

The Call Beyond

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

Sri Aurobindo
Savitri, Book 11, Canto 1, p. 689

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Spiritually speaking, Speaking spiritually

Apart from a very few exceptions, it is absolute silence that is put against unbridled talkativeness. Yet it is a much greater and more fruitful austerity to control one's speech than to abolish it altogether.

THE MOTHER

Man is the only animal that talks, and he makes rather lavish use of this unique ability. **He talks, although all that he talks is seldom necessary. And he talks, although it is talking that often gets him into trouble.** Sometimes he talks to people, and sometimes he talks at people. It is only talking to people that is called a conversation. Our relationship with our fellow beings has a spiritual angle to it. Our fellow beings are, like us, a manifestation of the Divine. Therefore, they are our equals, and as manifestations of the Divine, also worthy of our respect. In simpler words, our fellow beings are children of the same God as we, and are therefore our brothers and sisters. This applies also to the people we talk to.

What?

The quality of a conversation is said to depend on whether it is about ideas, events, or people – in that order. Conversation about people is considered inferior because it generally consists of criticism behind their back. Gossip, the favourite pastime of so many is just that. How can talking ill of a brother or sister be spiritual? Equally bad is talking endlessly about oneself because it is an expression of our egoistic separation from others, not that of our spiritual unity with them. Conversation about people can have a spiritual character only if it expresses genuine love and concern for the person whom we are talking to.

How much?

Conversation is between two or more persons, all of them spiritual equals. Keeping in mind how much time others have, the conversation should follow a pace that allows a fair exchange between the participants. To hog more than one's share in the conversation is also inconsistent with the spiritual worldview.

How?

How a person talks reflects his level of consciousness. The quality of the conversation goes beyond the beauty of the language. That the language should not be crude or abusive is basic. But not listening carefully to others, while insisting that others listen to us is also bad. Although it is not expressed so clearly, but it is so common for a person to pretend as if he is listening, while actually being busy thinking of what he will himself say as soon as the other person finishes. If he waits for the other person to finish, even that would be at least something. What is worse is that he interrupts the other person, without as much as an apology. When the conversation is about a subject about which opinions can differ, sticking to one's honest opinion based on a strong conviction is acceptable, but to insist that our way of looking at the subject is the only way to look at it is unacceptable. What is spiritual is to defend the other person's right to differ even if we do not agree with him.

Closing thoughts

It may look that all these things are for children in the kindergarten. One only has to watch discussions on the Indian TV to see how much of so many of our educated eminent persons occupying important public positions actually practice of what they should have learnt in kindergarten. They interrupt each other with impunity, the person who is interrupted refuses to get interrupted, and what you have are two persons shouting. It doesn't matter that nobody can understand what they are saying, but at least they have the satisfaction of speaking! As to spirituality, we boast of being a spiritual country. While we are the cradle of the highest spiritual wisdom in the world, it is the implications of the wisdom in daily life that make it of real value in making the world a better place to live in.

First published as a blog on the *Speaking Tree* website on 7 Nov 2014

Please see the related articles 'Sweetness of Speech' by Lopa Mukherjee on the next page and 'A Humbling Reflection' by Shishu on page 8

readers write

Dear Editor and team,

Thank you for choosing precious pearls of wisdom and stringing them into the March issue of The Call Beyond! A mundane existence gets a new zest and charge each month with a much awaited mail from you... Reinforcing my belief that there is a Beyond that Calls regularly.

With best wishes,

Seema Sekhri
(in an e-mail dated 15 March 2017)

Dear Tara didi and Team,

Thank you for a very inspiring issue of The Call Beyond.

With much love and appreciation,

Jaya
(Jaya Jorel Berggreen- Clausen)

Executive, Unity Pavilion
Auroville
(in an e-mail dated 15 March 2017)

Sweetness of Speech

Lopa Mukherjee

Amritasya deva dhaarano bhuyaasam.

Shariram me vicharshanam.

Jihva me madhumattamaa.

Karnabhyaam bhuri vishruvam.

- *Taittiriya Upanishad, Shikshavalli*

O Lord, may I become a vessel of immortality.

May my body be swift to all works.

May my tongue drop pure honey.

May I hear vast and manifold lore with my ears.

- *Sri Aurobindo's translation*

These words of our ancient sages have a power behind them. Uttering them will bring something of their potency into our lives: strength to our body, sweetness to our tongue, attentiveness to our ears, so that we can be prepared to hold the divine nectar. Such is the power of a mantra, compact yet clear in meaning. Entire disciplines of self-realization have sprung from each of these pithy phrases.

Hatha yoga, dances and the culture of physical fitness spin off from *shariram me vicharshanam*, an energetic body. This I believe has been given its due in human civilization; one may even say, a lopsided due. The art of war has become the science of combat. Football and soccer games are no different than gladiator tournaments. Individual sports are all stress and little fun. Media persons follow sports-stars like a pack of wolves. And now, the million chatting tongues on social media. All these, and the many cuisines and comforts, at the service of the physical sheath. Enough has been done here. Now a little energy needs to be diverted elsewhere.

Let's see where we are in *jihva me madhumatta*, "May my tongue drop pure honey". Bauls and Sufis have sung their songs, poets and storytellers have touched us. But at the same time there is loud crashing of drums and screaming voices, aptly called rock and rap. Stories that keep you awake at night, poems that give you ideas for violence. *Vak shuddhi* is the discipline of the purification of speech. Here is some sage advice from *Manusmriti* (4.138):

Satyam brooyaat, priyam brooyaat, na brooyaat satyamapriyam,

Priyam cha naanritam brooyat, esha dharmah sanaatanah.

(Speak truthfully, speak sweetly, speak not unpleasant truths,

Speak not pleasant lies, this is the eternal wisdom.)

The Mother says, "When you have nothing nice to say about someone, don't say anything." But this advice is violated so often. People hurt each other so often through unpleasant language. Or worse, there are sadists who enjoy hurting others, enjoy spreading fear. Some want to blame testosterone, or the environment, or circumstances. But people who have a rough tongue, perform consistently wherever they are, in all sorts of circumstances. And they are not just men; women too have the same problem. Behind all these movements is the ego: feeling insecure if nobody listens to it, losing control unless it is acknowledged. With time these individuals lose connection with their emotional centres.

They cannot empathize anymore. They become narcissists. They want the world to rotate around them, and lose their cool when that does not happen. These people become unpleasant company. Who would want to talk to a know-it-all, eager to give advice, with no patience to understand the person they are advising?

I want to share something I discovered when I first landed in the US. People across the counter were polite, whether it was a bank teller, or a post office clerk, or a grocery seller. They made eye contact, they asked how I was doing, they said ‘thank you’, or ‘you are welcome’ when I said ‘thank you’. This was an experience I had missed in India. Customer Service is an art the Western world has been working on. Even in daily speech they are not the blunt advice-giving type. These are ways in which a rude phrase such as ‘You should do this’ can be made polite. Of course, if the person who is giving advice thinks he is superior the phrases will come out fake. It is not about who is superior and who inferior. The whole paradigm is different. It is not about you, but about your helping someone. So here are some polite alternatives that I have learnt:

- “If I were you, this is what I would do.”
- “People have profited by doing this.”
- “If I may suggest, this may help.”
- “Do you think you want to do this?”

These behavioural traits are taught at the home-school. But if adults themselves are rude, children have little chance.

Another disturbing trend has surfaced in all societies regarding rude speech. It is the anonymity of social media. People pass irresponsible and hurtful comments; and don’t feel ashamed, because of the faceless anonymity. Internet trolling has become common. Those at the receiving end may get nervous breakdowns or plunge into depression because of abusive comments. Some have responded by getting disconnected from social media. Some have become aggressive themselves. Psychologists say it is cowards who post rude comments anonymously. They also lack empathy. They don’t want to walk in the shoes of the people they are hurting, or even learn what kind of journey brought them there. Some are attention seekers, like the chronic selfie-takers.

This brings us to the third phrase – *karnabhyam bhuri vishruvam*, listening attentively. The external ear has to start by listening to nature and people, before the inner ear can awaken to eternal Truths. The faculty of listening is quickly losing its value in society. Before artificial sounds were born, we listened to birds, to raindrops, to evaporating dew and knew it was time to plant or harvest. We heard a sigh and felt someone’s pain. Now one has to scream to be noticed. One has to pay a counsellor to make someone listen to us. We have to take classes to re-learn compassionate listening. Somewhere we took the wrong turn and landed in ‘deafland’.

The Mother told of a vision she saw during an occult journey of hers. This is a creation story. At first was the Supreme all alone, *Asat va idam agra aseet*. Then He wanted to create. He created four formidable beings. The lord of Life, Lord of Knowledge or Consciousness, Lord of Bliss or Love, and Lord of Truth. The Supreme then created the first principle. It was freedom. The four beings were given full freedom. They began the experiment of creation. They created their opposites. Life created Death, Knowledge created Ignorance and Unconsciousness, Bliss and Love created Sorrow and Hatred, Truth created Falsehood. All the eight powers reigned together and created quite a mess. The Supreme then decided to plunge a portion of Himself into the creation to save it. This first emanation was Love.

It came as a Mother, Father, Friend, Lover, Guide of all beings. Love did not come alone. She came with her entourage of gods and goddesses. She is actively waging occult battles all the time. We remember her once a year as Durga, another time as Saraswati, as Kali, as Lakshmi, as Virgin Mary, as Kwan Yin, as Tara. But she is always there in the earth's atmosphere, ready to seat herself in any heart that is open to her. These become her weapons. That is why she has a thousand arms, each wielding a weapon of its own.

Sadly, the reverse is also true. Those who bare themselves to the evil powers become their seat of action. Those with impurities of egoism, sadism, cruelty, roughness of tongue, those who think they know a lot, who lack humility... become prey to evil powers. The Adversaries too are watching to capture human instruments, they too have weapons, they too are always in the earth's atmosphere. In the Mother's prayer, 'Glory to Thee, O Lord' are the following lines:

“Grant that nothing in us shall be an obstacle to Thy work.
Grant that nothing may retard Thy manifestation.
Grant that we may be faithful to Thee utterly and for ever.
We would be completely under Thy influence to the exclusion of every other.”

Research has shown the benefits of doing the right thing. If you have compassion within you, it makes your immune system stronger, overcomes depression and sharpens your intelligence. These are indicators that our current civilization values. Therefore, empathy lessons are being taught in schools now. They are termed variously as Emotional Intelligence, Self-awareness, and Mindfulness. Adults are taught non-violent communication, the art of compassionate listening, meditation. There is great skill in being non-judgemental. It means silencing the ego, having no preferences, such as “I like/dislike this, it is good/bad, it is worse/better than...”. It's hard enough dealing with conscious biases, how do we control our unconscious biases? Well, there are experts offering classes, as you may have guessed. There are anger management courses. Truth Commissions have been set up in countries with a history of conflict, like South Africa and Sri Lanka. Here crimes are forgiven as long as the perpetrators come forward and decide to give up their past. Prisons have meditation and hatha yoga programs, which means people realize crime can be prevented by promoting a connection to the spirit.

Can people be trained in empathy later in life? “Sure,” says the Dalai Lama. Now is the best time. Every day there are conferences around the world on increasing compassion. Speakers range from Zen masters and scientists to non-believers and ex-criminals. **The Dalai Lama says, “Compassion is not a luxury anymore, but a necessity.”** Sages of all ages have warned that hatred begets more hatred. Only love can overcome hatred. Think of the Partition of India. Once the first stone was cast, the revenge went back and forth until half a million people were massacred. Within this madness there were voices that besieged for love. Films and stories are written every day making a pitch for love. In Palestine, Professor Mohammed Dajani started teaching his students about the holocaust atrocities that the Jews had to face. A former Israeli soldier, Avner Gvaryahu, is condemning Israeli violence. Both of them have had to seek refuge in the US. But such people do exist. Parents from both sides who have lost children to this seventy-year war have formed an organization. They work together as a team bound by the sacred ties of love and empathy. Within their hearts the seed of Divine Love is growing. The battle of good against evil is going on.

When the Amitabha Buddha was crossing over to the eternal peace of Nirvana, he turned on the threshold one last time. He saw sentient beings suffering on earth. One tear drop trickled down his cheek, and that tear drop became the bodhisattwa of compassion. Avalokiteshwar he is called, the “downward gazing one”. He took on a female form and became Kwan Yin. She got a thousand arms

and a weapon in each. Sometimes she is the mother soothing our wounds, sometimes she is fighting in the frontline.

Let me end on a sweet note, *madhurena samapayet*. In Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri*, when *Savitri* has conquered Death and has been granted a boon by the Supreme, she asks for peace, oneness, energy for humanity. Again, and again the Supreme asks her to choose something for herself, like moksha or the bliss of Union, but she repeatedly chooses boons for humanity, and resolves to return to the earth.

In me the spirit of immortal love
 Stretches its arms out to embrace mankind.
 Too far thy heavens for me from suffering men.
Imperfect is the joy not shared by all.
 O to spread forth, O to encircle and seize
 More hearts till love in us has filled thy world!

(*Savitri*, Book 11, Canto 1)

At the end, the Supreme is satisfied with her and grants all her boons. He sends her back amongst sentient beings to be the "Mother of unnumbered souls". The very last boon she asks is:

Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
 Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
 Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men.

(*Savitri*, Book 11, Canto 1)

Among the most undesirable kinds of talkativeness should be included all that one says about others.

The Mother

Please see the related editorial 'Spiritually Speaking, Speaking Spiritually' on page 3

A Humbling Reflection

Shishu

It has been said that you may forget what somebody did to you, but it is much more difficult to forget how a person made you feel. The commonest way we end up making somebody feel bad is probably through words. I have done it a lot, and the most to people near and dear to me, people who have done a lot for me, people who would have expected it the least, and people who did not deserve it at all. The surprise is that they continue to be close to me, which means they have forgiven me. To forgive is divine, which means they not only have the Divine in them, they have manifested it. Why should I not forgive those who have hurt me?

Cycles or Spirals?

Let go the old to let in the new

Manisha Jacobs

Life brings us back to the places we've left behind. It brings us back in time to remind us that 'never' doesn't exist, 'forever' could end today and that 'always' is a lie. Everything is the same. We seem to want the same things, to be always in our comfort zone.

Looking up at the night sky, I'm blinded by the sunlight trapped in my eyes, from the day gone by. It hides the view. As I blink and let go of the rays already in my eyes, I see stars. They fill the same sky that was once filled to the brim by the sun. Life, I can tell, is the same. A barter of stars, seems to work for me. Then one day, I will lose count of the different stars, spread across the dark, vast night sky. The same sky that was once filled to the brim by the almighty star of the Sun, and will be so again tomorrow!

hundred years ago

The Divine Language in Forms*

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

In the world of forms a violation of Beauty is as great a fault as a violation of Truth in the world of ideas. For Beauty is the worship Nature offers to the supreme Master of the universe; Beauty is the divine language in forms. And a consciousness of the Divine which is not translated externally by an understanding and expression of Beauty would be an incomplete consciousness.

But true Beauty is as difficult to discover, to understand and above all to live as any other expression of the Divine; this discovery and expression exacts as much impersonality and renunciation of egoism as that of Truth or Bliss. Pure Beauty is universal and one must be universal to see and recognise it.

O Lord of Beauty, how many faults I have committed against Thee, how many do I still commit.... Give me the perfect understanding of Thy Law so that I may not again fail to keep it. Love would be incomplete without Thee, Thou art one of its most perfect ornaments, Thou art one of its most harmonious smiles. At times I have misunderstood Thy role, but in the depths of my heart I have always loved Thee; and the most arbitrary and radical doctrines could not extinguish the fire of worship which, from my childhood, I had vowed to Thee.

Thou art not at all what a vain people think Thee to be, Thou art not at all attached exclusively to this or that form of life: it is possible to be awaken Thee and make Thee shine in every form; but for that one must have discovered Thy secret....

O Lord of Beauty, give me the perfect understanding of Thy Law, so that I may no longer fail to keep it, so that Thou mayst become in me the harmonious consummation of the Lord of Love.

THE MOTHER (In *Prayers and Meditations*, prayer dated 29 January,17)

*Title given by the editor

The Synthesis of Yoga

THE SOUL AND NATURE

The Absolute is everywhere and has to be seen and found everywhere, every finite is an infinite and has to be known and sensed in its infiniteness as well as in finite appearance; to know it we have to perceive, not as an intellectual idea or imagination, but with a sort of divine vision, divine sense, divine ecstasy, divine union of ourselves with the object of our consciousness that not only the Beyond but all here, not only the totality, the All in its mass, but each thing in the All is in itself our self, God, the Absolute and Infinite, Sachchidananda. This is the secret of complete delight in God's world, complete satisfaction of the mind and heart and will, complete liberation of the consciousness.

Involved in mind, possessed by the ordinary phenomenon of mental thought, sensation, emotion, reception of the vital and physical impacts of the world and mechanical reaction to them, the soul is subject to nature. ...It must first extend its consciousness and see the universe in itself instead of being like the mind limited by the physical, vital, sensational, emotional, intellectual outlook of the little divided personality; it must accept the world truths, the world-energies, the world-tendencies, the world-purposes as its own instead of clinging to its own intellectual ideas, desires and endeavours, preferences, objects, intentions, impulses; these, so far as they remain, must be harmonised with the universal. It must then submit its knowledge and will at their very source to the divine Knowledge and the divine Will and so arrive through submission at immergence, losing its personal light in the divine Light and its personal initiative in the divine initiative. To be first in tune with the Infinite, in harmony with the Divine, and then to be unified with the Infinite, taken into the Divine in its condition of perfect strength and mastery, and this is precisely the very nature of the spiritual life and the spiritual existence.

The distinction made in the Gita between the Purusha and the Prakriti gives us the clue to the various attitudes which the soul can adopt towards Nature in its movement towards perfect freedom and rule. The Purusha is, says the Gita, witness, upholder, source of the sanction, knower, lord, enjoyer; Prakriti executes, it is the active principle and must have an operation corresponding to the attitude of the Purusha. The soul may assume, if it wishes, the poise of the pure witness, sakshi; it may look on at the action of Nature as a thing from which it stands apart; it watches but does not itself participate. ... The attitude of the Witness at its highest is the absolute of unattachment and freedom from affection by the phenomenon of the cosmic existence.

Purusha and Prakriti in their union and duality arise from the being of Sachchidananda. Self-conscious existence is the essential nature of the Being; that is Sat or Purusha: the Power of self-aware existence, whether drawn into itself or acting in the works of its consciousness and force, its knowledge and its will, Chit and Tapas, Chit and its Shakti, – that is Prakriti. Delight of being, Ananda, is the eternal truth of the union of this conscious being and its conscious force whether absorbed in itself or else deployed in the inseparable duality of its two aspects, unrolling the worlds and viewing them, acting in them and upholding the action, executing works and giving the sanctions without which the force of Nature cannot act, executing and controlling the determinations of the knowledge force and will-force, ministering to the enjoyment and enjoying, – the Soul possessor, observer, knower lord of Nature, Nature expressing the being, executing the will, satisfying the self-knowledge, ministering to the delight of being of the soul. There we have, founded on the very nature of being, the supreme and the universal relation of Prakriti with Purusha. The absolute joy of the soul in itself and, based upon that, the absolute joy of the soul in the Nature and the divine fulfilment of the relation.

twenty five years ago

Sri K.D. Sethna: A Man With a Divine Touch

(An Interview by Sukhendu Roy) Continued from the previous issue

Sri K.D. Sethna (1904 - 2011), popularly known as Amal Kiran, was one the foremost and very learned disciples of Sri Aurobindo. A poet, writer and cultural critic, he published more than 40 books.



Q: All sorts of theories have flourished throughout ages. No theory or philosophy could claim absolute success, however grand it may be. Not only did most of them degenerate with the passage of time but also ceased to exist. From that viewpoint how would you look at Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga?

A: I think the Integral Yoga covers the whole of our being. It tries to put us in touch with the whole of existence and cannot be compared to partial-philosophical, religious or spiritual-experiments in the past. That is my feeling. I think that it lays the foundation of a new future for the world. A great deal can be done if we follow the light of Sri Aurobindo. But it is not easy to do so because of the inertia and resistance of the nature. It will take time. Sri Aurobindo has a real solution to all the problems. He says that as long as we remain confined to the mental level we cannot solve all the problems. We have to go beyond that, we must enter a deeper and higher state of consciousness; then things will come to us, solutions will arise by inspiration and revelation. Then a lot of things can be done. Ultimately, I think, the world has to come to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, if it wants to solve its persistent problems.

The Integral Yoga will never cease to exist. It may change according to the circumstances. But the core of it, the heart of it, will remain for all the future. If Sri Aurobindo takes a body again and improves upon his own work, that is a different question. There is a certain finality in what he has seen, experienced, realized, written and tried to establish, having had an integral view. **When I came to the end of reading 'The Life Divine', I felt that the author of the book must be the author of the universe!** There was so much knowledge about everything. If my impression has any truth in it, Sri Aurobindo's work will go on.

Q: Do you think that without knowing the Integral Yoga no one can practice it?

A: I think one can if one is open to one's inmost being; there could be a natural Integral Yoga. But the meaning of integrality may not be the same. What Sri Aurobindo meant by integrality people may not be able to get by themselves. So, I believe, some familiarity with Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is required. If one has to practice really the Integral Yoga as visioned by Sri Aurobindo, then of course one should read Sri Aurobindo's books. When someone like Sri Aurobindo comes to the world, he spreads his light everywhere. Some receptive minds may practice the Integral Yoga spontaneously, but what Sri Aurobindo meant by Integral Yoga may not be very clear to them. There are certain radical experiences – for instance, the finding of the psychic being, which is a first basic step. How many people can do that? Ideas of goodness, truth, beauty are not the things the psychic being searches for. Its most spontaneous urge is to dedicate itself to the Supreme, to God. There is an aspiration to unite with the Highest. Truth, Goodness and Beauty are ingrained in the self of man. To find the psychic being, the true soul, is not an easy thing. Indirectly, many can contact it, but to go to its very core, as it were, to the throbbing centre of it, is not easy. It requires discipline, concentration, leading a certain regulated life, with the knowledge which Sri Aurobindo has brought. Unless you are in touch with Sri Aurobindo's literature and have or had some inspiration, it is difficult to really get into the spirit of the Integral Yoga.

Excerpts from The Call Beyond, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1992, p. 32-33 (To be continued)

kidspeak

Children generally know and understand much more than we think. Even in the realm of spirituality, they can show amazing insights because their psychic being is wide awake. This column will carry striking expressions suggesting remarkable spiritual development actually spoken by children. Readers are welcome to contribute to the column. Entries received may be edited and published at the editor's discretion.

Here is a conversation between a mother and her eight year old son, Krishna.

Mother: When you grow up, what would you like to be?

Child: What would you like me to be?

Mother: I like uniforms very much. I think you could be a soldier.

Child: Do you want me to kill the child of another mother? Is there any job where I can be someone who can stop wars?

Mother: Yes, there are jobs that are aimed at ending conflicts, bringing people together, and you have the capability to do such a job. But it takes a lot of hard work.

Child: Mamma, I am sure that hard work would be much easier than a mother's work.

The finale, sure, was music to the mother's ears.

(Contributed by the Krishna's mother, Ms. Divya Tyagi)

The Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO declares that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". If adults could have minds like that of this child, there would be no wars any more.

humour

Balanced Person

I have been told so many times to be a balanced person. Today finally my doctor told me to rest my legs on a pillow when I go to bed (as treatment for my varicose veins). I have my head on a pillow in the bed anyway. With my head and feet both resting on pillows, I will at last be perfectly balanced.

tip of the month

This column shall carry advice, practices or exercises which can make it a little easier for the spiritual seeker to walk on the path of spiritual progress. Contributions from the readers are welcome, and may be printed at the editor's discretion after editorial revision.

Be Vigilant*

If one wants to lead the spiritual life, one must not be three-fourths asleep. ... if you relax, relax your vigilance, all of a sudden you find that you are at the other end from where you wanted to go! ... To be vigilant is **not merely to resist** what pulls you downward, **but above all to be alert in order not to lose any opportunity** to progress, any opportunity to overcome a weakness, to resist a temptation, any opportunity to learn something, to correct something, to master something.

THE MOTHER (in 'The Great Adventure', pp. 71-72)

*Title given by the editor

Spirituality is Seeing

Shishu

*Spirituality is seeing:
The Unmanifest in the manifest
The Invisible in the visible
The Infinite in the finite
The One in many
The Ineffable in speech
The Constant in the changing
The Imperishable in the perishable
The Unknown in the known
The Knowable in the unknown
The One in all that is
All in the One that is
All as the One that is, was, and will be.*



Inspiration

Shalini Agarwal

*Inspiration is like a bud waiting to flower,
Needs to be watered and nurtured to grow,
The hour before the dawn is needed too,
Giving it hope and reason to go on.
Some music to calm the soul is important too,
Concentrating its efforts, pushing its limits,
A caring heart to hold its hand
And sing it a soothing song.
A gentle breeze that guides through whispers,
Setting it free from its own chains,
Wings of thought that lighten the weight,
Clearing the way for the flight into the skies.
And then comes the climax,
Taking one away from what one was,
Giving the strength to defy indolence and inertia,
To realize the aspiration awakened by the inspiration.
Caring for nothing, wanting nothing
But to know and serve the Divine,
An inspiration is like a beautiful bud,
Which to flower, needs the Mother's helping Hand.*

may i help you

In this column, we 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 is kept confidential if the question is about a sensitive issue. The questions may be sent to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

'M' wants to know:

How much of study is necessary for spiritual life?

The question is based on the assumption that at least some study is essential for spiritual life. The question is not whether studying is essential; the only question is how much.

There are very few absolute statements that can be made in the world which would also be true. That applies also to the statement that 'studying is essential for spiritual life'. Simple folk, with no pretensions of intellectual approach to spirituality, have made remarkable progress in spiritual life simply by doing their work in a disinterested manner as instruments of the Divine, or by intense devotion and total surrender to the Divine. Having said that, spending some time everyday on study of spiritual literature does aid spiritual progress by intensifying the aspiration, showing the path, and pointing out our shortcomings. 'How much study is required for that' is difficult to say. That would depend on the inclination and temperament of the individual. However, whatever time is spent on studying, should be spent with full concentration, in a state of uplifted consciousness, trying to get into the spirit of the words rather than their literal meaning, without indulging in empty hair-splitting, or unproductive analysis. Spirituality is about going beyond the mind, and that can become difficult if one starts relishing mental gymnastics.

In this respect, one absolute statement that studying **alone** will not help is important to keep in mind. As the 'Katha Upanishad' says, "The Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning" (Cycle 1, Chapter 2, verse 23). At the same time, it does not mean that one should not study. This discussion would best end with a quote from The Mother: "Education is certainly one of the best means of **preparing** the consciousness for a higher development. There are people with very crude and very simple natures, who can have great aspiration and attain a certain spiritual development, **but the base will always be of an inferior quality**, and as soon as they return to their ordinary consciousness they will find obstacles in it, because the stuff is too thin, there are not enough elements in their vital and mental consciousness to enable them to bear the descent of a higher force". ('The Great Adventure', p. 9)

*He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.*

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

appreciations

Tributes to Karuna Didi



Dear Tara Didi,

Please receive my deepest thanks for my stay in the Ashram at this very tender time of Karuna Didi's passing. Everyone here has been so generous and loving. I am so grateful to have said my farewells to Didi while being in the Ashram community.

I hope that even at a distance I can still be of some support to the Ashram devotees who are upholding the music. There is much that can be shared through written and recorded music. I will see how much I can also help with the Ashram music archive.

My deepest thanks for your inspiring leadership and evening meditations which have been both healing and uplifting for me.

I await the day when I can visit the Ashram again.

Thank you for being The Mother's Bright Light!

Yours gratefully,

Joan (Allekotte)

(in a note dated 24 March 2017)

Dearest Rangamma ji,

I was overwhelmed with sadness to hear the news of our beloved Didi's passing. I am grateful that her transition was swift and hopefully painless and I know that her body was becoming more and more burdensome. Yet I am sorrowful that we will no longer have the blessing of her earthly loving presence and guidance. I do still feel blessed by her love and guidance in spirit and remembrance.

Thank you for being her companion and caregiver for much of her life. We all are blessed by your loving and attentive care of her daily needs as you supported her in maintaining a meditative and prayerful life focusing deeply on spiritual rather than material concerns.

I cannot imagine the loss you are feeling as you were with her daily but I know that Sri Sri Karunamayee's loving and wise spirit is no longer bound by body, space and time.

I am sorry that I am not able to come to India to celebrate in person Didi's life and Urs. Hopefully, our paths will cross again in physical form. I feel blessed with your friendship and am so grateful to have been in your presence. I know you are very humble but also very wise and powerful through your devotion and love of God.

Many thanks for your being!

Wishing you comfort and peace,

Robin (Nichols)

(in an e-mail dated 29 January 2017)

Dear Rangamma Madam,

Namasthe! I got to know about Didi when I spoke to amma. Please accept our deepest condolences to you and the entire ashram. Didi's physical presence cannot be replaced but she will be with us in every thought and deed.

Please stay strong and take care of your health.

Affectionately,

Praveena

(in an e-mail dated 8 February 2017)



Dear Ramesh Bhai,
 Thank you for blessing my stay at the Ashram with your kind thoughtfulness. Your invitations to participate in the spiritual life of the Ashram through music, through your shared writings, through your talks in the Meditation Hall, and your elevated conversations – all has brought me much richness at the time of Karuna Didi's departure from this life; all has helped me very much to say farewell to her by sharing this special time in the Ashram.

In appreciation,
 Joan (Allekotte)

(in a note dated 24 March 2017)

Dearest Rangammaji,

I just learned of Beloved Didi-ji's passing. My deepest feelings go out to you. You were her soul mate and my deepest condolence to you. The picture of the two of you together always lives in my heart. I hope the Divine gives you comfort and strength in what must be a difficult time at the Ashram.

With love and blessings,

Terry Riley

(in an e-mail dated 27 January 2017)

My dear Rangammaji,

I send you a heart full of love as I join you in mourning the loss of our beautiful Didi. I remember several years ago, when I had feared her death at that time, she had said to me, "I will never leave you. I will always be in the music." Let her music continue to flow.

I send you love,

Atmasha

(in an e-mail dated 29 January 2017)

Rangamma,

I am the violinist who played with Karunamayee and visited you both so many times at the Ashram when I visited from New York. My thoughts are with Karuna-ji in Spirit, and with you in comfort. I send much love to you and Karuna-ji.

Michael (Braudy)

(in an e-mail dated 13 February 2017)

Dearest Rangamma,

Sending all love, affection and support for our dearest Karuna Didi's Journey. May it be filled with ease, strength and Anand! And sending your heart all the support I can to be resilient in this enormous loss.

Both you and Didi are engraved on our Hearts as such wonderful beneficial beings who make a difference to help humanity grow and awaken.

With all gratitude,

Shabda

(in an e-mail dated 27 January 2017)

Dear (Tara) Didi,

I would like to express my deep condolences on the demise of one of the most important people of our Ashram – Karuna Didi. When I heard this news I couldn't believe that she is no more. My teacher who taught me how to sing and guided me to play guitar in my childhood! She was the one who helped me overcome the problems that I came across. She was such a polite, sweet and cheerful teacher! I will never forget the endearing and encouraging smile that she always had for us. She would attend all the functions that were held in the Ashram and MIS with joy and give her blessings to everyone.

Yours sincerely,

Neeraj Kumar

XII-E, The Mother's International School

Dear Rangamma Didi,

With deep sorrow I did receive the sad news about the transition of Karuna Didi. May her soul be blessed by the Divine! May she ever be immersed in music and light! And may her journey to the Divine be smooth.

I am so thankful, that I did visit you last year. She gave to me all that she could give – all what I could receive at that time. I came home with such a deep peace I never felt before. When I left her, I knew, she was a master. She opened the door to a world of which I could only dream before, the world of that real divine music behind all... May she be always there!

This year I also wanted to come to India, but I couldn't. Something held me back...

Today I will visit Aeolia for the 90th Urs of Hazrat Inayat Khan. I will stay with her until the 7th to tune into the celebration for Karuna Didi at the Sri Aurbindo Ashram. So we will be with you in spirit.

All my best wishes and all my love to you! May your way also be smooth! Take care!

Fereshta

(in an e-mail dated 5 February 2017)



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