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New Race

Blessings



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From the editor's desk...

Dear Readers,

Darshan greetings to all!

The Mother once said this of poetry: "Poetry is sensuality of the spirit." (CWM, 12, p. 241) The feature article in this issue gives us an occasion to experience some of this sensuality of the spirit, as we go through some delightful exchanges from a recently completed online course at SACAR, titled *Poetry of the Future*. We hope that readers will be inspired by the perceptions and perspectives shared by some of our students, and will be touched by the sensitivity of their insights and observations on some of the poems of Sri Aurobindo.

As per our practice, this August 2010 issue continues to highlight some of the work submitted by our dedicated learners who are deeply involved in their study of Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision that is the basis of all our academic programmes. In the pages to follow, our readers will witness a variety of voices and topics, including a brief study of some of the concerns of youth in Auroville, the role of surrender on the path of Integral Yoga, and some personal reflections on the study of Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle*. We hope that this sample of student voices helps readers get a glimpse of how the various educational programmes offered by SACAR help learners connect their intellectual quest with their personal inner journey and aspiration.

Till next time....

Beloo

August 2010

"India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the people."

Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR) is pleased to announce three new educational programmes.

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POETIC VISION



Vision is the characteristic power of the poet, as is discriminative thought the essential gift of the philosopher and analytic observation the natural genius of the scientist. The Kavi¹ was in the idea of the ancients the seer and revealer of truth, and though we have wandered far enough from that ideal to demand from him only the pleasure of the ear and the amusement of the aesthetic faculty, still all great poetry instinctively preserves something of that higher turn of its own aim and significance. Poetry, in fact, being Art, must attempt to make us see, and since it is to the inner senses that it has to address itself,—for the ear is its only physical gate of entry and even there its real appeal is to an inner hearing,—and since its object is to make us live within ourselves what the poet has embodied in his verse, it is an inner sight which he opens in us, and this inner sight must have been intense in him before he can awaken it in us.

SRI AUROBINDO

The Future Poetry, CWSA, Vol. 26, pp. 31-32

¹ The Sanskrit word for poet. In classical Sanskrit it is applied to any maker of verse or even of prose, but in the Vedic it meant the poet-seer who saw the Truth and found in a subtle truth-hearing the inspired word of his vision.

**APPRECIATING SRI AUROBINDO'S POEMS:
A SMALL COLLECTION OF INSIGHTFUL OBSERVATIONS
FROM SACAR LEARNERS**

Editor's Note: We present below a few selections from an online course "Poetry of the Future" that has been recently concluded. We hope our readers will enjoy reading these thoughtful and thought-provoking comments and analyses by some of the learners enrolled in the class. For a better reading flow, we have organized the selections according to the poems that are being commented upon by the learners.

Assignment posted by the course facilitator, Larry Seidlitz

Comment on one or two of the assigned poems by Sri Aurobindo. What do you like about it? How does it make you feel or what ideas does it generate? What do you find in the form of a poem that is particularly appealing or effective? In your analysis also discuss how each of the following points contribute (or don't contribute) to the meaning and/or significance conveyed in the poem:

1. Selection of words
2. Use of images
3. The speaker of the poem
4. Use of Rhyme and/or Rhythm

THE BLUE BIRD

I am the bird of God in His blue;
Divinely high and clear
I sing the notes of the sweet and the true
For the god's and the seraph's ear.

I rise like a fire from the mortal's earth
Into a griefless sky
And drop in the suffering soil of his birth
Fire-seeds of ecstasy.

My pinions soar beyond Time and Space
Into unfading Light;
I bring the bliss of the Eternal's face
And the boon of the Spirit's sight.

I measure the worlds with my ruby eyes;
I have perched on Wisdom's tree
Thronged with the blossoms of Paradise
By the streams of Eternity.

Nothing is hid from my burning heart;
My mind is shoreless and still;
My song is rapture's mystic art,
My flight immortal will.

Sri Aurobindo
Collected Poems, CWSA, vol. 2, p. 533

Poem: The Blue Bird
Response by learner, Deepali Prasad

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo's "The Blue Bird" has the rather enviable ability to transcend worlds. In the Indian cultural context birds enjoy a rather exalted place. They are considered as representatives and vehicles for the Gods. The eagle or Garuda for Lord Vishnu, the crow for Saturn and many more. This simple acceptance of the power and position, bestowed upon it by God, is apparent in the very first stanza of the poem:

*"I am the bird of God in His blue
Divinely high and clear
I sing the notes of the sweet and the true
For the gods and the seraph's ear."*

Speaker

Written as a first person, interior monologue the poem soliloquizes the poet's own meditation on the experiences of the Blue Bird. The poet himself remains completely invisible while adopting the persona of the Blue Bird. While the poem is purely descriptive it is richly embellished with the poet's own imagination as well. The sky is "griefless", the soil is "suffering" and the Blue Bird has a "burning heart".

Diction

The choice of words is as wide and expansive as the flight of the Blue Bird whose

*"Pinions soar beyond Time and Space
Into unfading Light."*
It has the ability to

"...Measure the worlds with... ruby eyes"; and

"perch on 'Wisdom's tree."

The Blue Bird is eternal because it brings

*"the bliss of the Eternal's face
and the boon of the Spirit's sight."*

Light, wisdom, bliss and insight would then be the qualities that the Blue Bird has acquired by association.

Rhythm

Sri Aurobindo adheres to a formal arrangement in the rhyme in order to create harmony. The pure rhyming pattern [ab, ab] is identical, with the second line in each quatrain ending on a rising note. This is further reinforced by the meter, which is a loose iambic tetrameter [I think]. But as a variation some of the lines [mostly the second and fourth lines] pack four accents in a very short space as in *'Divinely high and clear'* or *'Into unfading Light'*. To me this appears to give a sense of purposefulness to the bird's flight. The choice of a short meter also implies an uncomplicated yet meaningful symbol, for which the poet would like the reader to impart, his/her own interpretation.

Imagery

"The Blue Bird" is a descriptive poem replete with images both literal and abstract. Sometimes both may appear in the same line as in this case:

*"My pinions soar beyond Time and Space
Into unfading Light."*

It is easy to visualize a bird spread its wings and fly but it is difficult to visualize anything beyond time and space. This then, is an abstraction which produces a feeling of awe in the reader for the special powers of this creature.

Sri Aurobindo's Blue Bird is a mystic who has witnessed all. His freedom is born of true knowledge, "Nothing is hid from my burning heart" and consequently he has a mind that is "shoreless and still". And most of all his, "song is rapture's mystic art" because it is the, "immortal will", that determines his life course and not personal whim.



Photo credit: thundafunda.com/393/images/wallpapers/animals/bright-pink-flowers-tree-with-blue-bird.JPG

Conclusion

I enjoyed the simple delight of the bird's flight in this poem. I have always felt birds are privy to the secrets of both heaven and earth [lucky fellows!]

*"Nothing is hid from my burning heart;
My mind is shoreless and still;"*

...brings out beautifully the power this creature enjoys along the tempering wisdom its observations evoke.

The rhythm comes across as unhurried and even and at the same time captivating.

I found the last two lines particularly meaningful because "*rapture's mystic art*" to me means the original joy all creatures are meant to experience in complete acceptance of the 'immortal will'.

A symbol in poetry is the embodiment of the poet's own thoughts and feelings. Sri Aurobindo, the yogi cannot be separated from the poet. His use of the Blue Bird as a symbol goes far beyond its literary connotation and reflects his own consciousness. The Blue Bird is the epitome of freedom, wisdom and happiness born out of a joining of will, with that of the Eternal's. It has achieved the harmony that is only possible by combining vibrancy with stillness.

Response by course facilitator, Larry

Dear Deepali,

Thank you for your insightful analysis of this wonderful poem - an excellent choice and among his most popular ones. I should have mentioned that when analyzing a poem it is perhaps best to focus first on the meaning and significances in the poem, since at least in most poems this is the central thing, and then complement this focus on meaning by showing how the various forms (rhyme, rhythm, repetitions, sounds, word choices, images, etc.) relate to and highlight these meanings. You have brought out some of the central and important meanings but more peripherally, but I will take credit for not listing the meaning and significances at the top of the list.

Regarding Blue Bird, I think the meter there is iambic tetrameter in the first and third lines but iambic trimeter in the second and fourth. However, there are quite a few substitutions of anapests (short, short, long) for iambs (short, long). I suppose this alteration of the meter accents in a way the flight of the bluebird, a kind of rising and dipping pattern-- faster, then slower, then faster. This significance is perhaps accented in the second stanza where he says in line one "I rise" and in line three "And drop."

Deepali, I agree with you that there is an interesting combination of abstract and concrete terms here. I suppose this is a vehicle Sri Aurobindo uses to invest the images with more abstract meaning, without becoming overly abstract. Even, this alteration might in some way get reflected in the rhythm of the alternating line length. For example, sometimes it seems that the longer lines are more image-laden, and the shorter lines more abstract, though there are variations to this. And sometimes it also seems that longer lines are more movement oriented whereas the shorter lines are more static, an image signifying a state of consciousness.

I thought it might also be useful to highlight a relatively obvious but important characteristic of this poem which is also evident in much of Sri Aurobindo's poetry: the integrality of the spiritual experience and aspiration. For example, in Blue Bird, second stanza, he says,

*"I rise like a fire from the mortal's earth
Into a griefless sky*

*And drop in the suffering soil of his birth
Fire-seeds of ecstasy."*

This refers to the ascent of consciousness towards the Divine and a returning descent of the higher consciousness into the lower physical consciousness--which is perhaps the most characteristic aspect of his Integral Yoga. There is another aspect of integrality, and that is the integral participation of all the different parts of the nature in the realization. Here in this poem he refers specifically to the mind ("*shoreless and still*"), the "*burning heart*," the "*immortal will*," and the senses ("*bring the bliss of the Eternal's face / And the boon of the Spirit's sight.*")



Photo credit: www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/Landscapes_g114-Atmosphere_Of_Mist_p15606.html

INVITATION

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?

Not in the petty circle of cities
Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;
Over me God is blue in the welkin,
Against me the wind and the storm rebel.

I sport with solitude here in my regions,
Of misadventure have made me a friend.
Who would live largely? Who would live freely?
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.

I am the lord of tempest and mountain,
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

Poem: Invitation

Response by learner Geetanjali Prabhu

“Invitation” was composed in Alipore Jail in 1908. Here, Sri Aurobindo gives voice to his own inner feelings by inventing a narrator, a first person narrator to be precise. To put the poem in a nutshell, the poet-narrator invites readers to attain an inner freedom that does not depend on any other beyond the Self, an invitation to embrace solitude, and an invitation to experience free and peaceful existence. This poem is better understood in the light of history. As readers it becomes important that we contextualize the poem with a backdrop of the personal life of Sri Aurobindo and collective life of Indians in the bondage under the British rule. Sri Aurobindo had revelatory visions of Krishna while in Alipore Jail, and instead of feeling jailed he miraculously felt deep inner freedom and had the experience that the divine is manifest in one and all. It would not be wrong to say that this period was a turning point in Sri Aurobindo’s life and his life as a seer gradually unfurled to bloom after this testing time in prison.

“Invitation” is a short mystical poem in four lyrical stanzas with the rhyme scheme *abcb*. The poem is an invitation to experience the narrator’s experience of freedom and largesse in existence. The atmosphere that the words create is dreamy, almost fairytale like and unfelt, unknown in reality or not wholly comprehensible to our own, busy self-absorbed mechanical routine of life. The effect of this poem is that one can sense a calling or beckoning and one knows that bright promises are inherent in the call. The reader knows that there are rewards for accepting the invitation.

Getting into the detail of the mystical elements in poetry, Sri Aurobindo elucidates the same in one of his letters with an illustration from his poetry which needs to be essentially understood as one delves into the mysticism inherent in his poetry which nonetheless speaks for itself: “A mystic poem may explain itself or a general idea may emerge from it, but it is the vision that is important or what one can get from it by intuitive feeling, not the explanation or idea; *Thought the Paraclete* is a vision or revelation of an ascent through spiritual planes, but gives no names and no photographic description of the planes crossed.” (Life-Literature-Yoga: Some Letters of Sri Aurobindo, 1967, pp. 149-50)

In the first stanza of “Invitation” we can sense that the geo-physical words employed by the poet to describe the journey are very English, and we can attribute this to Sri Aurobindo’s European residence and education; the word “moorlands” which is indicative of the uncultivated countryside and the idea of “*Wade through the brook and tramp to the snow*” create an English influence upon the Indian emotion of the up-climb. The poet wants others to be a party to the ascension and extends an invitation in verse when he says “*Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?*” It is noteworthy that both of the action words or verbs in this line begin with the “c” sound.

The first two stanzas are particularly loaded with a Wordsworth-ian sort of romanticism – a love for nature and the countryside, which are in stark contrast to the hustle-bustle of city life. In this poem, Sri Aurobindo goes ahead to move us from the outer landscape to the inner nature and a state of desirable freedom. The poet-narrator makes his carefree state of existence very clear by contrasting it with city life and its limitedness when he says “*Not in the petty circles of cities /*

Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;” The phrase “*petty circle of cities*” has a repetition of the sounds of “t” and “c” and the phrase amounts to concluding that city life is binding and circular or rather limited. The next line opens with the “c” and the poet says that he is beyond the cramped doors and walls, the sounds of “d” repeats in this line in the words “doors” and “dwell”. A note of distinction between the poet and the drabness of city life is made more obvious and emphatic when the poet narrator says “your doors” and “your walls”. He sees himself as distinct and there is a sort of psychoanalytic “otherness” that the poet-narrator establishes by emphasizing on the word “your”. He describes his natural state of existence when he says “*Over me God is blue in the welkin/ Against me the wind and the storm rebel.*” The choice of the literary word “welkin” for sky, as being the abode of God, literally transforms the setting of the poem from the mundane to the celestial spheres.

There is an aura of mystery when the poet-narrator says that he plays with solitude in his own region and that he has befriended misadventure. Perhaps he implies that to those who are trapped in the humdrum of life his situation would translate to a misadventure, but for him there is a largesse and freedom in his situation. Once again, there is a repetition as in the first stanza, the poet further extends the invitation in the following lines

*“Who would live largely? Who would live freely?
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.”*

Perhaps the word “wind-swept” is indicative of certain calmness devoid of turmoil.

In the last stanza the poet-narrator reveals the prominent attributes of his entity and also enlists the essential pre-requisites for those who wish to accept his invitation. He calls himself the lord of the tempest and the mountain and says that he is “*the Spirit of freedom and pride*”. The persona that Sri Aurobindo creates is powerful and embodies the spirit of freedom and pride; here the spirit is personified with the capitalization of the “s”. The word pride in association with freedom should not be read in a derogatory manner but rather as a dimension of self respect. Pride is sinful in the English context but here the narrator is perhaps trying to convey an Indian expression like ‘*atma-samman*’ in the foreign language, and has few words as equal substitutes. In the end the poet says that the ones who accept the invitation must be “*stark*” and “*a kinsman to danger*” indicative of the strength required to accept the invitation and to ascend upwards to share the poet-narrator’s experience.

Sri Aurobindo’s short poems can awaken one to the true love of poetry and this little poem is proof enough to that effect.

Response by course facilitator, Larry

Dear Geetanjali,

I enjoyed the essay very much, I think you captured well the approach that I have advocated in focusing on meaning and then drawing this out further through the connections between meaning and forms in the poem. I must add that I recently heard a remarkable talk in the Ashram that referred to this poem as well as to other of Sri Aurobindo's literary writings made during this period. The main point of the talk was the close connection between Sri Aurobindo's sadhana, that is, the *practice* of his yoga, and his literary work. In effect, his writing was a part of his practice of sadhana. Part of this practice had to do with receiving inspiration or higher

knowledge in word-form, and part of it was expressing his inner visions in his poetry, two things which are related. Anyway, in the context of this particular poem, the speaker argued that the images in this poem were not simply literary devices or symbols in the conventional sense, but things actually seen by him which no doubt were imaging a profounder knowledge and reality. I understand that this talk is going to be published soon in the journal Shraddha, and you may find it interesting.

Response by learner Makuteswara Kuppuswamy

I would like to add the following comment regarding the poem "Invitation":

Written in prison when he was alone in solitary confinement where he practiced Yoga and had the experience of God. This is reflected in the image of sweeping winds, both abstract and visual in nature.

By '*I am the lord of tempest*' he refers to God. Wind and storm convey the movement and energy; though the stormy wind is invisible the ravaging effects can be visualized. It is the God as Lord of tempest inviting him to join Him in the wonderful wind-swept uplands. Besides, the strong winds also denote unrestrained freedom and display of command that he felt not as a prisoner but as a free bird.

Response by course facilitator, Larry

Dear Kuppuswamy,

Yes, this is a good point. Sri Aurobindo, or let us say the narrator or speaker of the poem, seems to be identifying with this Spirit of freedom and pride. One of the interesting things about poetry is that the author can take different voices, different perspectives. She can be a character in the poem seeing everything from that character's perspective, or she can be an impersonal witness to the events, or even a spirit or God.

Another thought comes to me about Alipore, and that is that Sri Aurobindo has said that Swami Vivekananda had come to him in jail and showed to him the overhead planes of consciousness intervening between the human mind and the Supermind. So this upward ascent with the wind and weather beating round him might also represent something of this ascension of consciousness through these higher spiritual planes of consciousness that he was traversing, probably for the first time.

Response by learner Geetanjali Prabhu

It feels good to read an ongoing dialogue here. The "spiritual transmutation" that goes along with poetry is food for thought. It was interesting to know that Swami Vivekananda enlightened Sri Aurobindo by the spirit. The lives of the great are indeed so deep and often interestingly mysterious.



Worship

Photo credit: Eeshaan Mahesh (www.binduartaaura.com)

WHO

In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest,
Whose is the hand that has painted the glow?
When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,
Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?

He is lost in the heart, in the cavern of Nature,
He is found in the brain where He builds up the thought:
In the pattern and bloom of the flowers He is woven,
In the luminous net of the stars He is caught.

In the strength of a man, in the beauty of woman,
In the laugh of a boy, in the blush of a girl;
The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven,
Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl.

These are His works and His veils and His shadows;
But where is He then? by what name is He known?
Is He Brahma or Vishnu? a man or a woman?
Bodied or bodiless? twin or alone?

We have love for a boy who is dark and resplendent,
A woman is lord of us, naked and fierce.
We have seen Him a-muse on the snow of the mountains,
We have watched Him at work in the heart of the spheres.

We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning:
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,
Then lures with His joy and His beauty again.

All music is only the sound of His laughter,
All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.

He is strength that is loud in the blare of the trumpets,
And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;
He slays without stint and is full of compassion;
He wars for the world and its ultimate years.

In the sweep of the worlds, in the surge of the ages,
Ineffable, mighty, majestic and pure,
Beyond the last pinnacle seized by the thinker
He is throned in His seats that for ever endure.

The Master of man and his infinite Lover,
He is close to our hearts, had we vision to see;
We are blind with our pride and the pomp of our passions,
We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone.

Sri Aurobindo

Collected Poems, CWSA, vol. 2, pp. 201-203

Poem: Who

Response by learner Geetanjali Prabhu

The next poem for our reading "Who" presents somewhat a continuum of thought that is built in "Invitation". Perhaps it was that phase in Sri Aurobindo's life where many revelations and mysteries stood resolved before the eye of the mind and therefore stand out in his poetry. The title has no question mark but has the quality of a riddle. Sri Aurobindo does not merely raise questions but intentionally asks questions that are in themselves suggestive of answers. The poem creates many series of images, those which appear manifest before the eyes ("*blue of the sky*", "*green of the forest*") and those which are invisible ("*He is lost in the heart*", "*He is found in the*

brain where He builds up the thought) . The many images only point to the One who is All in the Aurobindonian thought.

Some of Sri Aurobindo's phraseology is stark and unique to my understanding, for instance, just look at the phrase "*womb of the ether*", it is such a deep, beautiful and profound expression if one actually gives it a thought. It reminds me of the classical term in Sanskrit "*Hiranyagarbha*". Today's learners struggle with limited powers of language. Reading Sri Aurobindo I am awed by the easy and natural flow of Indian concepts into a foreign language, I guess for a linguist Sri Aurobindo, it is but a natural outburst rather than a studied effort.

While I think it is a particularly Indian thought to conceive of the world as the cosmic dance of Shiva or alternatively as the conjugal love of Radha-Krishna, and such a thought may not allow a poem to make its way into the English literary canon which claims to be secular, I personally admire such a thought because English is the only language that I am comfortable with and it is only in English that I understand India and Indian-ness. In the seventh stanza the poet says,

*"Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss".*

It is once again a rather eastern concept to imagine the divine as a slayer, and perhaps in the 'sensitive', 'secular' and 'sensational' times that we live, it becomes very important to understand that the divine is a metaphorical slayer of the demons within and not to misunderstand or associate the divine with the tormentor as a Lucifer or a Mephistophilis spreading hell-fire. This is evident in the eighth stanza:

*"And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;
He slays without stint and is full of compassion;
He wars for the world and its ultimate years."*

Car is perhaps the "rath" in Hindi or Sanskrit (and of course not the automobile) wherein the idol presides over during festivals in any town!

Examining the last stanza...

*"It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone."*

I begin to feel as if this is the description of a scene before the world was manifest, a pre-creation sort of idea or thought.

Response by course facilitator, Larry

Dear Geetanjali,

You have nicely brought out some of the interesting images of the poem "Who." Yes, that "womb of the ether" phrase is quite striking, and I think you are right that it suggests Hiranyagarbha, though to a westerner it might suggest simply outer space. The vast, cold, empty

vacuum of space is more vivid in our imagination. One of the striking things about the poem is its personification of the Divine. Here Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the Divine as a being, not simply as a truth or an ideal, and he specifically references various Hindu gods through whom He comes into relation with us.

Response by learner Biswajit Banerjee

The poem "Who" is indescribably sweet...every word, every phrase, every sentence, every stanza and the poem as a whole resonate with Godly energy. It is such a smooth read, the words just fall into the reader's being without any effort on her part.

As a comprehensive analysis is beyond the scope of this discussion, I shall very briefly talk about only a few of the stanzas that truly appealed to me.

*"In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest,
Whose is the hand that has painted the glow?
When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,
Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?"*

What control of language! Such control cannot be accomplished by the intellect. This is the first stanza and even before we are into the heart of this beautiful poem, the soul-force of the poet shows up. The very first words connect us to the Divine Force working within and without our beings. The Master employs just a few words to express the workings of the Infinite Being.

*"These are his works and His veils and His shadows;
But where is He then? By what name is He known?
Is He Brahma or Vishnu? a man or a woman?
Bodied or bodiless? twin or alone?"*

Note the words "These are his works and His veils and His shadows" – these words clearly explain that the things surrounding us – whether beautiful or ugly, whether bright or dark, whether explicable or inexplicable – are not only the Divine's expressions but also his veils. In other words, the Brahman's creations are also serving as cover-ups for the Brahman. And this is really true. Most of us get caught up in the material web of life and hardly think about the Brahman, let alone seeking Him.

The last line of this stanza is equally interesting. It mentions, although doesn't make a clear statement, on the 'Sakara' and 'Nirakara' forms of the Divine. The words 'twin and alone' point at the dual possibilities of the Brahman being a Single Soul or an agglomeration of multiple atomic souls.

*"We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning:
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping;
Then lures with His joy and His beauty again."*

A very interesting stanza – Sri Aurobindo describes the sadistic side of God. And that makes it a very bold expression as well. Going by a simple logic, if God created all that we know or do not know just for reasons of pure pleasure, then sorrow which happens to be a very important

ingredient of his creation was also made a part of our world so that He could have pleasure. It is not a criticism of God because He made sorrow a part of our lives, it just raises a question a common man might ask when faced with an unpleasant situation – “Why should I have to suffer, couldn’t God have arranged things in a manner so that I, and for that purpose others, wouldn’t have to suffer?” It cannot be expected of a common man to know the purpose of keeping sorrow in the scheme of things...only a realized soul would know that. Till one accomplishes such spiritual quality so as not be moved no matter what is the intensity of happiness or sorrow, one will certainly not be willing to tread through sorrow. So for an unrealized soul the pleasure of God in making others weep is nothing short of pure sadism.

*“All music is only the sound of His laughter,
All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.”*

I just mention this stanza for its sheer beauty. Its beatific intonations can drive one to near ecstasy.

*“He is strength that is loud in the blare of the trumpets,
And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;
He stays without stint and is full of compassion;
He wars for the world and its ultimate years.”*

It shows the dual nature of God, He can live through diametrically opposite attributes – hardness and softness, bitterness and sweetness, cruelty and compassion, hate and love – God is capable of harmonizing such opposites. I would like to particularly stress on the last sentence of this stanza viz. “He wars for the world and its ultimate years” – this perhaps suggests the scheme of the Divinity wherein consciousness progressively moves towards super-consciousness, an end that will be reached in the ultimate years of evolution.

*“It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone.”*

The last stanza of the poem...it describes the infinity of the Supreme Brahman. He is beyond time and space, beyond the measurements in the physical or ethereal scales, beyond the deepest of the depths, and beyond the laws of lights and shadows. He is immense and complete.

I repeat – “Who” shows what soul-force can do. Sri Aurobindo has mentioned in ‘The Essence of Poetry’ that the power of soul force can bring poetry close to the realms of mantra. ‘Who’ is very close to being a mantra...a true masterpiece of the Master.

Response by course facilitator, Larry

Dear Biswajit,

Thanks for your interesting comments on the poem. This is surely one of Sri Aurobindo's best-loved short poems. It certainly does lead us directly into the mysteries of existence in such a delightful and apparently simple way--the way of the soul, I suppose. As you say, he does not really solve the riddle of pain and suffering, but merely raises the question that many people do. But also, as you say, it is bold that he puts God behind that side too, which many religionists would not dare. Perhaps he also gives some hints about the solution to this riddle, in lines which you also quoted. The following lines seem to bear on it:

*"It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;"*

...as it suggests that darkness is his shadow, the absence or inverse reflection of his ageless and deathless light.

The word shadow and its idea is also a repetition of the earlier line:

"These are his works and His veils and His shadows;"

...again suggesting this notion that darkness is an inverse of the light He is.

Also the other stanza you mentioned also bears on it:

*"He is strength that is loud in the blare of the trumpets,
And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;
He stays without stint and is full of compassion;
He wars for the world and its ultimate years."*

These lines put Him in the battle for the establishment of Truth, and in this battle death and pain are natural consequences. But why does the establishment of Truth have to be a battle? Again he gives a clue in these lines:

*"When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone."*

These lines suggest the beginning of the universe, and the long evolutionary growth of light and consciousness out of the inconscience. If we also recall that darkness is simply His shadow or a covering over Him, it also gives us a deeper insight into this whole evolutionary journey.

So much philosophy is here, yet in a deceptively simple and delightful expression. I appreciate you bringing out these gems for our consideration.



Godhead

Photo credit: <http://www.blossomlikeaflower.com/2008/04/godhead.html>

A GOD'S LABOUR

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
Marrying the soil to the sky
And sow in this dancing planet midge
The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my meed since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;
Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame
And from all things glad and pure;
Only by pleasure and passion and pain
His drama can endure.

All around is darkness and strife;
For the lamps that men call suns
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life
Cast by the Undying Ones.

Man lights his little torches of hope
That lead to a failing edge;
A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,
An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,
Each enemy slain revives,
Each battle for ever is fought and refought
Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
And the Titan kings assail,
But I cannot rest till my task is done
And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
"Thy hope is Chimera's head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;
Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead.

"Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease
And joy and golden room
To us who are waifs on inconscient seas

And bound to life's iron doom?

"This earth is ours, a field of Night
For our petty flickering fires.
How shall it brook the sacred Light
Or suffer a god's desires?"

"Come, let us slay him and end his course!
Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
And the curb of his wide white peace."

But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mire and waste
For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, "Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate."

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep
On the Dragon's outspread wings.

I left the surface gods of mind
And life's unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body's alleys blind
To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
And heard her black mass' bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;

All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
On my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stair-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end.

A little more and the new life's doors
Shall be carved in silver light
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.

Sri Aurobindo

Collected Poems, CWSA vol. 2, pp. 534-538

Poem: A God's Labour

Response by learner Geetanjali Prabhu

"A God's Labour" is a beautiful poem, generally Indian in its theme and particularly Aurobindonian. The poem runs in thirty one lyrical stanzas, and the rhyme scheme is strictly maintained. It brings out to an extent the secret path that yogis and tapasvis tread.

On reading the first stanza, the first question that arose in my mind is about the identity of "I" and "you". Reading the poem revealed them as the poet-narrator and God. This poem is about the efforts involved in manifesting divinity on earth itself, and this agenda is conveyed in the first two stanzas itself. I particularly found the expression "Marrying the soil to the sky" so very potent and lending the poem to a metaphysical analysis.

The third stanza which begins with a conjunction "But" itself introduces the detrimental impediments with regard to the agenda mentioned.

*"But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
The roots were not deep enough."*

The fourth stanza brings the hope of resolution, when the poet-narrator says that God himself must descend as human ("into clay") to achieve this divine end. I think it is a very Indian idea to imagine that human body is a material one and it is the spirit that adds divinity to the same. The poet-narrator is clear that being on earth is no pleasurable experience when he says:

*"He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way."*

Further in the poem poet-narrator assumes a Prometheus like persona, and I see a many journeyed voice speaking of its myriad experience and hardships along the path of "Marrying the path to the sky". As I see it, there is a very powerful imagery that builds in the poem and the "grey Elf" is apparently indicative of the animalistic tendencies in human life. Even the bad and the ugly part of existence attain a beautiful description in the hands of a great literary master. While the concept of eulogizing something unworthy which is perhaps a part of human nature and growth, is brought out in...

*"The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
Or a demon altar choose."*

...the idea of death and rebirth is captured in...

*"Each battle for ever is fought and refought
Through vistas of fruitless lives."*

...and the mirage that this world is is brought out in the lines...

*"I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things."*

...but before that what keeps the poet-narrator going is the voice which said:

*"A voice cried, "Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And Knock at the keyless gate." "*

While the narrator vividly describes his mysterious journey very vividly he also reveals that

*"Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn."*

...which is perhaps a metaphysical discovery. Finally, the fruits of the "Labour" are captured in last two stanzas that almost crown the whole poem when the poet narrator concludes:

*"There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you."*

By the way, I am wondering why the "you" begin with the small letter "y" and not the capital one since it refers to God. Perhaps what the writer tells us about his work is the most important key, but then even what the text offers to us as meaning is not less valuable.

Response by course facilitator, Larry

Dear Geetanjali,

I was intrigued by your question about the lower case "you." Indeed, he uses the upper case in some places (I have heard His voice and borne His will). It made me think of an alternative interpretation. Perhaps it is not God, but mankind, or a representative individual of mankind. The idea here is that each of us has a true, divine self. He has dreamed of a perfected humanity, a divinised humanity. These are his jewelled dreams of you. He uses this "you" again only in the last stanza, the last lines:

*"There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you."*

That is, the divinised man/woman shall walk on earth.

Response by learner Geetanjali Prabhu

Thank you Larry, that is right, the "you" could perhaps imply the divinised man/woman on earth.

LOSING FAITH IN FAITH: A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF THE YOUTH IN AUROVILLE

CARISSA DEVINE

Fulbright Scholar, Studied at SACAR, 2009-2010

Editor's Note: As part of her Fulbright research-study experience in India, Carissa Devine studied 'Fundamentals of Sri Aurobindo's Social Philosophy' and 'Transpersonal & Philosophical Research Methods' at SACAR. She lived and worked at Auroville where she conducted her fieldwork and research to learn about the experiences of youth at Auroville. A brief report and analysis of her findings and observations is documented in this article.

Auroville was created to be a laboratory, a laboratory for individuals to voluntarily experiment with the possibility of human unity. It set out to hasten a new race. This new race, this spiritually transformed race, is ultimately necessary for Auroville to exist as it demands a self-realized ethic, or a high sense of dignity that is unrecognizable in most humans thus far. Auroville has not reached where it is supposed to be, and despair is a constant threat to its citizens, especially to its own children. Children are amenable; they are curious and teachable. That being said, they are a vivid reflection of the living culture in which they grow. But instead of having faith in Auroville, it seems that most of its offspring are barely holding on to hope. The youth of Auroville have been imbued with an unnameable understanding of Auroville; they are its most honest critics, and given their unique insight into the community, their developing apathy should be of great concern. Integrating the input of Auroville's youth is not only a critical part of Auroville's self-conscious evolution, but also to the livelihood of its collective spirit, the essence of the subjective city-of-the future.

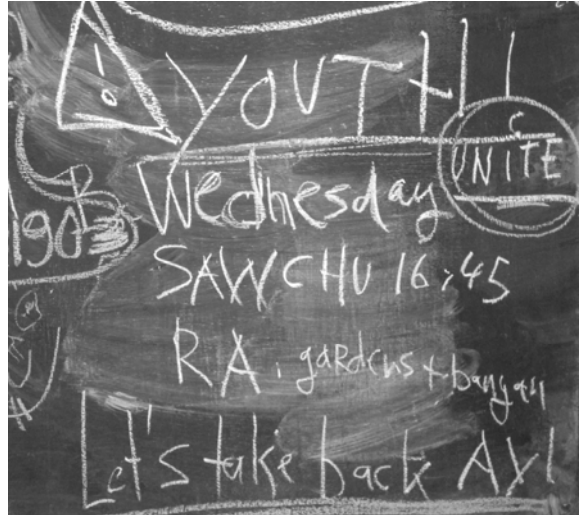
Faith has been, in the age of individualism and reason, dismissed to be religious rhetoric. On the one hand, the rationalist threw the baby out with the bath water when he dismissed faith as antiquated next to his hard science; on the other hand, reason usurped the blind faith that the religious conventions once held. But this faith in reason came to a serious point of reconsideration in the post World War II era; after all, if science, reason, and progress were the new gods, and world war was the kingdom achieved, then perhaps this faith was misplaced. Hence the hippie revolution of the 1960s, and the public announcement of the philosophical "Death of God" on the cover of the April 8, 1966 issue of *Time* magazine. Reflecting on this transitional period, American postmodern philosopher Jeffrey Robbins wrote, "Either religious language had lost its meaning, or even worse, the inherited meanings had grown perverse in the wake of a long list of modern atrocities" (Robbins, 2). The metaphysical truths once assumed to be true, whether it was in God the Father or Reason the God, could no longer be accepted. At this point, humanity had to find something else in which she could place her trust for a meaningful and purposeful life.

In the chapter entitled, "Conditions for the Coming of a Spiritual Age," Sri Aurobindo wrote, "There will be a labour of religion to reject its past heavy weight of dead matter and revivify its strength in the fountains of the spirit" (*The Human Cycle*, 249). This movement is reflected in the response of contemporary philosophy and theology to the Death of God theologies, announced first by Nietzsche at the end of the nineteenth century, and to the public in 1966—namely, a "Return to Religion [without religion]". This wave of thought is an attempt to re-interpret the scriptures of old with perverted and spiritual insights in place of the traditional views. One of the key elements in this movement is faith; after all, once Truth with a

capital T has been dismissed, that which remains are multiple, even countless truths. The world is, as Nietzsche claimed, nothing more than individual fables. In the midst of this Babel-like pluralism, faith in something meaningful is essential if the individual is not to be swallowed by the human curse of futility. For Sri Aurobindo, it is at this point, wherein subjective truths are given the faith and respect once reserved exclusively for the objective, metaphysical truth, that the human being's saving gift of idealism, born from her capacity to consciously adapt and improve her situation, becomes indispensable (*ibid.*, 61-62). This freedom for creative subjective development, and the faith therein, is the core of spirituality.

This respect for subjectivity is a necessary byproduct of the age of individualism. Sri Aurobindo notes two articles of faith within the creed of reason; namely, the awareness to constantly adapt and improve one's situation and the faith that one can always carry this out, and secondly, that my reason always trumps the other's (*ibid.*, 121-122). Therefore, the resulting lesson from the clash of individual gods in the age of individualism is the indispensable need to live and work together. The genesis of Auroville is an embodiment of this crusade as it attempted to give practical form to this new radical subjective thought. "We were so full of faith," said Shyama. "There we were all building the new world; what could be more fun? Of course we were immensely ignorant and naïve, but that was wonderful, we were engaging in what we felt was meaningful work" (Devin, 77). Unfortunately, this faith and idealism has been diluted through the ensuing generations in Auroville. Despite Auroville's attempt to bring the kingdom of God to earth, away from its heavenly realm of the past, its mix of genuine efforts and hypocrisy has challenged its youth to maintain a bona fide conviction in its work. In an interview regarding the youth's awareness of the underlying philosophical principles of Auroville, one of the individuals deeply involved in Future School remarked that this topic becomes, "tricky with a lot of the teenagers because they hear, unfortunately, a lot of the adults, 'Mother this...Mother said...In Auroville we should...Because of the ideals,' or whatever. They hear this, and then what they see people doing is very different, often. And of course they see the hypocrisy, no?" (Interview conducted on March 1, 2010). It is no surprise, then, that bringing up such ideas for class discussion or mere conversation and reflection is met with a "rolling of the eyes."

Sadly, many young people in Auroville believe that their voices are silenced, that they do not stand a chance at really having a say in Auroville's decisions simply because they are not on the side of those who hold the power to make decisions. At the Residents' Assembly Service's meeting with the youth, preparing for a City Planning Workshop, this frustration was voiced candidly. One of the individuals that attended, who has lived in Auroville since he was a small boy, commented, "The old won't let go, they won't let the youth make their mistakes...Workshops and dialogue seem futile, we have done this. It is something bigger. We have gone through this process and the stubborn dogmatic attitudes stay...Even if you have six months training [to join an influential committee], they dogmatize you; if you don't understand like them, you're out!" Instead of feeling empowered and encouraged to express their creative will, they are feeling the weight of bureaucracy, a deadly stagnation for any society. Another individual, who was born in Auroville, and was present at this meeting, stated, "You can't sit in meetings if you don't have money. With money, you can sit in, suggest projects, give money to help manifest those projects, etc. It's unfair, and yet, to make money is taboo." As a result, many are reluctant to participate in meetings and gatherings as they do not want to waste their time with the "useless discussion," which was made evident by the light attendance at this meeting of less than twenty representatives from the youth. All of this, in turn, further deteriorates the unity of the youth. "There is never a youth unity....There is no ground for the youth to enter [Auroville]. One needs money," said another.¹



A posting at Youth Centre in attempt to get more youth to participate in community decisions

So what is different today? How did the tenacity, faith and idealism, those precious saving gifts of humanity, from only forty-two years ago become so watered down? To start with, it seems like there was an unfair and naïve expectation of how the children of Auroville ought to be, not to mention a disconcerting taste of the “sacred egoism” of which Sri Aurobindo warns against (*ibid.*, 313). Consider, for instance, Munuandi’s reminiscent remark in the documentary “*The Children of Auroville: The Early Years*” (Neemberry, 2009): “We had people tell us stories, ‘You’re the gifted children. You’re the chosen ones. That kind of stuff. So it made us feel like the academic side of life wasn’t that important. So, be free and do what you want, you’re Auroville’s children, no matter what.” This hope is also evident in the comments from The Mother in the beginning of Auroville. She mentioned on several occasions the heightened sense of consciousness in Aurovilian children. For example, “The children, the little children who are only a few months old (as I said, those who are born in Auroville) are remarkable—they’re remarkable. I thought it was just one case, but all those whom I have seen so far, all: a concentration of consciousness” (AM X-456-457; also see AM X-37, AM XI-134-135, and AM XI-397).ⁱⁱ However, when asked whether or not the children of Auroville will be the “intermediate beings,” she replies, “I don’t know,” and then remarks that Auroville is quite far from its ideal (MA XII-37).

The Mother affirms that there is a powerful possibility for conscious evolution in children. She said, “I really think that those who can begin the new race are among children. Men are crusted over” (MA XII-58). At the same time, she is quite frank about her reluctance in naming them the intermediate beings:

But almost all of them [the Aurovilian children] are conscious beings. And the parents are absolutely stupid in their manner of behaving with them, because they don’t know, they don’t understand. I saw one again today...and I saw the consciousness inside him, it’s wonderful! And then they treat him like a little animal—he has no means of self defense (AM XI-397).

That being said, there should be no surprise that the Aurovilian youth are still struggling with the human condition, as were their parents. But the pioneering generation had the encouragement and blessings of The Mother to start anew, whereas the Aurovilian children are

expected to oblige to their parents' aims and ideals. The children of Auroville lack those precious blessings given by The Mother, that priceless experience of recognition and inspiration.

Without The Mother here to inspire directly, this responsibility is passed to the parents and the community itself. This responsibility, it seems, has been neglected, and it is reflected clearly in the two general opinions regarding the youth of Auroville, neither of which promote a healthy dose of subjective idealism. To start, the youth of Auroville are not the enlightened beings that were seemingly hoped for, and so the youth are regarded as "lost" and are merely tolerated within the community. On the flip side, others regard them as the answer to Auroville's struggles and propose or hope for a youthful revolution. In response to the first opinion, rejecting the youth is a sign of lacking the basic respect and dignity required in a subjective age. In regard to the second response, the hope for a youthful revolution, such an act would only keep Auroville in a cycle of individualist revolutions, wherein the younger generation constantly replaces the truth of the old with their new truth, never learning to respect the view of the other. This also is in disagreement with the social ethic of the subjective age since this age "...will hold sacred all the different parts of man's life which correspond to the parts of his being, all his physical, vital, dynamic, emotional, aesthetic, ethical, intellectual, psychic evolution, and see in them instruments for growth towards a diviner living" (*The Human Cycle*, 227).

"I think life is experience. Everyone has to go through different stages. By progressing and improving myself, by learning from my mistakes, to have my own opinion, thoughts, emotions, and share..."

~A 16-year-old Aurovilian's response to,
"What is the aim or purpose of life?"

In spite of the lack of faith in the project of Auroville itself amongst the youth, there is a basic ethic of experience and progress that seems to have been instilled. Most kids in Auroville consider experience and progress as the ultimate purpose in life, and there is an open mind when it comes to pursuing one's own spiritual path. These are the Aurovilian characteristics that the parents should be celebrating and harnessing rather than complaining about their parties, their lack of discipline, and their incessant music. Furthermore, citing The Mother or Sri Aurobindo at any point to ridicule the youth while they pursue their own path of development is not only narrow-minded, but it is an attribute of fundamentalism that has plagued the development of religions time and time again. "A religious movement brings usually a wave of spiritual excitement and aspiration that communicates itself to a large number of individuals and there is as a result a temporary uplifting and an effective formation, partly spiritual, partly ethical, partly dogmatic in its nature," wrote Sri Aurobindo concerning the advent and progress of the spiritual age. "But the wave after a generation or two or at most a few generations begins to subside; the formation remains" (*ibid.*, 263-264). If Auroville wants to stay true to its authentic religious pursuit, which is spiritual and distinct from the religionism which Sri Aurobindo admonishes against, Auroville ought to be more concerned about its conscious evolution, not dogmatizing written texts of the past, whether it is through strict architectural planning or unforgiving codes of conduct. Authentic aspiration is essential, not the hollow formation of preconceived and stagnant expectations.

“To me, spirituality is not a religion. Many people make it into a religion and that is stupid. Spirituality is something that takes a lot of work and I think that many people think they are spiritual just because they wear white clothes and chant ‘OM’ every morning. Spirituality, in my opinion, has to do with really letting go of all these extra characteristics and finding a true core of one’s personality. I think that each person can also find their own way of finding that and meditation and happy thoughts are not the only way.”

~ A 15-year-old Aurovilian response to,
“What does spirituality mean to you?”

If Auroville wants to pass on that magical faith of idealism and aspiration, that which Sri Aurobindo names as the saving grace of the human, that faith which is still apparent in some of the eyes of the pioneers (although sometimes you have to look really hard, pass the disheartened toil and into that spark that refuses to leave), it should concern itself with cultivating this ardor in its youth. This must begin with a certain level of respect, which can be shown by listening to their concerns for the community in all of its issues of organization and execution and providing the space and facilities for them to grow as much as possible. While the latter has come a far distance since Auroville’s inception, especially the opportunities for education, simple space to live—and most importantly, the opportunity to learn to live together—is an imminent problem for the youth of Auroville. Moreover, the former issue named is perhaps of greater concern, and it is the topic that receives the least amount of attention. Children are constantly referred to as the ones worthy for the kingdom of God, even by the Mother when she names men as “too crusted over.” If Auroville wants to give rise to a community soul that is subjective and distinct from the ways of the past, it should consider empowering and integrating the voices of the younger generations in its decisions for organization so that it can remain truly dynamic with the changing circumstances.

Since 1999, the minors in Auroville have made up nearly one quarter of its population. In the 2002 Tally (Consensus, www.auroville.org), there were 134 teenagers living in Auroville between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, and 174 between the ages of five and twelve. This means that there are (or that there should at least be an expectation of and facilities for) about 300 Aurovilian adolescents and young adults between the ages of thirteen and twenty-seven. Contrast these numbers to the space provided for youth living: Kailash, a housing project for 12 individuals between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one; WDK, which provides for 6 individuals between the ages of twenty and thirty, roughly; and Youth Centre, which houses less than 10 individuals. The difference in these numbers says a lot about the lack of concern with reference to the youth of Auroville.

In response, Auroville should encourage and support its youth to embark on living projects such as the ones just named, which teaches them how to live freely and independently and, at the same time, in a community, which teaches the necessary rules of organization and respect for others that ensue. While this intent does seem to be at the core of these projects, it is only accepted so long as it complies with the demands of the older Aurovilians, which sends a message of disrespect and disregard. Consider, for example, the simple fact that Kailash, housing a dozen adolescents, was planted directly next to the community Silence; or, for another example, that the Youth Centre is, perhaps symbolically, at odds with Master Plan as the Crown

Road is supposed to cut directly through it. For a final case in point, talk to Velu or Segar about their own ambitions in providing more space for the youth to live. The recent housing project, Muyerchi (in Surrender Community), which was initiated by the two of them, took seven years to complete after it was met with resistance from both L'avenir and the community. These examples demonstrate the lack of concern given to these youth projects, which should be one of the top priorities. Auroville should pursue projects like these, but with more awareness and foresight. It is foolish to expect the youth of Auroville to maintain a high level of respect for its intentions of spiritual pursuit for a new and better way to live together when, in reality, they feel both judged and ignored. Therefore, not only should there be many more living projects for the youth so that they can learn to be more aware of what is demanded of the individual when she lives in a community, but they should also be given the freedom to explore this without the heavy preconditions and judgments from their elders. Projects such as these could help cultivate the awareness and skills necessary for a more subjective society, and including these fresh voices in Auroville's already existing committees, such as the Auroville Council, the Working Committee and L'avenir could contribute a lot. Or they could consider having a Youth Council, a representative group wherein the youth could voice their concerns for the development of their community and to look out for their right to develop freely. Including the input of the youth into a community's organization, despite the lack of consistency it may have with the current mindset, could open new ways of thinking about the community, contributing a dynamism that is essential to any progressive community.



Photo credit: www.auroville.org

The succeeding generations of Auroville compose a critical part of its collective soul, which is, according to Sri Aurobindo, much more of an essential concern for a spiritual society than any physical formation. The spiritual society will be concerned with genuine spirituality. "Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul," wrote Sri Aurobindo, "because it is itself fulfilled by freedom and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's own nature, dharma" (*The Human Cycle*, 181). To live in this way, embracing one's own freedom while also respecting the other's, is the divine perfection. Realizing this ethic "can only be brought about by an individual change in each human life. The collective soul is there only as a great half-subconscious source of the individual existence; if it is to take on a definite psychological form or a new kind of collective life, that can only come by the shaping growth of its individuals," insisted Sri Aurobindo. "As will be the spirit and life of the individuals constituting it, so will be the realised spirit of the collectivity and the true power of its life. A society that lives not by its men but by its institutions, is not a collective soul, but a machine; its life becomes a mechanical product and ceases to be a living growth" (*ibid.*, 263). Providing for the growth of the youth in the right ways, thereby shaping a healthy community soul, should be at the forefront of Auroville's plan, which should always remain dynamic. The real difference in conscious evolution should be the tenacity and faith for meaningful progress imbued in the succeeding generations, not in clinging to a forty-year-old

master plan.

There is an unnameable Aurovilian quality that permeates the youth. They have a unique understanding of Auroville; they have not come to know Auroville through its ideals, which was the in the hearts of both the pioneers and is in the hearts of newcomers, but instead through its realities. They are not disillusioned. They are the most honest critics of Auroville, and self-reflection and self-criticism are essential for self-progress. If Auroville continues to allow for this feeling of disconnect with its youth, they will lose an essential, and maybe even necessary voice in shaping its future. For these children, Auroville will simply be home, a place with familiar faces (a mindset that is already starting to be noticeable), rather than a platform for finding new and better ways to live together. If the city-of-the-future wants to sustain itself, its primary concern should be with its collective spirit and whether or not that spirit is able to recognize and inspire, both individuals and the world. The most disillusioned and direct representation of this spirit can be seen in its children, and if their faith in Auroville continues to dissipate, their aspiration and idealism will be lost. This is the saving grace that Sri Aurobindo praised, and if it has no place even in the children of Auroville, then Auroville ought to reconsider its approach.

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NOTES

ⁱ This statement is also addressing another concern for Auroville, which is most commonly referred to as the “retiree community.” It is next to impossible for Auroville to welcome fresh youth into its community seeing as it does not have the facilities nor the funds to provide for its residents as is. That being the case, it is much easier for older individuals who have the finances to support themselves to make the transition into Auroville, giving Auroville more and more older residents each year.

ⁱⁱ References for Mother’s passages are taken from the text, “Mother on Auroville: References in Mother’s Agenda,” printed at the Auroville Press, but with no named editor or date. The citations that look like, MA XIII-212 or AMIX-101 stand for Mother’s Agenda, with the Roman numeral indicating the volume number, and the last number the page. ‘AM’ is the abbreviating for “L’Agenda de Mère” and is used for the volumes not yet published in English at the time of this text’s publication. A provisional translation was given by the editor.

SPIRITUALIZED SOCIETY: SOME REFLECTIONS

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Photo credit: Suhas Mehra

Introduction

The ideal of a spiritualized society appears to me to hold forth the only hope for mankind, if mankind is to solve the numberless problems it is faced with at present, and the numberless new problems it is engaged in making for the future—near and distant. Mankind has come to such an impasse that a solution itself creates new problems: hence mankind is living in a state of perpetual crisis so much so that nothing of quality can ever be initiated—it is always a matter of crisis management for the leaders of the world.

No political system appears to be able to satisfy the human need for peace, happiness and harmony. On the contrary, all political systems foster conflicts and wars, disharmony and unhappiness. No religion has succeeded in ensuring equity, brotherhood and love among the people of the world. All their elaborate belief systems, avowed piety and magical rites and traditional rituals notwithstanding, religions have failed to salvage mankind from disillusionment and decay. As a matter of fact religions with their emphasis on conventions, traditions and rituals rather than the need for the search for truth, have become the greatest obstacle that stands in the ways of spiritualization of mankind. Science and technology fuelled by the rampant consumerism keep producing numberless goodies; but behind the shoddy comforts and conveniences created there looms large the specter of ecological disaster, biochemical degeneration and global warming. Powerful drugs occasion the coming into being of the most virulent strains of germs that are resistant to the most powerful drugs in existence. All human endeavours are for bettering the

human condition; but all attempts end up in failures which give rise to the thought that there must be some radical defect somewhere in all the human endeavours at betterment.

The ideal of a spiritualized human society might appear as a utopian pipe dream or else at best as a figment of the imagination. Imagination too has a connection however distant it might be, even when it is free from the rigour of rational thought which is necessarily tethered very closely to sense based facts or probabilities, with facts and probabilities that are in the ultimate analysis sense based. Imaginary ideal is one thing and Sri Aurobindo's ideal of a spiritualized society is another thing. Sri Aurobindo's ideal is based on supramental facts regarding the structure of human personality.

Personality Structure of Man

Man is a composite whole made up of body, life, mind and spirit. Body is material in nature; and Matter according to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is the culmination of the principle of Ignorance. Hence the human body offers to the spirit a fundamental opposition in the form of Ignorance. There is another opposition in the form of bondage to mechanistic law. Response to stimulus is the sign of the presence of life in the body. Life that is spoken of by Sri Aurobindo is not the life that modern science believes to have evolved from matter. Life in Sri Aurobindo is a dynamic energy that is all pervading, imperishable and eternal. Similarly Mind spoken of by Sri Aurobindo is not the mind modern science speaks of. The opposition offered by the mind to the spirit is that it looks at the world after taking up a particular view point, and tries to know everything from that limiting stance without realizing its Procrustean nature. Spirit is the essential man: the body and the life and the mind are mere encrustations. This is not to belittle the role of body, life and mind: they are instruments meant to serve the spirit.

The ideal society of Sri Aurobindo is a society that gives due importance to spirit. In fact in the existing society spirit is not a subject for serious discussion, study and search. On the contrary, it is looked down as the result of a superstitious belief that somehow still clings on to the minds of some people in spite of all the scientific and technological advancements achieved by mankind. Mankind is thus habituated to neglect the spirit and live by what is not the highest in man. Human beings have a lower, a higher and a highest nature built into their personality structure.

The commonly found, normal human society has its genesis in the lower nature; and the lower shall bring about the doom of what it creates. In a society that is built on the lower nature, two forces are at work: one is the gregarious instinct, and the other is the clash of interests and the conflicts of egos. It means converging and diverging forces are at work in the formation of a normal human society; and this society is necessarily devoted to the development of the physical, the vital and the mental aspects of human life. But it neglects the development of the spiritual aspect. A society that develops by neglecting the spiritual aspect may become physically rich, vitally overactive and mentally complex and depressing. Hence such societies have to die in spite of their development, or may be more accurately, because of their development. This death by development is a sure sign of the presence of a radical defect in such social systems.

Personal Reflections

This ideal of a spiritualized society gives me a robust optimism in the face of the tremendous negativism rampant in the world. I feel, I think, I know why nothing works in the world. Earlier I used to console myself by telling myself that though the Almighty had created the world, the management is entrusted to the Dark One and his tribe of devils. This is replicated in the human realm where the altruistic humanitarians lead a revolution or a liberation struggle or an independence movement; but no sooner than the heroic efforts come to a successful close than self seeking rascals of the very lowest type take over the whole management. God creates and the devil manages! Though that black humour was not much of a consolation that was all the consolation I had, and hoped to have none better for all times to come. Then Beloo came to me insisting that I read Sri Aurobindo and understand his social thought. Till I read Sri Aurobindo, my social outlook had been that of an ardent Marxist. But Marxism seemed to work well only in the realm of theory; when it came to praxis it was rather difficult to distinguish Marxists from others who promised heaven on earth and created hell in reality. So my only consolation was the black humour.

When I was introduced to the personality structure of man as understood by Sri Aurobindo I had not suspected the social implications of that understanding. It became clear only when I began reading *The Human Cycle*. The socio-political riddles that used to pester me became very transparent then: the neglect of the Spirit foredooms all efforts at developments and growth. With this insight I would now like to probe my personal life to see how far the need for integral development applies to me personally.

The first two decades of my life were devoted to physical developments and vital satisfactions. Food was the main thing; the meaning of life dependent on the quality and quantity of gustatory enjoyment. Even the beauty of the opposite sex did not have any meaning to me till the middle of the second decade of my life. Food alone mattered. Then starting from the mid of the second decade, sex also had become a matter of great significance. And by imperceptible degrees the vital urges assumed supreme importance: food became a matter of secondary importance only. Even while sex ruled the mind, I had a great fascination for reading; but it cannot be said that mind mattered more to me than sex, drinks and company. Luckily for me I happened to come across the works of Dr. Paul Brunton who had been a fascinated student of Indian culture, especially of the sages like the Ramana Maharshi of Arunachala. I was taken up by his moving account of the spiritual lore of India. And when I got posted to Chandigarh in 1973 I took up the study of Philosophy in all earnestness. That possibly could be characterized as a passage from vital interests to the realm of the mind. This is not to say the vital had gone off: it was very much there but the mental had become a major contender with the vital. Though I did not have the luck to attend the lecture classes of any teacher of philosophy, I kept reading and thinking and finally secured the second rank in M.A. Philosophy from the Punjab University in 1978. Well, I mention this because to my thinking this signals some triumph of the mental over the vital.

The spiritual aspect had always fascinated me; but not so the religious. The temple going religious people had always held me as an atheist; for at the age of 14 itself I had forsaken temple worship. The man responsible for my break off from the traditional path of piety had been none other than a temple priest himself. I salute him as my Guru in this regard and am indebted to him for opening

my eyes to the reality beyond the temple. Of course he had not done this service with any awareness; he had no occasion even to guess what he had done to me. You see, he was a passive homosexual; and after one of my close friends of those days narrated his adventures with the priest of our Siva temple, I decided on my own that there could not be any meaning in temple worship. Giving up of temple worship had meant atheism to me in those days, for I knew no better than that; and hence I seemed an atheist to myself. It was during my school final exam days that I stopped fancying myself as an atheist. So the spiritual had been a matter of dire need and experimental inquiry for me, not a matter of dead belief and ritual.

As I matured the need for God became not simply a manner of overcoming exam fear but a deeper need upon which depended the meaning of whole existence itself. After attending a few sessions of Vipassana meditation, I became convinced that it is not through reading that I can ever get the answers I want. The same conviction became doubly strong when Sri Aurobindo came to me. I had read of Sri Aurobindo from the book *Among the Great*. No doubt I was fascinated; but did not dare to read Sri Aurobindo in the original after my miserable failure at reading *Savitri*. But it is through SACAR that I have received a proper introduction to Sri Aurobindo. Thanks to my studies at SACAR the path before me is clear. For now reading should continue till knowing makes reading redundant. This autobiographical excursion has once again made it clear to me that the personality of man is a composite whole and that the most precious part of them all is the Spirit. And, anything that neglects the spirit is foredoomed to fail. The ideal of a spiritualized society means hope for both the individual human being and the human race. Personally, to me it means clarity and courage. Its possibility may not be apparent right now: mankind will have to traverse through very many failures yet to get the possibility of a spiritualized society apparent. Only through failures can people be made wiser.

Conclusion

It seems if a spiritualized society is to come into being, the sway of the body over the vital, and the sway of the vital over the mental, and the sway of the mental over the spirit has to be overcome once and for all. This triple overcoming is certain, for it is the will of the higher Nature; it is towards this transcendence that mankind is moving even if it is at a snail's pace. Nothing can prevent mankind from reaching its divine destiny: The Divine Life.

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SELF SURRENDER IS THE KEY TO INTEGRAL YOGA

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Sri Aurobindo explains the triple labor of Integral yoga as aspiration, rejection and surrender. Aspiration should be constant and complete for the realization of the Divine consciousness, and it should always be vigilant. The rejection of all lower impulses, i.e. of the physical, vital and mental is also important in Integral yoga. Every false impulse or desire has to be rejected. Challenges are present at every point of life for the sadhak of Integral yoga and a constant vigilance is essential. Though aspiration, rejection and surrender go hand in hand, my position in this paper is that the third aspect, surrender, is the most important. When an individual is completely surrendered to the Divine, everything in life becomes an opportunity for progress. But for that it is absolutely necessary that surrender is constant, active and vigilant, not merely an inert passivity.

I will first examine the role of surrender in four major aspects of the Integral Yoga, i.e. knowledge, devotion, meditation and work or service. I will also show that the central importance of surrender is what makes Integral yoga different from other yogas. Thus, I will show that self-surrender is the key to Integral Yoga.

In preparing this paper I have relied extensively on three key works of Sri Aurobindo: *The Mother*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *Letters on Yoga*. Wherever I have used a direct quote from any of these texts, I have given the exact reference as per the best of my ability.

The Role of Self Surrender in Integral Yoga

A major part of the life of an individual is concentrated on the outside, one is always more attentive to outward appearances, actions and influences than an inner life. In contrast, in Integral yoga every action should be directed by the psychic. The recognition of the psychic and an unconditional surrender to the Divine is the first step in this path. The soul becomes the guide and leads the individual through the outer life.

Self surrender is often mistaken with inert passivity. It is not just mental acceptance, but also a focused effort on the part of the sadhak. Inert passivity means one is not receptive to the Divine force and hence is inactive. But a truly surrendered individual is open to the Divine grace and is a receptacle of the Divine power, the opening within is towards the Divine influences only. Initially in the path of Integral yoga, surrender is not complete. Hence an active personal effort is required at this stage.

The ultimate purpose of self surrender is the complete transformation of the individual self, which is the aim of Integral yoga. It is the harmony of the outer and inner life, the outer life is guided by the soul and the realization of the Divine happens in all walks of our life. For the psychic to be prominent, the replacement of the lower impulses of the physical and vital by the influences from the higher consciousness is required.

Two most important signs of progress in Integral yoga may be the realization of the Divine in the self and the identification of the self with the universal consciousness. The Divine spark within is the guide, but it is veiled due to the darkness in the individual. During the initial stages of Integral yoga, it is difficult to identify the Divine spark within. There are obstacles on the path, like the vital impulses which mask themselves and are mistaken to be the voice from within, or the biased mental impressions which often come up, which have to be recognized as not the Divine influence and overcome before the true self within can be recognized. It is

constant vigilance and surrender which help in the realization of the individual Divine Consciousness. In the path of Integral yoga, a time comes when the individual realizes that it is the One Divine in all—the realization of the universal consciousness. It is definitely an achievement, but not the goal.

The progress on the path is directly related to the self surrender of the individual. Sri Aurobindo says “In proportion as the surrender and self consecration progress, the sadhaka becomes conscious of the Divine shakti doing the sadhana, pouring into him more and more of herself, founding in him the freedom and perfection of the Divine nature” (*The Mother*, chapter 2, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 8).

Self surrender and consecration of all is not limited to some particular period or time in the everyday life of the sadhak. It is commonly held that a person remembers and offers self to the Divine while sitting in meditation, but as soon as the meditation is over, the remembrance is also over. This is not the case in Integral yoga. Surrender should be constant, happening throughout the day, throughout every activity in which the sadhak is involved.

Sri Aurobindo says, “Life, not a remote silent or high uplifted ecstatic beyond—Life alone is the field of our Yoga” (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, p. 89). Surrender has a role in every activity of the life.

Role of Surrender in Knowledge

Though learning can be considered a mental activity, in actuality it is much more than that. Mostly it is only analysis and synthesis that are done by the mind. But the true knowledge lies within. One cannot read and know what is not already known. Reading, understanding and learning are just means to unravel this knowledge within. With self surrender, there is a psychic opening and knowledge is revealed. The knowledge is acquired directly from the one and only real teacher—the Divine. Learning can happen from the teachers and the shastras, but it is not complete knowledge. They impart the knowledge which has been revealed to them. They have the wisdom of the ages and their progress helps the new sadhak on his way. The physical teachers or shastras can be road maps, but one should not be completely dependent on them or blindly follow them. It is always important to remember that the real teacher is the Divine. Even on the physical level, surrender helps an individual to acquire knowledge, as the opening in the mind leads to better understanding. Thus, spiritual knowledge is better acquired with the opening of the psychic. Surrender results in this opening.

There are obstacles also in the path of knowledge. Mental pride, the satisfaction of the knowledge acquired from the books read or even the feeling of advancing on the path of yoga come in the way of progress. The sadhak has to be constantly vigilant and offer to overcome such impulses which are a contradiction of true surrender of oneself to the Divine.

Role of Surrender in Work and Action

For an ordinary person, major part of time is devoted to some external work or action. Much attention is given to external appearances, contacts, relationships, job and career etc. Following the path of Integral yoga does not mean giving up all outer work and life. It is a change of consciousness which is the determining factor in Integral yoga. Initially, mental acceptance that every work is a service to the Divine has to be present. This understanding and acceptance is the result of self surrender. Once self surrender happens, there is no personal work, every thing is done as a service to the Divine.

Cessation of demand and choice of work, lack of desire towards the results, abundance of energy for work and equanimity towards all work happen when the individual has offered oneself to the Divine. Though there is no desire for the result, dedication is still present. The

difference between the work of a follower and a non-follower lies in the interest in the work. It is very rare that a person who has not surrendered to the Divine would put in 100% of his ability and knowledge to the work given, but in the case of a follower, it is not the result but the knowledge that the work is being done for the Divine which is important. Every action is offered to the Divine. There is a constant remembrance of the Divine. During the initial stages, when the surrender is not complete, personal effort from the sadhak is essential for constant remembrance and offering, but as yoga progresses, surrender becomes more complete and the remembrance of the Divine is present at all times, even while involved in the most tedious physical work.

Constantly remembering the Divine even when working does not mean that there is lack of attention towards the work being done. Once the self has surrendered to the Divine, the psychic opens and there is a separation between the inner and outer consciousness during the work. The outer consciousness may be fully involved in the work at hand, but the inner consciousness always guides it as well as opens continuously to the Divine.

In ordinary situations, vital is the seat of all action, but for the follower of the Integral yoga, the psychic is the guiding force behind all action. This happens when the individual is completely surrendered to the Divine. The consecration of the vital can be identified by different signs. Sri Aurobindo explains the signs of consecration of the vital in action as a feeling that all work and life belongs to the Divine and a joy experienced, calm and disappearance of the egoistic attachment, the feeling of the Divine behind all the actions and a persistent faith. Persistent effort and self surrender are essential to come to this stage of Integral yoga, but it is not unachievable. The key point to be remembered is the self surrender. Once the surrender is complete in all parts of the individual, integral yoga becomes easier.

Equanimity in all the work done also becomes evident with the surrender. Not the position or the importance of the work, but rather the spirit in which the work is being done is the essence.



Loving Surrender

Photo credit: <http://www.blossomlikeaflower.com/2008/05/surrender.html>

Role of Surrender in Love and Devotion to the Divine

Sri Aurobindo asserts that the soul's turning to the Divine is essentially a Divine love. But the initial manifestation comes as human love and devotion to the Divine. The one important characteristic of Divine love is the lack of demand or desire. There is no wish for anything, no gains in physical, vital, mental or spiritual level is required, and the happiness and joy is in the

experience of the love itself. When surrender to the Divine is complete and the Divine becomes the most important aspect of one's life, nothing else matters. Whatever happens in life is accepted as the will of the Divine. Thus surrender helps the opening to the Divine and the filling up of the person with love and wisdom. The individual becomes a perfect instrument for the Divine. "True love for the Divine is a self giving, free of demand, full of aspiration and complete surrender" (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 757).

Sri Aurobindo explains bhakti as not an experience, but as a state of mind. When the individual is devoted to the Divine, the psychic becomes awake and prominent. This is one important step in the Integral yoga. The ultimate level of devotion to the Divine is a complete surrender.

As a beginner on the path of Integral yoga, effort is required in devotion as in any other area of life. Initially, the experience of bhakti and the surrender to the Divine are mental. One has to constantly remember and offer, till the time the psychic opens up and yoga becomes life itself.

Surrender in Concentration and Meditation

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother do not insist on hours of meditation as the most essential part of Integral yoga. Though meditation and concentration have a role in opening of the psychic, it should not be an escape from life, as in doing nothing else but sitting in meditation.

Concentration helps in the progress in Integral yoga. Sri Aurobindo explains concentration in Integral yoga as "Concentration for our yoga, means when the consciousness is fixed in a particular state (e.g. peace) or movement (e.g. aspiration, will, coming into contact with the Mother, taking the Mother's name): meditation is when the inner mind is looking at things to get the right knowledge" (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 723).

Concentration leads to the emptying of the mind, leaving it open to the Divine influence and knowledge. It is a means to ultimate calm and peace. It also helps in the surrender to the Divine. Sri Aurobindo explains "The power of the concentration in the heart-centre is to open that centre and by the power of aspiration, love, bhakti, surrender remove the veil which covers and conceals the soul and bring forward the soul or psychic being to govern the mind, life and body and turn and open them fully to the Divine, removing all that is opened to that turning and opening" (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 725).

Surrender in Other Systems of Yoga

Though the aspiration for the Divine is a common factor in all the systems of yoga, the focus is different in different systems. Rajayoga stresses on the knowledge aspect, the people who follow this system devote their life to acquiring knowledge of the shastras and meditation and contemplation. Hathayoga, on the other hand, focuses on the perfection of the physical as an instrument for the Divine. They follow hours of physical exercises to attain perfection. The other aspects of life are ignored in this process.

These other systems hence do not focus exclusively on the complete submission to the Divine, whereas in Integral Yoga it is the whole individual who practices the yoga. The first step towards perfection of the whole individual is the acknowledgement that the Divine is the doer and we are just instruments in His hands. This understanding leads to the complete surrender to the will of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo says "The Mother's power and not any human endeavour and tapasya alone can rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering truth and light and life Divine and immortal's Ananda" (*The Mother*, SABCL Vol. 25, p. 41) This recognition is the major difference between Integral yoga and other systems of yoga. It is the surrender of the individual which leads to this recognition and working of the Divine power in the human.

Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have explained the importance of complete surrender to the Divine in very clear terms. It may be seen that surrender is the key to the opening of the psychic which is the essential component in the progress of Integral Yoga. Surrender means a complete offering where the individual becomes an instrument in the hands of the Divine. There is no ego, desire for the egoistic satisfaction or personal demands even that of the spiritual achievements when complete consecration has happened. Surrender helps the psychic come forward and guide the individual's life.

Integral Yoga is not an easy path. Progress may not be seen in days, months or years. It is the surrender and the trust in the Divine which keeps the individual going through even the dark periods. It is the light of Integral Yoga.

Aspiration, rejection and surrender go hand in hand in Integral yoga, but among these, surrender is the key. Once the individual is completely surrendered to the Divine, the path becomes easier. Initially, the sadhak has to put in a lot of personal effort, constantly remembering and offering the self and all activities at all time to the Divine, constantly rejecting the impulses of the lower levels of consciousness and aspiring at all times for the manifestation and realization of the Divine consciousness. The mental effort of the initial stages gradually becomes effortless. Whatever the activity, whatever the state of the outer consciousness, remembrance of the Divine is always present in the inner consciousness. This is progress in Integral Yoga. Surrender also leads to a complete change of consciousness of the individual. It also leads to the psychic opening and transformation. Eventually the realization of individual consciousness and the universal consciousness also happens. Hence it can be safely concluded that surrender to the Divine, complete consecration of the self is the key to Integral Yoga.

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