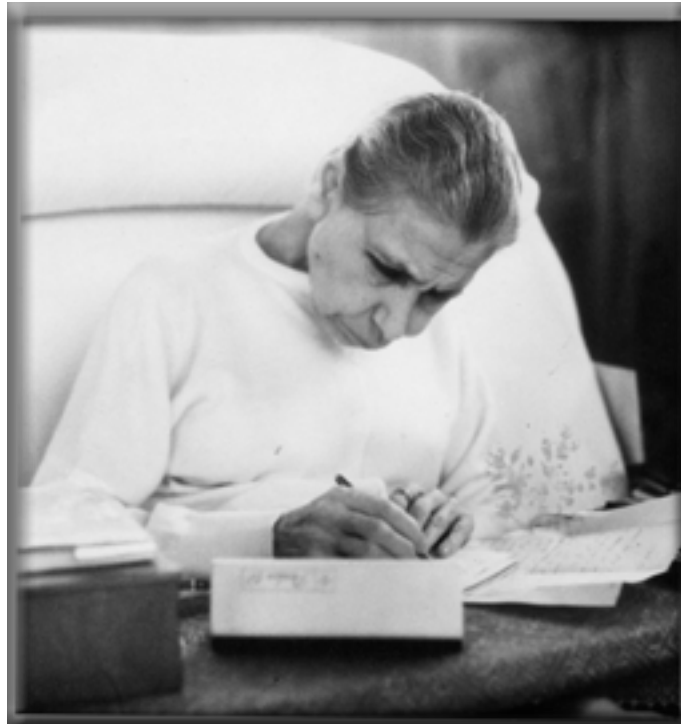


THE CALL BEYOND

Volume 41 // No. 4 // 15 April 2016



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

Sri Aurobindo

Savitri, Book 11, Canto 1, p. 689

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THE CALL BEYOND // APRIL 2016

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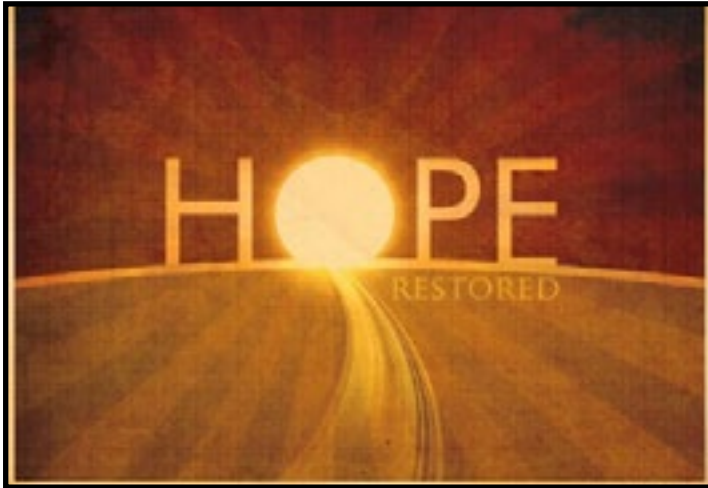
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Is Cancer Curable?

LOVLEEN BIJLANI

Good health is the exterior expression of an inner harmony.

THE MOTHER



I see people who die a few minutes after a doctor tells them there is no hope of a cure. They give up and go. Others get angry and find joy in proving the doctor wrong. Something within them is challenged and hopeful. Hope is the divine motivator.

Bernie Siegel

Whether cancer is curable is one of those questions that cannot be answered in yes or no. For all practical purposes, the answer is no, but cures from cancer are not unknown. What is more important than this guarded answer are some more facts. Cures do not necessarily happen because of wrong diagnosis or the disease being of the milder variety. Cures happen in cases that have been diagnosed early, and are restricted to patients with certain personality traits. It is the second part of this statement that will be the focus of this editorial. *First*, patients who recover completely from cancer do not resign themselves to their fate, even if their doctor has been tactless enough to hand them over a prediction about how long they are likely to live. Instead, these patients say to themselves that the doctor is not God; I will prove him wrong. *Secondly*, these patients do not focus their attention entirely on the disease. They let life run as normally as possible despite the disease. *Thirdly*, they look at the positive side of the disease: they treat the disease as an advance notice from death, which in any case is inevitable, whether because of cancer or otherwise. They decide to use the notice period to do all the things that they wanted to do, but had been postponing for one reason or the other.

Fourthly, they do not let the disease shift their focus to themselves. Rather, they start taking more interest in others, start becoming more kind to others. They probably realize through the illness that life is too short to be spent on bickering, jealousy and hatred. They become more loving, and express their love through what they do for others. *Finally*, their helplessness with respect to the illness takes them closer to God. They start praying for their recovery, and irrespective of how their prayer is answered, they develop an intimate relationship with God. The love that they shower on their fellow beings, and the relationship that they develop with God, lead to their spiritual growth, which is the purpose of life. Interestingly, this approach not only makes life more meaningful, it also prolongs life, and may sometimes lead to total cure. *In short*, only those patients get cured of cancer who participate in their treatment through the attitude that they adopt towards the disease. The cancer surgeon, Bernie Siegel, observed this phenomenon, and asked himself, if the attitude that leads to cure comes naturally to some people, can it be induced in others. And, he found that although attitudes are difficult to change, it is not impossible, especially when the change offers the person hope of cure from a disease that is considered incurable.

Love and peace of mind do protect us. They allow us to overcome the problems that life hands us. They teach us to survive... to live now... to have the courage to confront each day.

-Bernie Siegel

The next question that arises is how this approach works. We are all equipped with the immune system, which protects us from a variety of diseases. The best understood function of the immune system is the protection it offers against infections. It offers protection against infections by killing the harmful germs that have entered the body. A basic mechanism by which it kills these germs selectively is its ability to distinguish between 'self' (belonging to the body) and 'non-self'. Since germs do not belong to the body, it identifies them as 'non-self' and starts working against them. Cancer is a disease in which cells multiply uncontrollably, and the large number of cells that are produced because of such uncontrolled division are different from the normal cells of the body. Therefore, the immune system identifies cancer cells also as 'non-self' and works against them. Cancer, therefore, represents a situation where the process of uncontrolled cell division has overwhelmed the immune system. If the tumor is removed by surgery, the number of cancer cells is drastically reduced, but seldom reduced to zero. And, the remaining

cells can once again multiply and lead to a recurrence of the cancer, sometimes at many places in the body. But the few cells that remain in the body after surgery can be eliminated by the immune system of the patient. If all the remaining cells are so eliminated, the person is cured of cancer.

However, for such a cure to materialize, the immune system of the patient should be healthy. What makes the immune system healthy is a good diet, regular physical activity, and **most importantly**, psychological factors such as positive thinking, hope, and mental peace. Therefore, the patient who has the faith that the self-healing mechanisms of the body together with the treatment that he is taking will cure him, and is mentally at peace, is the patient who is most likely to get cured.

In short, there is no miracle cure, but what lies behind cures that seem to be miraculous is a person with ample inner resources and the resolve to make the best use of everything in life, no matter what. Cancer is just one of the traumatic events that a person might face in life. Any of these events may leave a person bent, bruised or broken; or the person may simply survive the event and life may be back to the same as that before the event. But the best is to use the difficult phase of life as an opportunity for spiritual growth, and return to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

Dr. Lovleen Bijlani was Professor of Medical Oncology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, till 2007 when she took early retirement and joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch.

***Unappalled by the fear of death canst thou leave to Him, not as an experiment,
with a calm and entire faith thy ailments? Thou shalt find that in the end
He exceeds the skill of a million doctors.***

SRI AUROBINDO

Please see in the issue the related [article](#), 'Seeing Them Off' and answers to questions related to cancer under the column [may I help you](#).

The health, disease and wellness related information in *The Call Beyond* is not a substitute for professional consultation.

When a person is diagnosed with an essentially incurable disease such as cancer, it comes as a bolt from the blue for the patient and his caregivers. The dictum that all events and circumstances of life are opportunities for spiritual growth applies as much, or even more, to this situation as to any other. Examples abound where patients as well as caregivers have emerged from such difficult circumstances more full of love and closer to the Divine.

“The most surprising thing in the world is that everybody knows that death is inevitable and yet behaves as if he were immortal”, says Yudhishter in the Mahabharata. To this one might add that we also behave, and misbehave, with our near and dear ones as if they were immortal. The result is that if they leave us suddenly without warning, leaving no possibility of even saying “sorry”, we are left with life-long regret. The situation is a little better if they give us a few months or years of notice by developing an incurable disease such as cancer. The caregivers of such patients face several difficult questions:

- Whether to tell the patient the truth?
- How much of the truth to tell and how to tell it?
- To do all that is possible for prolonging the life of the patient or to withhold those heroic measures which are likely to only prolong misery?
- How much of a choice to give the patient in choosing the treatment?
- What the approach should be to alternative systems of medicine?
- Whether to add modalities such as distance healing, faith healing and distance healing?...

The list is endless and the answers debatable.

There is not much debate anymore on whether to tell the patient the truth. Even if efforts are made to hide the truth from the patient, the patient knows it anyway. In any case, the truth must be told; the only question is how. A few important principles are that the news should be broken only when there is ample time available to talk to the patient. All hope should not be taken away from the patient, and the patient should feel fully supported. It is cruel to break bad news to the patient in a hurry and leave the patient all alone to digest its implications. Regarding not taking away hope, it might be asked how hope can be given when there is no hope while still sticking to the truth. The fact is that *there is no situation in which there is no hope*. Remissions may be rare in some cancers, but are known in virtually all cancers. Furthermore, the remissions are not arbitrary: they are more likely among those who expect them, and psychoneuroimmunology offers a plausible explanation for the phenomenon. That is why Bernie Siegel, the famous cancer surgeon, says that one should beware of giving false ‘no hope’.

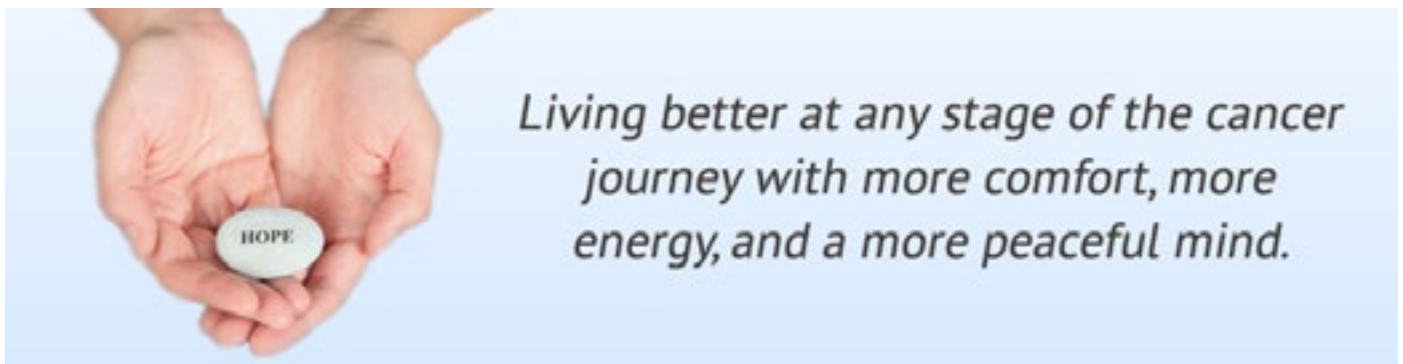
Cancer also presents difficult dilemmas regarding the extent to which every new advance in treatment should be used, and the types of treatment that may be combined. Broadly speaking, there are three modalities of treatment: surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Surgery, whenever possible, is a good option because it reduces the tumour load and gives the body's immune mechanisms a chance to overpower the cancer cells that may still be lurking here and there in the body.


Radiotherapy and *chemotherapy*, however, are double-edged weapons. They destroy tumour cells, but they also damage the rapidly dividing normal cells; hence their side effects. Among the rapidly dividing cells are also the cells of the immune system. It is not always easy to determine whether the benefit expected from radiotherapy or chemotherapy exceeds the harm they might do by weakening the immune system. Further, a social and moral dimension is added to the issue because chemotherapy is often very expensive. If the family refuses chemotherapy, they may feel guilty that they are not doing everything possible to prolong the life of the patient. On the other hand, if they somehow manage the chemotherapy, they might face bankruptcy for the sake of giving the patient doubtful prolongation of poor quality life. If these decisions are taken without any discussion with the patient, an important aspect of the truth regarding his illness is being hidden from him. On the other hand, if the patient is consulted on these points, it may be difficult to avoid in the patient the perception that the family is not doing enough for him in order to economize on the expenses.

In chronic disease, relatives, friends and other well wishers have a tendency to suggest unconventional remedies such as alternative systems of medicine, diet therapies, touch therapy, spiritual healing and so on. Sometimes they even suggest specific practitioners or spiritual masters and support their advice with anecdotal evidence. This happens all the more in diseases such as cancer. It is difficult for any family to act on all such advice. Which path to follow would, and should, depend on what they, particularly the patient, have faith in. Even if the treatment has no specific beneficial biological effect attributable to its chemistry, it would at least act as a placebo if the patient has faith in it. Placebos are currently looked upon with a great deal of respect because first, they can work wonders; and secondly, if the placebo is an inert substance, it will have no side effects. However, it is not prudent to depend only on an alternative therapy unless practitioners of scientific medicine have given up, or at least the patient and the relatives have taken a conscious decision not to avail of scientific medicine anymore.

While all the above questions and several other mundane considerations inevitably enter the picture in a disease such as cancer, the most *comforting, constructive and creative* approach comes from the spiritual worldview.



Living better at any stage of the cancer journey with more comfort, more energy, and a more peaceful mind.



Life is so much
brighter when we
focus on what truly
matters.....

The spiritual worldview helps us accept the disease not only as an expression of the Divine Will, but also of the Divine Wisdom. Accepting it as an expression of the Divine Wisdom enables us to look at the disease positively. The usual way to look at the disease is as a problem to be solved, a battle to be fought, and an enemy to be conquered. From the spiritual point of view, however, the disease is a powerful teacher. It is an opportunity with an extremely high potential to stimulate the spiritual growth of the patient and his caregivers. Since spiritual growth is the true purpose of life, the disease helps them fulfill the purpose of life. All events and circumstances can serve as opportunities for spiritual growth. While ordinary everyday life gives opportunities for taking only one small step at a time towards the fulfillment of the purpose of life,

traumatic events such as cancer are opportunities for taking several big and rapid strides. A person going through the experience of cancer for a couple of years, and his caregivers, can grow spiritually more in those few years than in several decades of ordinary life. The transforming effect of this growth outweighs the physical and emotional hardship faced by the family. The effect of the transformation is to bring the family closer, and to make them much more capable of loving, caring and sharing. The transformation also equips them to face any future vicissitudes of life with equanimity. They discover peace and joy within themselves, and learn how to access these inner resources. They get liberated from their dependence on external circumstances for their happiness. Hence their happiness becomes event-proof and shock-proof. Their overwhelming concern for recovery from the disease is replaced by the need to redirect life in order to make life more meaningful and fulfilling. Thus, the disease that seems to be a curse becomes a blessing in disguise. Interestingly, with this attitude, not only does the remainder of life become more meaningful, the remainder also seems to get longer. There can be no better way of seeing off our loved ones than to thank them for the opportunity they bring us even while preparing to leave, and to make good use of the opportunity.

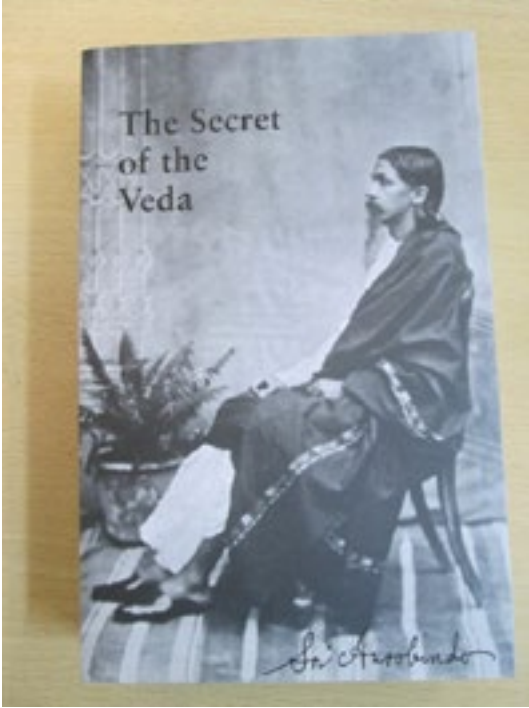
First published in a Souvenir titled 'Voice for Palliative Cancer Care in India' published on World Hospice Day, 2009, on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of Ganga Prem Hospice, Rishikesh.

*Death is a passage, not the goal of our walk:
Some ancient deep impulsion labours on:
Our souls are dragged as with a hidden leash,
Carried from birth to birth, from world to world,
Our acts prolong after the body's fall
The old perpetual journey without pause.*

Sri Aurobindo (Savitri, Book 2, Canto 6, p. 197)

Please see also the related editorial, [Is Cancer Curable](#) and the questions and answers under the column [may i help you](#).

The article is fifth in a series based on Sri Aurobindo's 'The Secret of the Veda'



“All is based on the central Vedic conception of the supra-mental or Truth-consciousness towards which the progressively perfected mentality of the human being labours as towards a consummation and a goal.”(1)

– Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*

In order to raise our present state of mind to the supra-mental or Truth-consciousness, we first need to purify and perfect our thoughts. This mental preparation is represented in the Veda by invoking two deities – *Varuna* and *Mitra*. They are called upon by the Rishis to prepare the intellect, the *buddhi* or simply the *dhi*, as one of the first steps towards the Truth-consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo works upon the following hymn to reveal who *Varuna* and *Mitra* are and what role they serve:

*Mitram huve pūtādaksam, varunam cā riśādasam;
dhiyam ghrtācim sādhanā – R.V. I.2.7*

Mitra is *pūtādakṣa* – it brings about a purified discernment– a pure intellect capable of doubt-free judgement and action based on Truth. The purification is effected by a harmonizing mental process, which amicably removes the impurities of doubts and confusions. *Mitra* represents this process.

Varuna is *riśādasa*, destroyer of all enemies or obstacles in this progress. The obstacles here are influences which interfere with the growth of Truth by limiting it. *Varuna* represents the vastness of Truth that overcomes these limiting forces.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

“Varuna in the Veda is always characterised as a power of wideness and purity; when, therefore, he is present in man as a conscious force of the Truth, all that limits and hurts the nature by introducing into it fault, sin and evil is destroyed by contact with him.”(2)

“Mitra, a power like Varuṇa of Light and Truth, especially represents Love, Joy and Harmony, the foundations of Mayas, the Vedic beatitude. Working with the purity of Varuṇa and imparting that purity to the discernment, he enables it to get rid of all discords and confusions and establish the right working of the strong and luminous intellect.”(3)

The adjective used for the intellect or *dhi* is the word *ghṛtācim*. This is a perfect example of how the Rishis perceived *ghṛt*, the clarified butter offered in the sacrificial fire. It had a psychological significance like all other symbols in the Veda. The root *ghṛ* connotes brightness or heat. Therefore, it was used to mean a “rich and bright state or activity of the brain-power, *medhā*, as basis and substance of illuminated thought”(4). By invoking Mitra and Varuna, the intellect is purified and then each thought is an illumined thought with which man can progress towards Truth-consciousness.

The next mantra indicates this:

*Rtena mitrāvarunāv, rtāvardhāva rtāsparśā;
kratum brhantam āśāthe – R.V. I.2.8*

Mitra and Varuna work as agents of Truth, *ṛtam*. They increase *ṛtam*, *ṛtāvardhāva*, and they touch the *ṛtam* or enable the seeker to touch it, *rtāsparśā*.

They are *kratum brhantam āśāthe*, enjoy the use of a vast effective Will, “a will that is in harmony with the Truth, guided therefore by a purified discernment”(5). This is how one is to understand the role of the Vedic deities Mitra and Varuna in one’s spiritual progress.

REFERENCES

- (1) *The Secret of The Veda*, p. 79, Line 2
- (2) *The Secret of The Veda*, p. 76, Line 30
- (3) *The Secret of The Veda*, p. 76, Line 36
- (4) *The Secret of The Veda*, p. 76, Line 8
- (5) *The Secret of The Veda*, p. 77, Line 12

hundred years ago

The Synthesis of Yoga

RENUNCIATION

**Renunciation is not
giving up the things of
this world -
it is accepting that
they go away.**

If discipline of all the members of our being by purification and concentration may be described as the right arm of the body of Yoga, renunciation is its left arm. By discipline or positive practice we confirm in ourselves the truth of things, truth of being, truth of knowledge, truth of love, truth of work and replace with these the falsehoods that have overgrown and perverted our nature; by renunciation we cease upon the falsehoods, pluck up their roots and cast them out of our way so that they shall no longer hamper by their persistence, their resistance or their recurrence the happy and harmonious growth of our divine living. Renunciation is an indispensable instrument of our perfection...



We regard the world not as an invention of the devil or a self-delusion of the soul, but as a manifestation of the Divine, a progressive and evolutionary manifestation. Therefore for us renunciation of life cannot be the goal of life nor rejection of the world the object for which the world was created. We seek to realise our unity with God, but for us that realisation involves a complete and absolute recognition of our unity with man and we cannot cut the two asunder...



Again our renunciation must obviously be an inward renunciation; especially and above all, a renunciation of attachment and craving of desire in the senses and the heart, of self-will in the thought and action and of egoism in the centre of the consciousness. For these things are the three knots by which we are bound to our lower nature and if we can renounce these utterly, there is nothing else that can bind us....And this does not mean that there is nothing at all that we shall love, nothing in which we shall take delight; for attachment is egoism in love and not love itself, desire is limitation and insecurity in a hunger for pleasure and satisfaction and not the seeking after the divine delight in things. A universal love we must have, calm and yet eternally intense beyond the brief vehemence of the most violent passion; a delight in things rooted in a delight in God that does not adhere to their forms but to that which they conceal in themselves and that embraces the universe without being caught in its meshes....

We must be prepared to leave behind on the path not only that which we stigmatise as evil, but that which seems to us to be good, yet is not the one good. There are things which were beneficial, helpful, which seemed perhaps at one time the one thing desirable, and yet once their work is done, once they are attained, they become obstacles and even hostile forces when we are called to advance beyond them. These are desirable states of the soul which it is dangerous to rest in after they have been mastered, because then we do not march on to the wider kingdoms of God beyond. Even divine realisations must not be clung to, if they are not the divine realisation in its utter essentiality and completeness. We must rest at nothing less than the All, nothing short of the utter transcendence. And if we can thus be free in the spirit, we shall find out all the wonder of God's workings; we shall find that in inwardly renouncing everything we have lost nothing. "By all this abandoned thou shalt come to enjoy the All." For everything is kept for us and restored to us but with a wonderful change and transfiguration into the All-Good and the All-Beautiful, the All-Light and the All-Delight of Him who is forever pure and infinite and the mystery and the miracle that ceases not through the ages.

SRI AUROBINDO (In the *Arya*, Vol. 2, No.9, 15 April 1916)

hundred years ago **Passing from One Equilibrium to Another***



The collection *Prayers and Meditations* consists of extracts from the Mother's spiritual diaries. Most of them are from the period 1912 to 1917

Long months have gone by in which nothing could be said, for it was a period of transition, of passing from one equilibrium to another, vaster and more complete. The outer circumstances were manifold and new, as if the being needed to accumulate many perceptions and observations in order to give a more extensive and complex base to its experience. But, being entirely plunged within this experience, it did not have the necessary perspective to see it as a whole, to know what it was and above all where it was leading.

Suddenly, on the fifth of June the veil was rent, and there was light in my consciousness.

When I contemplated Thee in Thy individual form, O Lord of eternity, and implored Thee to take possession of Thy kingdom of the flesh, Thou didst set again into motion, into activity its vital form, which, for the necessity of development and unification, had been living for years in a passivity that was receptive and harmonious but alien to all active manifestation of Thy will.

This return to activity meant a completely new adaptation of the vital instrument, for its natural tendency is always to resume action and its old habits and methods. This period of adaptation was long, painful, sometimes obscure, though behind, the perception of Thy Presence and perfect surrender to Thy Law were immutable and quite strongly conscious for any disturbance to shake the being.

Gradually the vital being grew accustomed to find harmony in the intensest action as it had in passive surrender. And once this harmony was sufficiently established, there was light again in all the parts of the being, and the consciousness of what had happened became complete.

Now in the heart of action the vital being has discovered the perception of Infinity and Eternity. It can perceive Thy Supreme Beauty and live it in all sensations and all forms. Even in its very sensation, extended, active, fully developed to feel contrary sensations at the same time, it always perceives Thee.

It is not unaware, however, that this is only one stage, and it bows before Thee in a profound adoration and tells Thee: "Lord, Thou hast taken up Thy instrument again and willed to use it for action. The instrument knows its imperfection and impurity and implores Thy mercy to perfect and purify it, so that, day by day, through a progressive disappearance of all its preferences and limitations, it may be able to manifest Thee more integrally."

THE MOTHER (In *Prayers and Meditations*, prayer dated 7 June, 1916)

*Title given by the editor

twenty-five years ago

So Long, Farewell

INDU PILLAI

On the 14th April, 1991 Rama Raoji sent me a book 'A Century's Salutations to Sri Aurobindo' by Nolini Kanta Gupta. It was a personal copy which he presented to me, "You may keep this book with you".

Glancing through the book on the 11th May I found a quotation of the Mother on a loose sheet of paper, in Rama Raoji's handwriting. It reads:

"The ideal is to enter an integral repose, that is, immobility in the body, perfect peace in the vital, absolute silence in the mind – and the consciousness goes out of all activity to enter into Sachchidananda."

When I looked at his face on the morning of 1st May, he seemed to be in perfect repose as though death had added something to his being. He looked healthy, as he had not looked for months. The peace and serenity on his face made me feel light-hearted.

Rama Raoji had been a patient of diabetes for fourteen years. He had suffered a heart attack two years back. The doctors did not advise by-pass surgery because he was too frail. He took it all in his stride. He seemed to be mellowing and turning more and more inwards. On the first April the doctors told him he had cancer of the lung. On the 3rd April he resigned from the position of Manager of The Mother's International School.

Whenever one visited him and enquired about his health he would simply narrate the physical symptoms of his ailment 'Can't sleep much, I feel weak' etc. He was never perturbed. He never complained. A gentleman to the core, unfailingly courteous, he bore the physical tribulations with rare equanimity. "I am giving you a lot of trouble", he told Akka and Amar.

On the 24th April, Darshan Day, his daughter, Amar, put him in a wheel chair and brought him to the Samadhi. When I greeted him he fixed his calm and saintly eyes on me for quite some time. There was willing acceptance of what had befallen him and a lot of goodwill in that glance.

The fruit was ripe, mellow and sweet. It was ready to drop off the tree. His last words on the fateful night of the 30th April were, "I am relaxing, I am relaxing, I am relaxing." And like a babe that rests contentedly in the lap of his mother, he shut his eyes quietly.

Reproduced from *The Call Beyond*, Vol. 16, No.2, 1991, pp. 54



poetry

Clarity
ANITA SHARMA

*There comes a road block
Every now and then,
The rocks I believed in
Take a disappearing dip often.
The best part though is the frame
That keeps the space intact.
Then a brand new horizon
Brings forth a new fact
Reflecting upon me
A clear sky-like wall.
On the wall is painted
A belief polished and proper
Just ready to be installed.*

Sri Aurobindo, while discussing the weaknesses of reason, says:

*As if she knew not facts are husks of truth,
The husks she keeps, the kernels throws aside.*

(*Savitri*, Book 2, Canto 10, p. 253)

humour

Keep Unfit Exercises

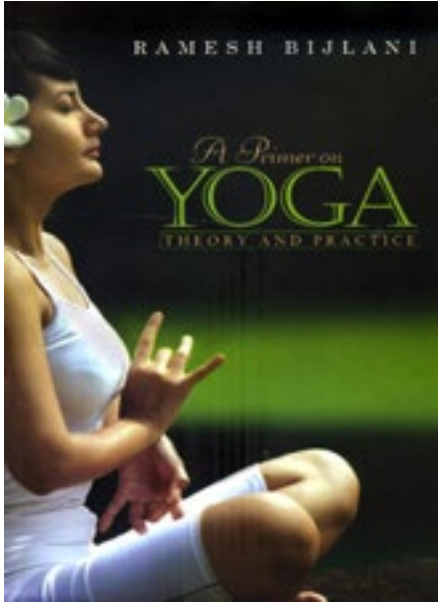
A patient to a doctor: “How can I be unfit? There are so many exercises I do regularly, such as jumping to conclusions, bending over backwards, dragging my heels, pushing my luck, going round in circles, beating about the bush, and making mountains out of molehills.”

(Based on a joke published in the Reader’s Digest (India), December 2015, p. 26)

book review

A Primer on Yoga: Theory and Practice by Ramesh Bijlani. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2015. 132 pages, Rs. 130. Includes a DVD on the physical practices of yoga.

Dr. Ramesh Bijlani is a writer par excellence. His writing is lucid and elegant in style. He is thorough in what he writes, leaving little room for confusion or wrong interpretations. I always liken his writing to a bottlebrush. Just as the brush reach every corner of the bottle to clean the dirt, his writing reaches every corner of the mind to dispel darkness.



A Primer on Yoga is no different from his previous books. It covers all the important aspects of Yoga within the limits of the size imposed on this book. Very rarely does one find a book of this size covering such a wide-ranging topic in such detail. The writer gives a lucid explanation of various aspects of Yoga, the philosophy behind it, and how to bring Yoga into life in easy-to-do steps. He dispels the various doubts, confusions and wrong imaginary theories about Yoga prevalent during the current times, including those which are being spread through the medium of the internet. The 'Question & Answer' section is as informative and important as the Chapters. This book, along with the DVD that is included, easily deserves a score of 8 out of 10.

The areas where the author could have done better are the DVD, and sections dealing with the philosophy of various schools of Yoga. The idea of DVD is excellent and very helpful, but it could have been shot with more professional help to make the content more attractive. I don't think the readers will mind paying some more money for a professional video as compared to one-room-shooting videos. Otherwise, the content of the DVD is sufficient for a novice to learn Yoga, after having practiced under a teacher for a few days.

The writer has been rather generous towards the recent proponents of the philosophy of Yoga. This is quite unlike him, specially keeping in mind how he writes on other topics. Yoga has a culture which appreciates constructive criticism of the ideas of even great luminaries. There has been a lot of confusion in the field of Yoga in terms of people appropriating ancient techniques and assigning their own brand names. For example, the phrase Raja Yoga used to be limited to some portions of the Bhagavad Gita till the 18th Century and, of course, the phrase was used also in astrology. Only later, people started using this phrase loosely, and brought the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali within its ambit. It is not necessary to continue with mistakes committed by a few. Similarly, the definition of Tantra given in this book seems to be rather far-fetched. The original definition, accepted across the spectrum including the dictionaries, says that it's a system of knowledge consisting of Yoga, japa, dhyana and some practices for raising the kundalini. Using old terms in new ways is a double edged sword. Creating new terminology is always welcome, but the other side of it is that it also creates one more layer for a beginner to dig before he or she can fathom the essence of the subject. Unless, the new terminology significantly simplifies the understanding, we should not tamper with original technical definitions. However, these remarks are only from the point of view of scholarship. These remarks, in no way, dilute the effectiveness or usefulness of the book.

All said and done, this small-looking booklet is no ordinary work. The author has put the essence of Yoga into it. The chapter on Integral Yoga is so well written that it leaves no doubts in the mind of readers, and demonstrates how it is relevant to people in all walks of life. If the DVD were more professionally done, this work could compete with the best sellers on Yoga in the world.

ACHARYA NAVNEET

may I help you?

Here are answers to a few questions about illnesses, particularly cancer, asked recently by a few readers

In this column, we shall try to answer three types of questions from the readers:

those related to spiritual quest ('aspiring high'); those related to psychological issues ('feeling low'); and those related to physical health ('frailties of the flesh').

It is needless to say that the identity of the person sending the question will be kept confidential. The questions may be sent to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

What are mind-body approaches?

Mind-body approaches depend on the power of the patient's mind to heal his body. That is why, if a patient has faith in the system of medicine being used for his treatment, has faith in the doctor who is treating him, has faith in the treatment he is taking, and has faith in the capacity of his body to heal, he is likely to recover from the illness faster and more completely.

One might extend the mind-body approach to include also the positive effect of the healer's mind on the patient, and there is evidence to support this idea. This opens up the possibility of the prayers and good wishes of all those who wish the patient well also affecting the outcome of the illness.

How do mind-body approaches work?

From the mechanistic point of view, these approaches work because the patient's thoughts and feelings lead to the release of (or inhibit the release of) certain neurotransmitters from the brain, which in turn affects the function of some endocrine glands, and finally affects the immune system of the body. In general, mental peace and relaxation strengthen the immune system. The immune system forms a major component of the healing system of the body. This explains the effect of the patient's mind on the patient's body. The

effect of somebody else's mind on the patient is explained by the argument that it works because the patient thinks that somebody else's healing intentions, good wishes or prayers will help him. Thus, eventually it is the patient's own mind affecting his body.

From the spiritual angle, the patient's body is a gross manifestation, and the patient's mind a subtle manifestation of the same soul. Therefore, the mind affecting the body is simply one mode of consciousness affecting another mode of the same consciousness. This explanation includes also the mechanistic explanation, because the brain, the endocrines, and the immune system are material mechanisms for channelizing the same consciousness.

Although the mechanistic point of view cannot easily explain the direct effect of somebody else's mind on the patient's body, from the spiritual angle it has a clear explanation. The patient and other individuals are discrete condensations of the universal spirit, and therefore their separation is only a partial fact. In fact, we are all interconnected by the universal spirit. Therefore, the patient's body, which is a gross manifestation of the universal spirit, can be affected by the healer's mind, which is a subtle manifestation of the same universal spirit. Thus, the spiritual explanation for all variants of mind-body approaches is that they represent the application of the Truth that all is One.

It's absurd not to use treatments that work, just because we don't yet understand them.

BERNIE SIEGEL

Do mind-body approaches work in cancer?

Yes, they do as much in cancer as in other diseases. But people turn to these approaches more often in cancer because the disease is considered ordinarily incurable. To give a few examples, in a study by David Spiegel on stage 4 breast cancer, the only patients who were alive after 5 years were those who received a psychosocial intervention in addition to the standard treatment, which the other patients (controls) also got. Deepak Chopra cites the case of a woman with cancer of the gall bladder, whose tumor started regressing once she started believing that she had only stones in the gall bladder. Bernie Siegel cites the case of a person with terminal lymphosarcoma whose disease showed surprisingly quick and dramatic remission twice when he expected a certain treatment to work, and also two relapses when the hope faded.

Name some specific mind-body approach for cancer.

An approach, not really specific for cancer, but which takes on a specific shape depending on the disease, is visualization. First the person becomes peaceful by meditating, so that he has an easier access to the universal life-force. Towards the end of meditation he visualizes for a few minutes his healing by using an image. For example, in cancer, he may visualize his cancer cells to be like food grains. Then he may visualize a golden bird that has entered his body pecking on the grains one by one till the bird is satisfied and the grains are finished.

These days many people are taking a conscious decision to reject radiotherapy and chemotherapy for cancer. How far is it prudent to do so?

The choice to refuse treatment is available to the patient in all diseases. In cancer, the decision is based on two interrelated facts. **First**, radiotherapy and chemotherapy are double edged weapons. While they eliminate some cancer cells, they also work against other rapidly dividing cells of the body. Among the other rapidly dividing cells are the immune cells, which could contribute to self-healing. Thus, while helping fight the disease, radiotherapy and chemotherapy weaken the self-healing mechanisms. **Secondly**, because of their effect on other rapidly dividing cells, there are side effects. For example the effects on intestinal cells may give diarrhea; effects on blood cells may give anemia, infections and a tendency to bleed; effects on the hair may lead to hair loss. Since the side effects impair the quality of life, some people prefer to have a better quality of life rather than prolongation of life.

While these are general facts, the situation in each type of cancer is not the same. In some cases, chemotherapy with relatively fewer side effects is available. Further, recent advances have reduced the ferocity of side effects. Therefore, whatever choice the patient makes should be an informed choice, not a prejudiced choice.

Death is the spirit's opportunity..

Sri Aurobindo (*Savitri*, Book 6, Canto 2, p. 459)

Does divine intervention help in cancer?

The Divine is behind all healing. Without the Intelligence of the Divine packed in the mechanisms of our body, no surgical wound would heal, nobody recover from any infection. The Divine sometimes also makes use of instruments other than those packed in our body. The surgeon who operates is one such instrument. The person who discovers drugs is another instrument. The healer who heals by healing intentions (as in Reiki and Pranic healing) is also an instrument. There is a story that illustrates this point. There was once a cancer patient who once prayed, and received an answer from God in his visions that he need not worry, and that God would save him. The next day, the doctor came and told the patient, "There is a new drug that has just arrived for your cancer. Would you like to try it".

The patient said, “No, God will save me”. Then a nutritionist came and said, “There is a wonderful dietary supplement that helps in cancer. Would you like to try it”. The patient said, “No, God will save me”. Then a healer came and said “I have healed so many with my therapeutic touch. Would you like me to try it on you”. The patient said, “No, God will save me”. The next day, the patient died. When he met God up there, this person complained to God, “You promised to save me, but you did not”. God said, “You fool, I sent so many people to you, and you sent all of them away. How could my Force work without an instrument?”

Suggested reading, specially for cancer

1. Bernie Siegel. Love, Medicine and Miracles. 1986.
2. Bernie Siegel. Peace, Love and Healing. 1990.
3. Vijay Bhat and Nilima Bhat. My Cancer is Me. 2013.

Please see also the related editorial, *Is Cancer Curable* and the article, *Seeing Them Off*.

Establish a greater peace and quietness in your body; that will give you the strength to resist attacks of illness.

THE MOTHER

appreciations

Good Wishes on the 60th Anniversary of the Ashram

Dear Sri Karunamayee Didi and Rangamma Didi,

Wishing you a glorious anniversary day, full of Light, singing, beauty, inspiration, and Harmony. So many have been elevated and so many lives have been touched by the generosity of the founders and all of you who live and contribute in the ashram. Thank you. May its purpose be fulfilled and all benefit. I hope both of you had an especially good time. You have shared so much Light, song, and wisdom in the world, and all have had such joy being part of it. May you have much joy as you continue.

Much Love,

Sara

(in an email dated 12 Feb 2016)

A Year in India

Hello to both of you [Tara Didi and Pranjal Bhaiya], hope you're doing fine.

Time has come for me to go back to cold Germany. I had such a fantastic year in India and I wanted to thank you for your contribution towards it. I appreciated your help, company and hospitality a lot! Also the time in Kechla and in the ashram was an experience I treasure well in my heart and I will never forget. I hope and plan to come back to Kechla one day, hopefully for a longer stay.

I would be happy if i could show you German hospitality one day, too! Wishing you all the best, especially for your health!

Much love, light and peace

Maximilian

(in an email dated 4 March 2016)

Feedback from a group of students of Psychology

A group of 17 including 14 students of psychology and two teachers from LaSalle University, Philadelphia, USA, accompanied by an Indian guide Darshini Shah visited the Ashram from 3 to 6 March 2016. Here is some of the feedback received from the group.



I found this talk very interesting and inspiring. I've been going through difficult times and you have opened my mind up to a new way to look at the world and the circumstances that I am in. I must admit that these concepts are difficult for me to wrap my head around. However, I would like to experience trying these methods of thinking and growing in the process. It's my belief that you have truly helped me in the past couple of days and your passion for spirituality is all the more reason to believe in the ideas which you teach. Thank you so much, I hope you continue to enlighten many people.

Amanda Riehl

Ramesh, you are someone who is wise and extremely influential. You have restructured my cognition and my methods of reasoning. I have learned tremendously from you and I know I will use your philosophy in my practice as a psychologist. Thank you for giving me a method to attain peace, love, inner happiness and fulfillment. I wish western schools had you to teach your philosophy of life. I have benefitted so much from two days listening to you. I truly wish I can stay here and learn from you every day. You have given me the greatest gift of all, mental peace and healing. I now need to work and process this in order to attain lasting mental peace. Thank you so much!

Peace and Love

Mohammad Abdallah

Thank you so much for your words of wisdom. I enjoyed listening to both of your lectures. The Mother's saying "You should find pleasure in everything you do, but, you should never do anything solely for pleasure," will live with me forever. A'naiya Cozart

This entire experience has been wonderful, listening to you speak about spirituality was wonderful and will influence me in my daily life. This ashram is clean and has a refreshing and calming energy.

Chloe Schultz

I thought the lecture was amazing. I have really enjoyed the various perspectives that you have taken and the way you have made the material applicable and easy to understand. Thank you so much for taking the time to teach us.

Brianna McDyer

Greetings from a Writer

My dear Tara jee,

This is just to thank you for your wonderful hospitality in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for all our delegates [to the Writer's Conference] from the SAARC countries. Everybody was very comfortable there. They are singing the praise of poetic ambience of the place, the peace, the food, and all else.

With affectionate regards,

Ajeet Cour

(in an email dated 9 March 2016)

Feedback from a group visiting from USA

A group of 25 spiritually inclined persons, led by Phil Goldberg visited the Ashram on March 6. Here is some of the feedback received from the group.



Thank you, Ramesh, for your gracious hospitality. I am very impressed by the ashram and will surely visit again.

Phil Goldberg

Thank you for inviting us to this beautiful place. I'm excited by the possibility of co-creating a world evolving beyond our current limitations.

Dale Allen

Brilliant lecture! I would like to come and study with you.

Swami Brahmananda

Thank you for the excellent presentation. Having stayed at the ashram for several nights five years ago, I am grateful to return. You have conveyed optimism that consciousness is rising.

Adrienne Navon

Thank you so much for your incredible lecture. I haven't read Sri Aurobindo for a few decades and was fondly remembering him.

Sincerely

Jenny Finch

Thank you so very much for sharing your teachings and your beautiful mind, heart and spirit with us. I will never forget this time spent here.

Gloria Baldino

Greetings from Canada

Dearest Dr. Bijlani,

I feel so very blessed to be able to spend even a short bit of time with you when we come to India. The way you teach really resonates with me and I have even tried to pass on a few of your insights to my students this week in class. And, thank you for the books. They are my company in the early morning when the jetlag wakes me up. I love your primer and the little meditation booklet. What precious gifts. I pray that I will somehow find a way to share their wisdom with my students. Already I look forward to next year. Thank you again, for everything.

With much love,

Karen

(in an email dated 10 March 2016)

Ninety-sixth Anniversary of the Mother's Final Arrival in Pondicherry

Sunday, 24 April 2016

7 am	Invocation by Karuna Didi	Meditation Hall
10 am	Musical offering by Karuna Didi	Meditation Hall
10.30 am	Will the Superman have Less Mental Ability than Man? (Based on Words of Long Ago, pp. 115-126) A talk by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani	Meditation Hall
11.30 am	A talk on Savitri by Mr. Prashant Khanna	Meditation Hall
6.30 pm	March Past & Lights of Aspiration	Samadhi Lawns
6.45 pm	Reading by Tara Didi	Meditation Hall
7 pm	Musical Offering by Shivaprasada Rao	Meditation Hall

CONTACT US

To get *The Call Beyond* online

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callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

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To learn about the recent and forthcoming activities through the Ashram's e-magazine, *Realization*, please send an email to

emagazine@saaonline.net.in,

after filling-in two fields as follows:

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Then click on Send

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