outer and the simplest way of achieving this is doing one's own true work without a sense of insecurity, competition or personal attainments.

A corporate well-being will be the result of people putting in true energies into their part of the work and adhering to deadlines as a subtle concern for the others. The authorities at the higher end will also be in a state of well-being with no reasons to waste their energies to follow up people in their allotted tasks and for further reporting or devising rules to get things done. It is often observed that if a rule is not being followed, one more rule is devised to ensure following of the first one and it goes on to become so complex with lots of paperwork, quality audits and identifying and correcting non-conformances. The higher authorities will have more reason, time and energies to concern themselves with the well-being of their people. And of course, such well-being measures will not include arranging some 'stress management' programmes but in fact be more creative, closer to life and transformative in nature helping people move towards some greater purpose in life.

Conclusion

An individual can bring about well-being in himself and in the collective by shifting the focus a bit from the own self towards the people around him in

professional life and it will be possible to make the work chain itself as a means of connecting with the other in body, mind, feelings and the spirit. This, I think, is the fundamental programme of wellness which each one of us must follow to attain not only individual wellness but also growth of the self. Similarly, the collective must follow this not only for reasons 'economic' but for reasons that will take individuals higher and help them fulfill the deeper purpose of their lives.

Thus the law for the individual is to perfect his individuality by free development from within, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development in others. His law is to harmonise his life with the life of the social aggregate and to pour himself out as a force for growth and perfection on humanity. The law for the community or nation is equally to perfect its corporate existence by a free development from within, aiding and taking full advantage of that of the individual, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development of other communities and nations. Its law is to harmonise its life with that of the human aggregate and to pour itself out as a force for growth and perfection on humanity. The law for humanity is to pursue its upward evolution towards the finding and expression of the Divine in the type of mankind, taking full advantage of the free development and gains of all individuals and nations and groupings of men, to work towards the day when mankind may be really and not only ideally one divine family, but even then, when it has succeeded in unifying itself, to respect, aid and be aided by the free growth and activity of its individuals and constituent aggregates.

SRI AUROBINDO, *The Human Cycle*, CWSA Volume 25, p. 71

ASPIRATION LEADING TO SURRENDER: A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Prabhjot Kulkarni

In most ordinary terms to aspire means to have an intense desire to achieve something. But Sri Aurobindo says that aspiration is not any form of desire; it is a feeling of the inner soul's need. It is a quiet yearning and will to turn to the Divine to unite with the Divine—to have nothing but the Divine! An aspiration is like a burning flame—it does not disturb the harmony of inner being. An aspiration needs to be true and pure in nature to work and reach the required destination. It requires calmness and peace with no disturbance in the vital—no worry, no tension, no anxiety.

Aspiration is the will to open to the Mother, the Supreme. What happens during the course of opening? One finds jolts, blows or other difficulties during the course of opening. A person needs a quiet confidence to overcome all such jolts. One's nature thus starts becoming plastic gradually and one starts taking difficulties in the light of various opportunities of growth. These are only lessons to remind that no mistake is to be repeated and one becomes more conscious of one's nature and its conduct in the outer life, as outer conduct becomes a projection of the inner atmosphere. All difficulties in life provide us a chance to change our nature gradually leading us for a transformation that necessitates the overall process of purification. Also, there comes a strong feeling - "I cannot go anymore without the Divine help. He is the Doer, Let Him solve my problems." This feeling becomes more and more intense and a subtle solace and assurance from within comes - "I am now under the change of the Mother and when She is there why should I fear or worry?" This is the beginning of Surrender. The more one aspires for a higher life, greater becomes the surrender. More the true aspiration, greater is the possibility of becoming plastic. If one develops an attitude of a *drishta* and looks at all the difficulties, obstacles, problems like the ones in a drama, one is able to develop inner calm, tolerance and peace. One can thus strengthen one's dependence upon the Divine. Here one realises, "I am only an actor and I have to act in accordance with my director who is backstage. I am only here to perform and do my role according to the guidance and cues from my director." How beautiful life becomes when one is only an 'actor' in the hands of the 'director' (The Doer). Aspiration thus has a close connection with surrender. For true aspiration, one should be true from all self-preferences, one's own demands and expectations. One should have such a complete TRUST in the ways and doings of the Divine Mother that one says to oneself, "I am now in the hands of my Mother Supreme, what is there to fear? She makes sure that her child is well secured and protected."

This faith or total dependence is not only self-assuring and self-affirming but it also helps address various gaps of egoistic tendencies, doubts and demands. Such a reliance and dependence on Her doings certainly develops an intimate bond of love for Her—a sincere and true yearning, a strong will to meet Her and unite. It is the real thirst that one derives from Her own love and care. She only puts this will in one's being and She becomes the doer of fulfilling that will and She thus does everything. One becomes an obedient child, a true doer of Her works, precisely Her instrument. (In fact, She chooses and prepares Her own instruments.)

Sri Aurobindo says that the first step in yoga is surrender and that is also the last word, which means that the whole process of yoga demands surrender at every step.

A surrender to be complete and integral must be active and dynamic in nature. An active surrender is to match and tune one's will with the Divine Will—a complete association of the self-will with that of the Divine. One needs to understand very clearly what is not divine—one should immediately reject it. Hence an offering of one's will to the Divine is an essential and easy way to practice surrender. To know the Divine Will one has to go deep down the inner self and find out the true, luminous expression of the Divine and accordingly receive those inner commands to act. Constantly one should be able to practice—"Let Thy will be done and not mine."

A complete surrender is not possible in so short time—it requires a long enduring practice. A complete surrender means to cut each part of ego in one's being—in one's character as a whole, which is offered in totality to the Divine. "...a complete surrender means to cut the knot of the ego in each part of the being and offer it, free and whole, to the Divine. The mind, the vital, the physical consciousness have one after the other to surrender separately, to give up their own way and to accept the way of the divine."¹

Sri Aurobindo says this in the light of daily practice starting with one's daily actions, feelings, thoughts, impulsions, sensations, everything that helps one's sadhana. At every moment and in all things when one starts making one's offering to the divine—all that one has, all that one is and all that one will be—one stations and positions oneself on a safe platform of 'great perfection' where there is no room for self-criticism or justification of right or wrong of good or bad. Thus one's life smoothens to a great extent and the role of ego or egoism gradually diminishes till it totally disappears from one's life. The practice may include a small prayer in the beginning of the day—"O Lord, Guide me and help me today in all my thoughts, actions, feelings in all my works that I do which you will. Let each little effort in today's life be yours and not mine."

Such small steps on a daily basis prove a great help on the path of surrender. While in the thick of action and in work situation, if one can become conscious of one's offering, one would be able to conduct oneself in a better way— day-

by-day one becomes conscious of one's inner movements, and with appropriate application of reason and logic one becomes a true evaluator of one's life. Becoming conscious of one's own thoughts, feelings, sensations, actions and the rest, and writing a reflective journal help in progress. The feelings of joy and satisfaction are immense at the end of the day.

A complete surrender may also be referred to as a detailed surrender. All these outer parts—mind, vital and body also get the touch of the psychic, the divine spark and with divine guidance they begin to become obedient servants of the master. The whole play of life becomes a very joyful experience.

The value of *japa* (repetition of Lord's name or a mantra) and *simran* (remembering) cannot be ignored at the critical stage of practicing surrender as this keeps intact an inner connection or intimate bond with the Divine.

'Remember and offer' is a true attitude to go on the path of surrender. One has to ultimately find one's own way depending upon one's inner nature and need. There are people who feel that in the beginning if surrender can be practiced through works, then it helps in other directions as well. So they make work as their offering to the divine in daily life. It is difficult to describe or prescribe one or many methods for all. It is eventually each person's own approach and understanding of what suits to his or her background, swabhava and need. Integral Yoga cannot be prescriptive. It is more of experimental nature, hence each person has to make the right choice and yield good results with wisdom and commonsense (or experience). If one's vital is a good instrument—refined and slightly pure—then prayers and constant remembrance are very powerful and fruitful.

Also, there is a great place of faith in the practice of surrender—

"Many who would be considered as mere nothings by the wise and strong have attained by Grace; illiterate, without mental power or training, without 'strength' of character or will, they have yet aspired and suddenly or rapidly grown into spiritual realisation, because they had faith or because they were sincere... these facts... are facts of spiritual history and of quite ordinary spiritual experience..."²

The Mother says that to win over all difficulties one should have a 'quiet confidence in the Grace'. Even if something in terms of outer chaos or disharmony takes place during the course, one should not lose the faith and trust in the Divine. 'Whatever happens with me is ultimately going to be desirable and good for me'—this is the only way of keeping one's inner peace and calm intact. This makes one cheerful and happy. The Mother says, "Be confident, you will become what you have to be and achieve what you have to do."³

Sri Aurobindo has given a great amount of stress on the role of faith in surrender, as is clear from his letters to different sadhaks.

“So long as a man has that faith, he is marked for spiritual life and I will say that, even if his nature is full of obstacles and crammed with denials and difficulties, and even if he has many years of struggle, he is marked out for success in the spiritual life... ‘The Divine exists, my following after the Divine cannot fail, I will go on through everything till I find him.’ ”⁴

References

1. Dalal, A.S., *Looking from Within* (Compilation), p. 123, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1995. (Original source: SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 591-92)
2. Ibid, p. 125 (SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 611)
3. Ibid, p. 127 (CWM, Vol. 14, p. 85)
4. Ibid, p. 129 (SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 573)

Surrender

*O Thou of whom I am the instrument,
O secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,
Let all my mortal being now be blent
In Thy still glory of divinity.*

*I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,
I have offered up my will to be Thy will:
Let nothing of myself be left behind
In our union mystic and unutterable.*

*My heart shall throb with the world-beats of Thy love,
My body become Thy engine for earth-use;
In my nerves and veins Thy rapture's streams shall move;
My thoughts shall be hounds of Light for Thy power to loose.*

*Keep only my soul to adore eternally
And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee.*

SRI AUROBINDO, *Collected Poems*, CWSA Volume 2, p. 611