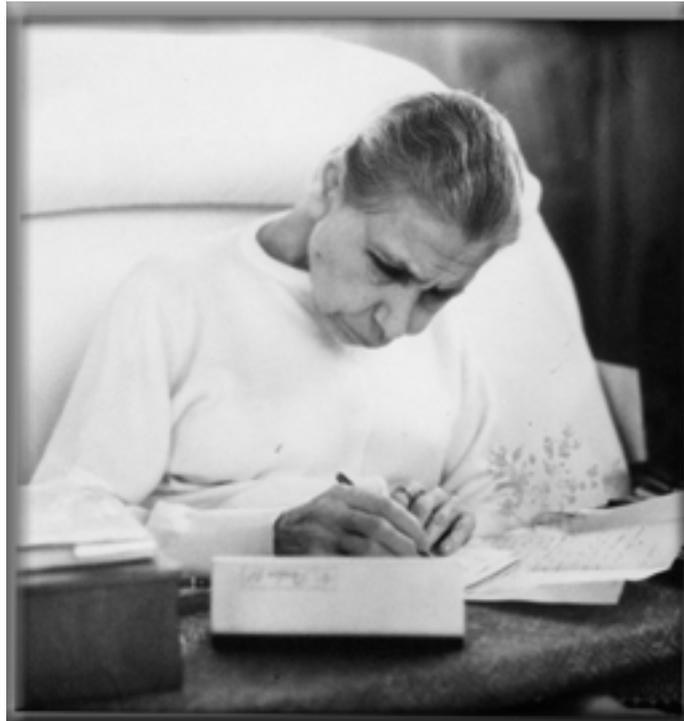


THE CALL BEYOND

Volume 41 // No. 1 // 15 January 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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CONTENTS

<i>editorial</i>	3
• <i>From Christmas to New Year is just one week...</i>	3
<i>readers write.</i>	4
<i>article</i>	4
• <i>The Vedas – The First Books of Knowledge</i>	4
<i>hundred years ago</i>	6
• <i>Knead Me More.</i>	6
• <i>The Synthesis of Yoga</i>	7
<i>twenty-five years ago</i>	9
• <i>The Truth I am Seeking.</i>	9
<i>poetry</i>	10
• <i>Another Step Into Another Year.</i>	10
<i>travelouge</i>	10
• <i>Namaste' Y'all.</i>	10
<i>may i help you?</i>	15
• <i>RM wants to know</i>	15
<i>inspirations.</i>	17
• <i>Feedback from B.Ed. Students from Amity Institute of Education</i>	17
• <i>Feedback from a Yoga Teacher from Austin TX, USA</i> ..	18
• <i>Feedback from MIS parents</i>	18
• <i>Feedback from Udayan Care</i>	18
• <i>Feedback received from a Guest from Germany</i>	19
• <i>Feedback provided by the participants of the Orientation to Integral Yoga, 19-20 December 2015.</i>	19
<i>notice board</i>	20

From Delhi to Agra is 200 km, and so is the distance from Agra to Delhi. Why then Christmas to New Year is just one week, but New Year to Christmas is almost a year? This question may be answered in at least two ways. The calendar gives us the mechanistic reason for the discrepancy. On the other hand, the teleological reason for the discrepancy is that the long gap between New Year and Christmas is to give us time for work between the celebrations. Leaving this frivolous question aside, from birth to death is just three score and ten years, how about the interval between death and being born again? Some would have it, the question is absurd because this is the only life we have. But even those who believe in rebirth may not know for sure. The interval between death and rebirth is said to be highly variable, and may range from a few days in some cases to several centuries in others. Having several lives available for completing the journey of the soul may be a good thought to relax the mind, but if we waste each life because there are many more available, the journey will never be over! Hence, no matter what we believe in, what we do with this life is itself important. The unique purpose of human life is spiritual growth, or growth of consciousness. We do not have to accept this idea just because religious and spiritual traditions say so. We are tempted to accept it because happy and fulfilled people in the world are only those who are living a life that leads to spiritual growth. The life that leads to spiritual growth is filled with choices driven by love, compassion, giving, caring and sharing. Those who are making these choices are not making them because they want to grow spiritually. They are making these choices because they respond positively to the voice of the soul, which is higher than the voice of reason. Responding positively brings with it the clarity and courage required to do what is right. Making the right choices in life gives a sense of joy and lasting mental peace. Spiritual growth is also a by-product of making the right choices. The more we grow spiritually, the easier it becomes to make the right choices. Making the right choices leads to further spiritual growth. Thus the process of spiritual growth is self-perpetuating. It is spiritual growth that the Mother referred to when She said that the aim of life should be high and wide, generous and disinterested. That gives us plenty to do during the long gap between the New Year and Christmas.

*A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion we must grow divine.
Our life is a paradox with God for key.*

SRI AUROBINDO , In: *Savitri*, Book 1, Canto 4, p.67



readers write

Dear Sir,

Thanks very much for the latest issue of The Call Beyond.

I was especially delighted to read Prasharji's "the truth

I am seeking"!

With regards,

Arvind

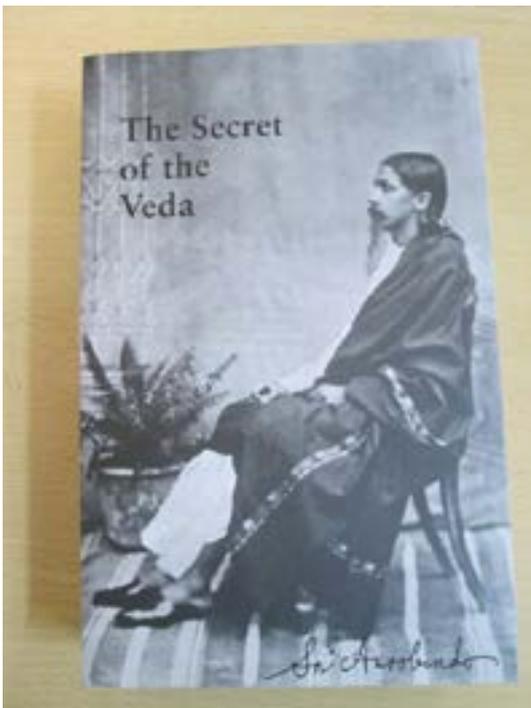
(in an e-mail dated 16 November 2015)

article

The Vedas – The First Books of Knowledge

UDHAV SUREKA

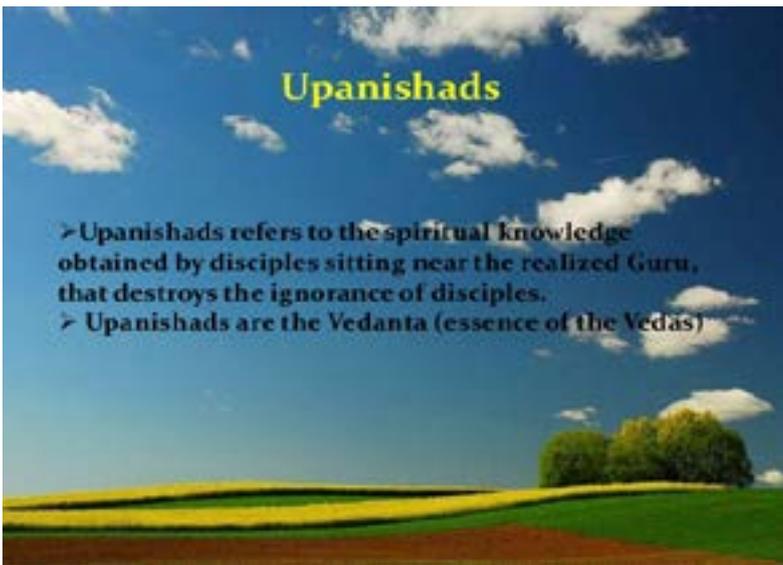
The article is second in a series based on Sri Aurobindo's 'The Secret of the Veda'



Sri Aurobindo began reading the *Rig Veda* not as a source of spiritual knowledge but only as a text of historical importance. Like his contemporaries, he also held the *Upanishads* as *the most ancient source of Indian thought and religion... as the first Book of Knowledge* (1). This view was perhaps the result of popular distinction made in the ancient Indian scholarly works where the Veda, with its apparent focus on ritual and ceremony, is called the book of works (*karma kanda*) while the Upanishads, being directly philosophical, are considered as the books of knowledge (*jnana kanda*). However, once Sri Aurobindo began his study of the Veda, it did not take him long to realize the richness of spiritual thought lying overlooked in Vedic hymns. The Veda, he found, to be a repository of profound ideas, which were far more elaborate and exact in describing spiritual experiences

than the Upanishads. In fact, the Upanishads had been composed to revive and re-establish the spiritual vision of the Veda itself.

Vedic knowledge was based on intuitive spiritual experiences. It required consistent devotion towards developing one's mental faculties. The following generations found it difficult to maintain the ideal of self-culture required for such knowledge. From sages, the Veda went to the priests, – two functions that had originally been one, and then from priests to scholars, who preserved the external ritual and the mantras with remarkable accuracy but couldn't do much to highlight its intent.



The Upanishads were composed with the aim of bringing forth this forgotten inner meaning but they ended up changing the fate of the Veda forever. They were more directly philosophical in content as opposed to the Vedas, in which the knowledge lay hidden under a thick cover of symbols and rituals. As a result, the Upanishads got recognized as the books of knowledge and went on to dominate the spiritual thought of future generations.

Through his interpretation of the Veda, Sri Aurobindo has tried to restore its rightful status. The human mind, he writes, marches from knowledge to knowledge. If the Upanishads are a source of profound ideas, then such knowledge couldn't have arisen out of a void. Its source must be sought in the Veda itself.

Sri Aurobindo shows how the Upanishads utilize the symbols of the Vedas to convey some very profound spiritual ideas.

“In the Isha Upanishad we find an appeal to Surya as a God of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest truth. This, too, is his function in the sacred Vedic formula of the Gayatri which was for thousands of years repeated by every Brahmin in his daily meditation; and we may note that this formula is a verse from the Rig Veda, from a hymn of the Rishi Vishwamitra.” (2)

Today, the Upanishads are held as the most powerful pillar of *Vedanta* – a philosophy which continues to dominate Indian thought. Its ideas find resonance in the verses of the Bhagavad Gita – the most widely read Indian scripture, and another pillar of *Vedanta*. Through his study of the Veda, Sri Aurobindo concluded that the Veda was the rightful forerunner of Vedanta. The distinction of *karma kanda* vs. *jnana kanda* is not correct as the Vedas too are books of knowledge, not merely books of transactional works or rituals.

After all - *“the name borne by them was ‘Veda’, the knowledge,—the received name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable.”* (3)

REFERENCES

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 36, line 7.
2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 7, line 12.
3. Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 5, line 12.

hundred years ago

Knead Me More*



O Thou whom I may call my God, Thou who art the personal form of the Transcendent Eternal, the Cause, Source and Reality of my individual being, Thou who hast through the centuries and millenniums slowly and subtly kneaded this Matter, so that one day it could become consciously identified with Thee, and be nothing but Thee; O Thou who hast appeared to me in all Thy divine splendour – this individual being in all its complexity offers itself to Thee in an act of supreme adoration; it aspires in its entirety to be identified with Thee, to be Thyself, eternally Thou, merged forever in Thy Reality. But is it ready for that? Is Thy work fully accomplished? Is there in it no longer any shadow, ignorance, or limitation? Canst Thou at last definitely take possession of it and, in the sublimest, most integral transformation free it forever from the world of Ignorance and make it live in the world of Truth?

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

Or rather Thou art myself divested of all error and limitation. Have I become integrally this true self in all the atoms of my being? Wilt Thou bring about an overwhelming transformation, or will it still be a slow action in which cell after cell must be wrested from its darkness and its limits?...

Thou art the Sovereign, ready to take possession of Thy kingdom; dost Thou not find Thy kingdom yet ready enough for Thee to link it definitely to Thyself and become integrated with it?

Will the great miracle of the integral Divine Life in the individual at last be accomplished?

THE MOTHER (In *Prayers and Meditations*, prayer dated 15 January 1916)

*Title given by the Editor



This realization consists of three successive movements, internal vision, complete internal experience and identity.

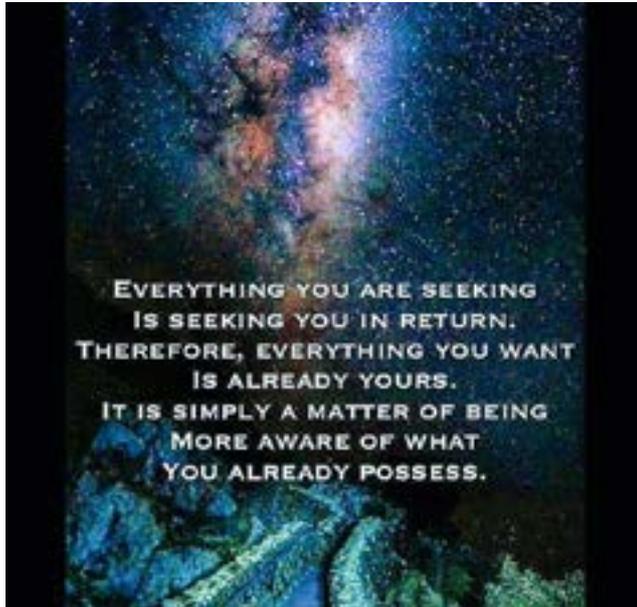
This internal vision, *drishti*, the power so highly valued by the ancient sages, the power which made a man a Rishi or Kavi and no longer a mere thinker, is a sort of light in the soul by which things unseen become as evident and real to it—to the soul and not merely to the intellect—as do things seem to the physical eye. In the physical world there are always two forms of knowledge, the direct and the indirect, *pratyaksha*, of that which is present to the eyes, and *paroksha*, of that which is remote from and beyond our vision... .. It is only when after long and persistent concentration or by other means the veil of the mind is rent or swept aside, only when a flood of light breaks over the awakened mentality, *Jyotirmaya Brahman*, and conception gives place to a knowledge-vision in which the Self is as present, real, concrete as a physical object to the physical eye, that we possess in knowledge; for we have seen....

This inner vision is one form of psychological experience; but the inner experience is not confined to the seeing; vision only opens, it does not embrace. Just as the eye, though it is alone adequate to bring the first sense of realization, has to call in the aid of experience by the touch and other organs of sense before there is embracing knowledge, so the vision of the self ought to be completed by an experience of it in all our members. We can have an emotional experience of the Self through Love and through emotional delight, love and delight of the Self in us, of the Self in the universal and of the Self in all with whom we have relations: thus the heart is satisfied of God. We can have an aesthetic experience of the Self in beauty, a delight-perception and taste of the absolute reality all-beautiful in everything whether created by ourselves or Nature in its appeal to the aesthetic mind and the senses; thus the sense is satisfied of God. We can have even the vital, nervous experience and practically the physical sense of the Self in all life and formation and in all workings of the powers, forces, energies that operate through us or others or in the world: thus the life and the body are satisfied of God.

All this knowledge and experience are primary means of arriving at and of possessing identity. We must not only see God and embrace Him, but become that Reality. We must become one with the Self in its transcendence of all form and manifestation by the resolution, the sublimation, the escape from itself from ego and all its belongings into That from which they proceed, as well as become the Self in all its manifested existences and belongings, one with it in the infinite existence, consciousness, peace, delight by which it reveals itself in us and one with it in the action, formation, play of self-conception with which it garbs itself in the world.

The status of knowledge is then the aim of this path and indeed of all paths when pursued to their end, to which intellectual discrimination and conception and all concentration and psychological self-knowledge and all seeking by the heart through love and by the senses through beauty and by the will through power and works and by the soul through peace and joy are only keys, avenues, first approaches and beginnings of the ascent which we have to use and to follow till the wide and infinite levels are attained and the divine doors swing open into the infinite Light.

SRI AUROBINDO (In the *Arya*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 15 January 1916)



In order to create a world of harmony in oneself one must either know or believe that such a world does exist. Secondly one must know that some people have created it within themselves. Then one should feel the urgent need for it. Then one must find the means of creating it. It may take some time to build it, but when the need and urge are there this is bound to be done. ...

Present, past and future are mental concepts for serving practical purposes in this world of manifestation. They do not touch the spirit which is both the actor and the witness of the drama. Because our apparent self is involved in the game of this merry-go-round we suffer and enjoy the shocks of time. ...

Love is ruthless, therein lies its difficulty and grace. The knot of ego is not easily cut. Love unravels this knot slowly but does not cut it. The fire with which love melts the heart has sufficient warmth in it, which sometimes seem to burn but does not actually burn. Blessed are those who are thus burnt on the slow fire of love. ...

Before one starts some work many hopes and fears begin to visit one's mind. They come from the unknown. If one is convinced of the divine hand in all movements, those hopes and the fears disappear. The trouble is that the element of mind which is necessary to break the atavism of matter does not let the spirit to pass beyond its bounds, because in that case it is afraid of losing its mastery. But this mastery is transitory and the soul with patience and courage ultimately succeeds in breaking the obstinacy of matter and the journey towards the divine continues. ...

In order to become more and more conscious one has to observe oneself minutely. Every thought, every feeling and every sensation has the whole world behind it. If we concentrate our will on the development on a certain trait in us we will succeed. Our meditation should be dynamic. That will be of abundant help to us. Though the capacity to keep one's mind blank should be acquired, but we should always keep our mind full of noble, dynamic and creative thoughts. They have power. ...

For work that is done for some inner fulfilment, discipline is necessary. The whole universe is moving according to the laws and principles, even our breathing and circulation of blood follow certain rhythm. When discipline is self-imposed it does not take away one's freedom. Such a discipline is needed by me.

Excerpts from *The Call Beyond*, Vol. 16, No.1, 1991, pp. 19-22.

poetry

Another Step Into Another Year

ANITA SHARMA

Another step into another year, And yet the search begins.

The search for the ease, The ease to repair and to prepare, To step with ease

On to another level, And seek the oyster pearl, That hides underneath.

To bring it to the fore, And safely store.

Expanding the reservoir, Of stillness and quiet,

Of peace and new heights, And dropping them bit by bit

Into minds, All through the year, With ease.

travelogue

Namaste' Y'all

TOM ZIMMERMANN

Tom Zimmermann and his wife Ellen were among the eight yoga enthusiasts, led by Mr. Jogi Bhagat, who came from Austin TX, USA, on a spiritual tour of India in November 2015, and stayed for a few days in Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. On his return to the US, he wrote a travelogue for his friends, which is being reproduced here with his permission. His account, replete with acute observations and subtle humour, gives us an insight into how (to use an expression of Sri Aurobindo) 'a sympathetic critic' looks at India and the Indians.

A Spiritual Tour of India with Jogi, the Yogi, was an adventure in cultural exchange and understanding. I have been fascinated by India since the early 70's when I read *Be Here Now* by Ram Das. This was my opportunity to see it up close and personally, and to visit the Indians who lived there.

Our tour guide, Jogendra Bhagat, is a wonderful son of Mother India. He lives now in Austin, Texas and teaches yoga. He had spent many years working for the Indian Foreign Service in Europe and the US. He is a kind, gentle and highly knowledgeable man, who knows his country of origin, its people and their religions. From the moment I met him, I knew I could trust him, and I liked him a lot. He makes me want to do yoga, and that is slightly miraculous.

We had a pre-trip gathering at Dyana's to prepare for our adventure. He supplied maps, websites, suggestions, and lots of information. I think the most important thing he shared was "When you get there, judge nothing for the first three to five days."

Before coming to India when I would tell people of my plans, they would have two possible reactions. Many would say, "Wow, I have always wanted to go there, you are so lucky, tell me about it when you get back." Others would say, "Why? Yuck, I would never go there." So people who go, self select. It is not really for the faint hearted.

So, after a 20 hour flight with a 3 hour layover in Istanbul, Turkey, we arrived early in the morning to the number one airport, a beautiful modern place. After clearing customs our driver, Mr. Singh greets us and takes us to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Delhi. An Ashram is a rather amazing, spiritual community. We pass through the gates into this oasis. The walls keep out much of the traffic noise from the streets, and we head for our rooms and a bit of rest.

Breakfast is served at 7:00 AM, and I am the type that never misses a meal. We get our 5 compartment metal trays, a cup for chai, and a bowl. It was something like cream of wheat or porridge, and bread and jam, and maybe there was more. It is a community so we wash our own tray and put them back in the rack. Sometimes it is quiet, some times folks talk quietly, and we share a table with Dr. Ramesh Bijlani, who in a week will become a favored teacher.

At noon Jogi arrives and we begin to meet India just outside the Ashram gates. Ellen gets a henna tattoo with our angel friend, and we begin to meet Indians. In a very short order I am feeling safe and comfortable in this country, that is like no other, that I have been to. We walk the grounds visiting the meditation hall, see The Mother's School, the kitchen, where we can volunteer, the clinic, the yoga hall, the book store, wandering peacocks, and more. Guests are from around India, South America, the UK, South Africa, Russia, Turkey, Australia and around the world. This community is one of the highlights of the trip.

Sri Aurobindo at age 7 went to study in England until age 21. He was top in his class, and learned to synthesize Eastern and Western thought. He came back and taught for a while. Eventually needing to fight for Indian Independence, yes, he did some jail time, where he realized he was more on a spiritual mission, and that independence would come. He was joined by The Mother, who came from France and helped him in his work.

Touring we went to an ancient mosque, a beautiful Bahai temple, the Parliament, and then the totally amazing Sikh Temple. They were chanting in the temple. We put on head covers because all Sikh men wear turbans as a sign of respect, so we did too. We were almost ready to leave when they took us to the feeding room where 1,000 people were sitting on the floor eating from those metal trays, being served by a small army of servants of God. We went to the kitchen. OMG, was it an amazing organized chaos cooking for those 1,000 and the other 24,000 who would also come that day. Jogi said, "You never see a Sikh beggar." They are good with business, and great with charity. We could have eaten there too.

A man on the plane told us that when you go to India, you have to appreciate the first verse of the Serenity Prayer. God, Grant me the Serenity to Accept the things I cannot change. He said, "You must accept or get past the 3 P's: Pollution, Population and Poverty.

Pollution is something you notice right away. The air is thick with smog. Jogi suggested that we wear masks. I didn't want to look Chinese and we were determined to tough it out.

Population, there are 1.2 billion Indians, in an area 1/3 the size of the US, with less than 1/3 the population. There are 22 official languages, and English is a unifying language, but not everyone speaks it. The streets are filled with people, cars, buses, tuk-tuk, pedicabs, carts, cows, and vendors. There are lots of Indians, and actually that's what was best, The Indians, Namaste' again.

Poverty is the 3rd P. We did see people in squatter villages, sometime under a tarp roof on the sidewalk, or the most difficult scene where the 100's, perhaps 1,000's were sleeping in the train station. No they weren't waiting for the train to Jaipur like we were. They wanted a roof over their heads for the night.

So all of India was in my prayers at all times. I also continually said my favorite prayer, "Thank you, God." I am so lucky, and so are you. If you are reading this, I am sure you have a roof over your head, you probably have a car, and I am sure you are not hungry. There are people with the Courage to change this, but it is a very big job. India is changing, and I pray for that positive change, and I saw many signs for hope.

Our next stop was Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. A much smaller city of only 6 million people, and countless cows. Jaipur is a friendlier and more intimate place. We stayed in the Hotel Fort Chandragupta. It looked on the website like a palace. It was in a great location not really on the secluded hilltop like the real fort. This room was made for a maharajah. This is the edge of the desert, and next country west, is Pakistan. We saw camels, elephants and bullocks pulling carts through the Pink City.

We visited the Pink Palace, which had been a harem. The Palace in the Lake, now that was a safe place, and the Amber Palace on the mountain top with wide walls around it. We rode the elephant driven by our mahout, Imran, up to the top for a rather spectacular view of the city below. We had a turban-tying event, and we were besieged by vendors; kind of like putting a cube of sugar on an anthill.

One of the vendors named Shiva had very lovely tee shirts, in blue, with an elephant embroidered on them. He followed our elephant all the way to the top. He only wanted 1,000 Rupees, which would be \$16.00. I knew it was the tourist price, and he was so persistent, and I wanted one, so for 800 Rupees I closed the deal. I thought \$13.00 was fair. Then Govinda was selling the same thing. He followed me all the way down, and eventually I bought two more as gifts, he said it was a "secret price." I got two for 500 Rupees that is \$4.00 each. I truly don't feel cheated at all. Shiva made more and made the first sale, and they sure need to make sales.

The group headed out that night for dancing. The Rajasthani desert dwellers danced with fire on their heads, and eventually they had me dancing with them. No, I don't do fire on my head. This was at the Indiana Restaurant whose owner had gone to Purdue. The city was always alive early in the morning and late into the night, with Street food, little shops, entrepreneurs, and everyone out and about trying to make a living. Of course we could have gone to an upscale mall, but they have those in Austin.

Traffic has to be addressed on any trip to India. That is traffic suggestions while usually driving on the left, but sometimes taking up the right also. When there were two lanes there were four vehicles in it. People did their best to get as close to the car next to them as the car in front. They left very little gap and still people crossed in front, and always surviving. Their horns are indispensable. What horn honking means is "I am here" "Please move" while here in the US when it is used, it seems to be the sound of the middle finger more often than not. Don't rent a car, rent a driver, a 750 Rupees for 4 hours, that is \$10.00, and they know how to drive in India, and I could not.

Next we take the night train to Rishikesh. A young man reading about Steve Jobs helps me make up the berth. There are about 30 people in this two-berth air conditioned sleeper car. We didn't board the one with three berths or the overcrowded car without berths and jammed with people. My first night on a train where you don't get to see each small village you drive through.

It was in the morning when things came alive. Multiple chai wallies coming through with tea; at 10 Rupees a cup it was a deal. We met Davanchi and the sweet 6 year old from Nepal who spoke English really well, as did her delightful parents who had just come from a ten day yoga retreat. They shared a compartment with Jogi, our yogi. It was the Indians and the Nepalese who made this trip heart touching.

We got off at Haridwar, and we got our first view of the Ganges. There were temples all around because this jumping city was a place of pilgrimage. Homes, apartments and businesses were putting up Diwali lights. That's why it seemed like Christmas along with the gift giving. It was like 4th of July because already we were hearing the sounds of never ending firecrackers.

Another Sikh driver carries us 20 some miles to the Hotel, The Great Ganga, overlooking the Ganges River. We did some yoga on the roof, and were awed by the views of the Himalayas, the Ganges River, the temples and the life in a smaller spiritual capital of yoga, with lots of temples and ashrams. Again our hotel was a delight and the food was delicious. This whole small city was vegetarian and it had no alcohol; it was okay, as I have no alcohol deficiency.

This was everyone's favorite place, with lively streets, different religious ceremonies, pilgrims, cows, holy men, beggars and the sweetest store keepers who were happy if you bought their wares, and they were happy if you just visited. There was no pressure to buy or to give. I remember at our favorite store near the tuk-tuk stand, where we were the first customers of the day. I gave the owner 100 Rupees for some yoga pants and he put it to his head, and said a quick prayer of gratitude. Now, I do recommend an attitude of gratitude, and Indians seem to have it.

We went to the Sivananda Ashram and temple for a service: chanting, singing, music, candles, incense and good people being of service. This was the Society of Divine Love also known as Vedanta. Sivananda was the founder until he took Mahasamadhi, which is either deep meditation or the euphemism for death. I don't know what he did in his next life, but the last one, he lived in love and service. One of the next men in his lineage was Swami Satchidananda. Oh what a small world, he joined me at the Human Unity Conference in Chicago back in 1980.

This ashram had an obelisk with loving teachings from 20 of the world religions. I tell you it was a spiritual, loving, accepting place. I didn't know that the Ganga was the hair of Krishna, but it did hold power for so many people. The water was cool and clear, and Ellen and I did get our feet into it. Down river, where it sure appears polluted near Varnasi, people still bathe in it, and it doesn't spread rampant disease. I know we wouldn't have gotten in down there.

While on this journey, I had begun to review my own spiritual journey. Of course I started with Roman Catholicism in a church I dearly loved. It was in the Jesuits that I became more Christian, liking the teachings of Jesus more than the rules of the Church. I know growing up

I thought there were Catholics and Non-Catholics. Now I know the Pope and the priests would really see the world as Catholics and other faith groups. The Hindus who had seemed to worship a pantheon of gods were really not much different from the teachings of Jesus.

My wife Ellen knows that in the years from 12 to 30 after Jesus had taught in the Temple like a good Jewish boy to man like a bar mitzvah. That he journeyed to India embracing the wonders of the Buddha and the best of the Hindu's, probably also studying with the Zoroastrians along the way. The Paths are many to reaching our divinity and expressing Love for all of God's children. Jesus actually wasn't a Christian, he was the Christ, and he was Jewish. He changed the Old Testament and brought in New.

This is why I like the Human Unity Conference that brought together people from many persuasions. The Bahai study all the great teachers like Jesus, Moses, Buddha, Mohammed, Aristotle, Einstein, Shakespeare and Zoroaster. Rodney King said it once, "Why can't we all just get along." God is Love, He who believes in Love, believes in God and God in Him. The AA's just speak of a Higher Power. It is time to appreciate the goodness in mankind and say Namaste', that is the Divine within me, honors the divine within you. From this Holy Place, I again notice that we are all one. We are all God's children, and we need to live in love.

We journey back to the Ashram in Delhi, and start our classes with Dr. Ramesh Bijlani. I took lots of notes from this quiet, gentle, wise man. He is a great synthesizer of Eastern and Western thought, and a follower of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo. He mentioned how psychology comes from the psyche, which means spirit, but Skinner and a few others worked to take the Spirit out of psychology. Well, not mine. He spoke of Integral yoga, that is integrating yoga into all of life. I think I do that now with Aikido, that wonderful martial art that means The Way of Harmony with the Universe.

This was also our time to celebrate Diwali. Ramesh read a story about Ram and Sita that he wrote for 3-year olds. That is why I finally understand these things. On the good days, I am as smart as a 3 year old. It was about loyalty, commitment, and standing for what is right. All these teaching stories may be the reason that Indians sure seem to be polite and respectful. Diwali celebrates Good over Evil and the return of the light. Sunita welcomed all of us with love and kindness, and her mother-in-law blessed us with "Ram, Ram, Ram", Ram being a name for God.

Indians use the name of God with love, whereas over here we are taught to not take the name of God in vain. God bless, is so much better than GD. 'Thank you, God' is truly my favorite prayer, and it reminds me to be grateful for all that I have. All these ways to make the divine real in our lives, and as Jogi would say, "To make me a better person."

So, if you want to go to India, GO! If you don't want to go, don't go. Do send love and understanding to a nation that is ready to awaken again, in all kinds of ways. Indians invented chess, maybe even democracy, before the Greeks; the zero to help with Arabic numbers; and Hinduism is probably the oldest religion. May this formerly poverty stricken country continue to grow so that all their people have clean air, fresh water, homes to live in, and where they all get to share their love and respect for all people and all religions.

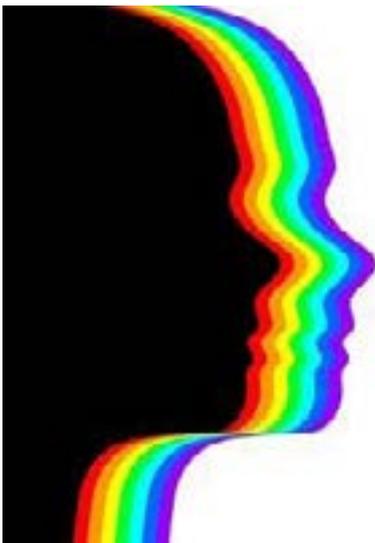
Namaste' Y'all

may i help you?

RM wants to know

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').

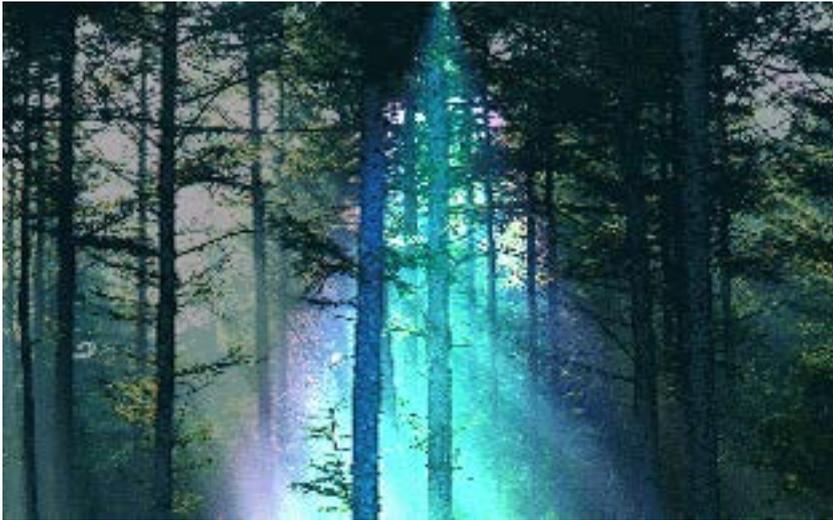
It is needless to say that the identity of the person sending the question will be kept confidential. The questions may be sent to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in



I have been a student of Advait Vedanta for a long time but one question never got answered for me and that is: what is sukshma sharira? I need an example to get it right. I see life as being like an electric bulb that goes out after a certain time. Atma is the electricity that is always there. Body and mind go away at the time of death. So, what example can clarify sukshma sharira?

Sukshma sharira (subtle body, or the astral body), as the name indicates, is a body, but is subtle, and therefore, it is not perceived by the ordinary mental consciousness. At levels of consciousness higher than the mental, yogis have perceived three bodies: the gross body (sthoola sharira), which we are all familiar with; the subtle body (sukshma sharira); and the causal body (kaarana sharira). The causal body is even more subtle than the 'subtle body'. The more subtle the body, the closer it is to the jivatma, and therefore 'deeper'. At the same time, the more subtle the body, the more it diffuses outward, because it is difficult to keep it confined within a boundary. Hence the subtle body is often depicted as surrounding the gross body. It corresponds to the aura around the body, which it has been claimed is the same as the halo surrounding the body seen in Kirlian photography.

Sukshma sharira corresponds to the *pranamaya* and *manomaya* koshas, which correspond to the vital and the mental sheaths respectively in Sri Aurobindo's terminology. *Prana* is the life force. Thus, the gross body is energized by the life-force or the *prana*, which is in the subtle body. *Manas* is the mind. Thus, the thoughts and feelings also manifest first in the subtle body, although they need the nervous system of the gross body for us to become aware of them. There is some research available which shows that a thought produces changes in the aura before any detectable activity in the brain. Since the subtle body extends beyond the gross body, the subtle bodies of two individuals may be in contact even when they are physically not touching each other. Therefore, individuals can affect each other's thoughts and feelings without touching each other, without saying a word, or doing anything. Are there some everyday observations that make these notions plausible? Yes, there are. First, people who are peaceful by nature, have a calming effect on those around them. Second, people do not like to sit very near each other while meditating because the presence of some people near them disturbs them although they are not touching each other, and their eyes are closed.



<http://modernagespirituality.com/2015/07/08/drop-subtle-as-well-as-physical-body-to-experience-consciousness/>

During dream sleep, the subtle body functions independently without needing the gross body. That is why, in dreams we have thoughts and feelings, objects materialize from nowhere, and we can travel long distances in no time. But the gross body remains where it is, and does not act out any thoughts that occur in dreams.

In terms of the bulb analogy, Spirit is the electricity in general, *jivatma* is the electricity passing through an individual bulb, and the subtle body is the glow around the bulb when switched on. However, the analogy breaks down after death.

If there is no bulb, there can be no glow. But after death, only the gross body becomes lifeless. The *jivatma* is released, but continues to be embodied in the subtle and causal bodies, and migrates to a world other than the earth. That is how the individual personality survives even after death.

Acharya Navneet has provided an analogy better than that of the bulb. The cellphone is the *sthoola sharira*. The electricity flowing through the whole device is the *sukshma sharira*, making the phone alive. SIM info and other default coding, including the address book, is the *kaarana sarira* which stores the previous calls (*karma*) and gives an identity to the phone. This analogy also has limitations, but analogies are meant only to facilitate understanding. They can neither be taken literally, nor will the parallel be valid in terms of minute details.



About 100 students doing B.Ed. at the Amity Institute of Education, Saket, and a few of their teachers spent a day at the Ashram on 16 October 2015. Here is a sample from the feedback that they provided at the end of their visit.

Bhaiya and Didi, thank you so much. It was an excellent and a very helpful session for me. Earlier I have attended seminars and lectures, but this was quite different. The first thing that I liked was the atmosphere of the Ashram. I wish to visit this place again, early in the morning or in the evening. In Delhi we do not get to see so much greenery! The second thing is that Bhaiya made us look upon certain topics that I had never heard or felt in my life. How should one react to the situations in life, how to make decisions following our inner soul, how to bring peace in our life, how to control our emotions and intellectual power, how to give happiness, and how to feel satisfied with what we have and what we do not...

Thank you for this wonderful session which will certainly help me in my present and future life. The food was tasty and delicious. Thank You.

Rita Shammi

My experience of attending the talk on the spiritual, mental and intellectual growth by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani was an amazing experience. Sir gave us a wonderful perspective to see life from a different angle. Sapana Ma'am, through her mesmerizing voice filled the meditation hall with calmness. Jayanti Ma'am also presented us the educational perspective which is an experiential way of giving knowledge provided by the school here. So overall I had a lifetime experience which I can never forget and my soul is filled with the aspiration to serve the nation.

Namrata Negi

I was personally a bit confused about why we were told to visit the Ashram and attend lectures. It is only now that things make more sense.

The moment I entered the Ashram, I was amazed by the simple beauty of it. The lecture helped me to understand education and teaching better. I could easily relate with the ideals shared as I have had the fortune to work with and under some teachers who can easily be called idealistic. Today the idea of reaching the goal of being a better person and a better teacher was reinforced. I would have loved to be a student at Mirambika. The opportunities given here seems unprecedented.

I totally enjoyed and learnt a lot today. Thank you for having us here.

Harshita Grover

Today's session at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram was enlightening and it had a very calming effect on me. Specially coming from the stressful world of studies, home and busy life, the meditation and soulful music (live) was absolutely a divine experience. The talks by all speakers were very inspiring, and pushed me to question some of my preconceived notions, and also strengthened my belief in the spiritual aspect of this world. Thank you for a wonderful experience. Would love to come back with my husband and son.

Preeti Gambhir

The session was the first of a type I have ever attended. The lecture series by Bijlani bhaiya was so relaxing and calm. I realized that there is so much to do in life apart from our personal aims and ambitions. Sri Aurobindo Ashram is a serene place where we can find peace and self-satisfaction. Our inner thoughts and inner self can be realized at this place. I am happy and amazed to see such a place and people associated with this place with a different approach towards life in the midst of the crowded Delhi. There is so much to learn and experience in this world; this notion strikes me here and is going to stay with me forever.

Esha Purohit

Feedback from a Yoga Teacher from Austin TX, USA

Dear Ramesh Ji,
Your Yoga DVD is excellent. I particularly like the explanations, given with Asanas etc.
Love and regards,
Jogi
(in an e-mail dated 11 December 2015)

Feedback from MIS parents

Dear Mr. Yogesh Sharma,
Hetush has recounted his experience at the 2-day camp at the Ashram which was initiated and organised by you. I wanted to thank you for the extra effort you have put in – the experience was very different for them all and very enlightening. All our children should learn ‘shram daan’ at an early age to become good citizens of our country. Mind and body relationships are prerequisites for conscious awakening and it is an experience like this which can really mould their futures. We are grateful that you exposed them to all this.
Thanks once again.
Archana & Vikas Gupta
(in an e-mail dated 14 December 2015)

Feedback from Udayan Care

About 40 meritorious girls of class XI studying in Government schools stayed two nights in the Ashram under the auspices of an NGO, Udayan Care, which calls them ‘Shalinis’. The highlights of their stay were talks on the spirituality and on nutrition, and the practice of asanas and pranayamas.

Dear Dr. Bijlani Sir,

Greetings!

We are really grateful to you for your presence and teachings during the two day residential camp organized by RTN-USF at Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The Bhajans and yoga sessions were enjoyed by all the children. They have promised that they will practice it daily for at least 15 minutes everyday. The short stories, illustrations and examples in your talk were inspirational for them. In children’s words “mazza aaya, bahut achhi thi”.

Another remarkable learning was the wonderful songs that you played for them and they sang along it. They really grasped the ideas and got inner peace in reciting them.

Sharing of the meanings of mantras was very educative to all of us. The sessions by you in these two days have left a great impact on our dear Shalinis and will help them to grow better and achieve their career goals.

Our special thanks to you for explaining the deeper meaning of the points of our ‘honour code’ in such simple language and steps related to them.

We thank you once again for inspiring the young minds with your presence and teachings.

Best regards

Meeta Masand

Shri Ratanlal Foundation & Udayan Care

(in an e-mail dated 15 December 2015)

Feedback received from a Guest from Germany

Dear Tara Didi,
The atmosphere in the Ashram is always so calm and special.
Max

Feedback provided by the participants of the Orientation to Integral Yoga, 19-20 December 2015

I was skeptical about attending but my father forced me to. By the end I realized that the topics which were in the back of my mind were also at the back of others' minds. I am still a skeptic but I feel a little comfortable attending and would want to attend a similar session again.
Dr. Shivam Sharma

A very enjoyable program. The asanas and the sharing by Dr. Bijlani were very clear and easy to understand for first timers. What a wonderful and inspiring way to understand about the Creator, creation, manifestation and connecting with the divine, mystic consciousness and dropping the veil to feel the oneness with other beings and things!! The session inspires me to seek more and be regular with yoga practice and see it in everything I do. At least make a conscious beginning. Thank You!!
Vidya Nair

It was indeed an enriched program. Today when everyone is rushing to achieve an aimless life, it gives a direction. This program will give direction to the young generation. Thanks a lot. Hope for more guidance and lectures in future.
Namita Dhankhar

It was very meaningful. I am not an adult but I still understood many things. I can understand the goal of life now.
Nishant Dhankhar

The workshop was very well conceived and did answer some of the big, profound questions that come up. The explanations with anecdotes were simple and easy to relate with. On the whole a fulfilling session.
Sonali Gupta
MIS teacher

Dear Dr. Bijlani,
I wanted to thank you for the two enlightening days over the last weekend.
I very much enjoyed the complete experience and look forward to attending more such sessions.
Kind regards,
Rajdeep Mukherjee
(in an e-mail dated 25 December 2015)

From: Pradeep Narang
Dear Tara di,
I was delighted to go through the CD containing the interview between the Mother and Shri Surendra Nath. Very educative!
Affectionately,
Pradeep
(in an e-mail dated 21 December 2015)

To get *The Call Beyond* online

To get The Call Beyond online regularly,
month after month,
please send an e-mail to:
callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

To get the Ashram's e-magazine, *Realization*

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:
Subject: Subscribe
Then click on Send

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For information about Sri Aurobindo Ashram
– Delhi Branch,
Please visit the website
www.sriurobindoashram.net

About AMSS - Kechla Project

Please visit the website
www.auomira.in

Feedback

Please send your feedback to:
callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

Sri Aurobindo Ashram - Delhi Branch

Orientation to Integral Yoga, 16 & 17 January 2016

This popular ultra-short orientation to the
Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the
Mother will be held from 16-17 January
2016, from 8 am – 12.30 pm each
day. The program is free, but advance
registration at the Ashram Reception, or
by sending contact information by e-mail
to Dr. Ramesh Bijlani (rambij@gmail.com) is desirable to avoid disappointment.

February 2016 will be a festive month in
Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch.
The Ashram will be celebrating its sixtieth
anniversary on 12 February 2016. The
Mother's Birthday, 21 February, falls on a
Sunday this year, and will be celebrated as
usual with a full-day program. The Golden
Day, 29 February, which marked the descent
of the Supramental on earth in 1956, is a day
that we get to commemorate only during the
leap years. So, look out for many special
programs during the month on our website
and in the monthly e-magazine, *Realization*.