

The Call Beyond



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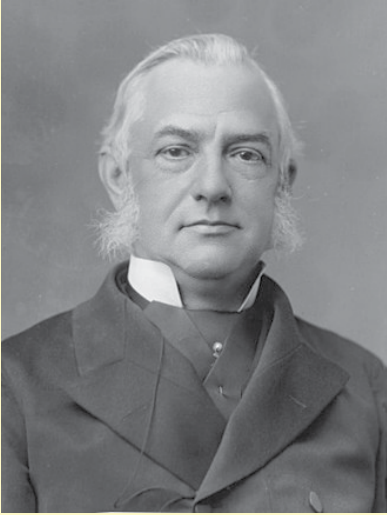
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Max Muller and His Evolution from a Scholar to an India-lover



*Friedrich Max Muller
(1823-1900)*

*An 1883 picture by Bassano
(Source: Wikipedia)*

Even in days when distance, language and tradition created barriers that were far more difficult to bridge than today, ancient Indian wisdom attracted some of the brightest minds of the world. One such mind arrived in this world 200 years ago, and was named Friedrich Max Muller. Max Muller was a polymath – a philologist, philosopher, and a writer, with more than ordinary interest in music and poetry.

Born on 6 December 1823 at Dessau, Germany, in a cultured family, Max Muller earned a doctorate from the University of Leipzig. His dissertation for the PhD was on Spinoza's ethics. In 1850, he was appointed professor of modern European languages at Oxford University, after which he spent much of his life in the UK. In 1868, Müller became Oxford's first professor of comparative philology. He held this chair until his death on 28 October 1900, although he retired from its active duties in 1875.

Prior to commencing his academic career at Oxford, Max Muller learnt Sanskrit, and started translating the Upanishads. His first book was a German translation of the Hitopadesha, a collection of Indian fables. Muller's connections with the East India Company and with Sanskrit scholars at Oxford University, and his links with the Brahmo Samaj in India, led to a career in Britain, where he eventually became an authority on the Indian culture. The trajectory of his career was guided by the then emerging insight among



the European scholars that Sanskrit was the mother of all Indo-European languages, and that language had an intimate relationship with culture and religion. It was with this idea that Max Muller and his contemporaries delved into the ancient Indian scriptures. It was to explore the relationship between the Vedic Sanskrit and Indo-European languages, and the relationship between ancient Indian literature and European languages and early European religions that Max Muller translated the Vedas and the Upanishads.

In 1881, he published a translation of the first edition of Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. In his Translator's Preface, Muller wrote: "The bridge of thoughts and sights that spans the whole history of the Aryan world has its first arch in the Veda, its last in Kant's Critique. ... While in the Veda we may study the childhood, we may study in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason the perfect manhood of the Aryan mind." While one can see here an acknowledgement of the ancestry of European culture residing in India, one can also see Muller's opinion that Vedic wisdom was only the beginning while it was in Europe that the early start matured into a respectable product. He strongly believed that the India's religious past had processed the Indian society to make it ripe for receiving Christianity. He saw it as one his missions to see how the "old mischief of Indian priestcraft could be overthrown and the way opened for the entrance of simple Christian teaching." It is astonishing how erroneous can be the conclusions that great thinkers arrive at with their remarkably well-developed logical faculties when they process the data available to them! Today, it is the born-Christian young people of the West who are rejecting all organised religion, including Christianity, and turning to spirituality founded in ancient Indian wisdom – a 180 degree turnaround when compared to Max Muller's conclusion. To be fair to Max Muller, however, it may be added that he attributed



the “mischief of Indian priestcraft” to “the inevitable decay to which every religion is exposed... Whenever we can trace back a religion to its first beginnings, we find it free from many blemishes that affected it in its later states.”

However, one of the great signs of great minds is that they evolve, and as they evolve, they are ready to change their ideas. In his sixties and seventies, Müller gave a series of lectures, which reflected a more nuanced view in favour of Hinduism and the ancient literature from India. In his “What can India teach us?” lecture at the University of Cambridge in 1883, he championed ancient Sanskrit literature and India as follows:

“If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. **If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India.** And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.”

It may be a fitting tribute to Max Muller on his 200th Birth Anniversary to end this editorial with what Swami Vivekananda wrote about Muller and his wife after their meeting over lunch on 28 May 1896:



“The visit was really a revelation to me. That little white house, its setting in a beautiful garden, the silver-haired sage, with a face calm and benign, and forehead smooth as a child’s in spite of seventy winters, and every line in that face speaking of a deep-seated mine of spirituality somewhere behind; that noble wife, the helpmate of his life through **his long and arduous task of exciting interest, overriding opposition and contempt, and at last creating a respect for the thoughts of the sages of ancient India**—the trees, the flowers, the calmness, and the clear sky—all these sent me back in imagination to the glorious days of ancient India, the days of our brahmarshis and rajarshis, the days of the great vanaprasthas, the days of Arundhatis and Vasishthas. It was neither the philologist nor the scholar that I saw, but a soul that is every day realizing its oneness with the universe.” (emphasis added).

Reference

Max Müller, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_M%C3%BCller (accessed on 13 December 2023).

Please see the related article, ‘Sri Aurobindo on Translations, including His and Max Muller’s’, on page 8



*Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.*

Henry Ford



Sri Aurobindo On Translations, including His and Max Muller's



This translation [Sri Aurobindo's translation] of a few of the simpler & more exoteric Upanishads to be followed by other sacred and philosophical writings of the Hindus ... has been effected on **one definite and unvarying**

principle, to present to England and through England to Europe the religious message of India only in those parts of her written thought which the West is fit to hear **and to present these in such a form as should be attractive & suggestive to the Occidental intellect.** The first branch of this principle necessitated a **rigid selection** on definite lines, the second dictated **the choice of a style & method of rendering** which should be literary rather than literal.

The series of translations called the *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by the late Professor Max Muller, was executed in a scholastic and peculiar spirit. Professor Max Muller, a scholar of wide attainments, great versatility and a refreshingly active, ingenious & irresponsible fancy, has won considerable respect in India by his attachment to Vedic studies, but it must fairly be recognized that he was more of a grammarian and philologist, than a sound Sanskrit scholar. He could construe Sanskrit well enough, but he could not feel the language or realise the spirit behind the letter. Accordingly **he committed two serious errors of judgment;** he imagined that by sitting in Oxford and evolving new meanings out of his own brilliant fancy he could understand the Upanishads better than Shankaracharya or any other Hindu of parts and learning; and he also imagined that what was important for



Europe to know about the Upanishads was what he and other European scholars considered they ought to mean. This, however, is a matter of no importance to anybody but the scholars themselves. What it is really important for Europe to know is in the first place what the Upanishads really do mean, so far as their exoteric teaching extends, and in a less degree what philosophic Hinduism took them to mean. The latter knowledge may be gathered from the commentaries of Shankaracharya and other philosophers which may be studied in the original or in the translations which the Dravidian Presidency, ignorantly called benighted by the materialists, has been issuing with a truly noble learning & high-minded enterprise. The former this book makes some attempt to convey.

But it may be asked, why these particular Upanishads alone, when there are so many others far larger in plan and of a not inferior importance? In answer I may quote a sentence from Professor Max Muller's Preface to the *Sacred Books of the East*. "I confess" he says "it has been for many years a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellent." Now I am myself only a poor coarse minded Oriental and therefore not disposed to deny the gross physical facts of life & nature or able to see why we should scuttle them out of sight and put on a smug, respectable expression which suggests while it affects to hide their existence. This perhaps is the reason why I am somewhat at a loss to imagine what the Professor found in the Upanishads that is hideous and repellent. Still I was brought up almost from my infancy in England and received an English education, so that sometimes I have glimmerings. But as to what he intends by the unmeaning, artificial and silly elements, there can be no doubt. **Everything is unmeaning**



in the Upanishads which the Europeans cannot understand, everything is artificial which does not come within the circle of their mental experience and everything is silly which is not explicable by European science and wisdom. Now this attitude is almost inevitable on the part of an European, for we all judge according to our lights and those who keep their minds really open, who can realise that there may be lights which are not theirs and yet as illuminating or more illuminating than theirs, are in any nation a very small handful. **For the most part men are the slaves of their associations.**

Let us suppose that the ceremonies & services of the Roman Catholic were not mere ceremonies and formularies, borrowed for the most part from Eastern occultisms without understanding them, — that they had been arranged so as to be perfect symbols of certain deep metaphysical truths and to produce certain effects spiritual and material according to a scientific knowledge of the power of sound over both mind and matter; let us suppose that deep philosophical works had been written in the terminology of these symbols and often in a veiled allusive language; and let us suppose finally that these were translated into Bengali or Hindustani and presented to an educated Pundit who had studied both at Calcutta & at Nuddea or Benares. What would he make of them? It will be as well to take a concrete instance. Jesus Christ was a great thinker, a man who had caught, apparently by his unaided power, though this is not certain, something of the divine knowledge, but the writers who recorded his sayings were for the most part ordinary men of a very narrow culture and scope of thought and they seem grossly to have misunderstood his deepest sayings. For instance when he said “I and my Father are one” expressing the deep truth that the human self and the divine self are identical, they imagined that he was setting up an individual claim to be God; hence the extraordinary legend of the Virgin Mary & all that followed



from it. Well, we all know the story of the Last Supper and Jesus' marvellously pregnant utterance as he broke the bread and gave of the wine to his disciples "This is my body and this is my blood" and the remarkable rite of the Eucharist and the doctrine of Transubstantiation which the Roman Catholic Church has founded upon it. "Corruption! superstition! blasphemous nonsense!" cries the Protestant. "Only a vivid Oriental metaphor and nothing more." If so, it was certainly an "unmeaning, artificial and silly" metaphor, nay, "even a hideous and repellent" one. **But I prefer to believe that Jesus' words had always a meaning & generally a true & beautiful one.** On the other hand the Transubstantiation doctrine is one which the Catholics themselves do not understand, it is to them a "mystery". And yet how plain the meaning is to an Oriental intelligence! The plasm of matter, the foodsheath of the universe to which bread and wine belong, is indeed the blood and body of God and typifies the great primal sacrifice by which God crucified himself so that the world might exist. **The Infinite had to become finite, the Unconditioned to condition himself, Spirit to evolve matter.** In the bread and the wine which the communicant eats, God actually is but he is not present to our consciousness, and he only becomes so present by an act of faith; this is the whole doctrine of the Transubstantiation. **For as the Upanishad says, we must believe in God before we can know him; we must realise him as the "He is" before we realise him in his essential. And indeed if the child had not believed in what his teacher or his book told him, how could the grown man know anything?** But if a deep philosophical work were written on the Eucharist hinting at great truths but always using the symbol of the bread and wine and making its terminology from the symbol & from the doctrine of Transubstantiation based upon the symbol, what would our Hindu Pundit make of it? Being a scholar & philosopher, he would find there



undoubtedly much that was fresh, natural, simple, beautiful & true but also a great deal that was unmeaning, artificial & silly & even to his vegetarian imagination hideous & repellent. As for the symbol itself, its probable effect on the poor vegetarian would be to make him vomit. "What hideous nonsense," says the Protestant, "we are to believe that we are eating God!" But that is exactly what the Protestant himself does believe if he is sincere & not a parrot when he says "God is everywhere", which is true enough, though it would be truer to say everything is in God. **If God is everywhere, He must be in the food we eat. Not only is God the eaten, but He is the eater and eventually, says the Vedanta, when you come to the bottom fact of existence there is neither eaten or eater, but all is God. These are hard sayings for the rationalist who insists on limiting knowledge within the circle of the five senses.** "God to whom the sages are as meat & princes as excellent eating & Death is the spice of his banquet, how shall such an one know of Him where He abideth?"

Many of the Upanishads are similarly written round symbols and in a phraseology and figures which have or had once a deep meaning and a sacred association to the Hindus but must be unintelligible and repellent to the European. ...



An objection may be urged to the method of translation that has been adopted. Professor Max Muller in his translation did not make any attempt to render into English the precise shades of Aryan philosophical terms like Atman & Prana which do not correspond to any philosophical conception familiar to the West; he believed that the very unfamiliarity of the terms he used to



translate them would be like a bracing splash of cold water to the mind forcing it to rouse itself and think. In this I think the Professor was in error; his proposition may be true of undaunted philosophical intellects such as Schopenhauer's or of those who are already somewhat familiar with the Sanscrit language, but to the ordinary reader the unfamiliar terminology forms a high & thick hedge of brambles shutting him off from the noble palace & beautiful gardens of the Upanishads. Moreover the result of a scholastic faithfulness to the letter has been to make the style of the translation intolerably uncouth and unworthy of the solemn rhythmic grandeur and ineffable poetical depth and beauty of these great religious poems. I do not say that this translation [Sri Aurobindo's translation] is worthy of them, for in no other human tongue than Sanscrit is such grandeur & beauty possible. But there are ways and their degrees. For instance *Etadwaitad*, the refrain of the *Katha Upanishad* has a deep & solemn ring in Sanscrit because *etad* and *tad* so used have in Sanscrit a profound and grandiose philosophical signification which everybody at once feels; but in English "This truly is That" can be nothing but a juggling with demonstrative pronouns; it is far better and renders more nearly both rhythm & meaning to translate "This is the God of your seeking" however inadequate such a translation may be.

It may, however, fairly be said that a version managed on these lines cannot give a precise & accurate idea of the meaning. It is misleading to translate *Prana* sometimes by life, sometimes by breath, sometimes by life breath or breath of life, because breath & life are merely subordinate aspects of the *Prana*. *Atman* again rendered indifferently by soul, spirit & self, must mislead, because what the West calls the soul is really the *Atman* yoked with mind & intelligence, and spirit is a word of variable connotation often synonymous



with soul; even “self” cannot be used precisely in that way in English. Again the Hindu idea of “immortality” is different from the European; it implies not life after death, but freedom from both life and death, for what we call life is after all impossible without death. Similarly Being does not render *Purusha*, nor “matter” *rayi*, nor askesis the whole idea of “tapas”. To a certain extent all this may be admitted, but at the same time I do not think that any reader who can think & feel will be seriously misled, and at any rate he will catch more of the meaning from imperfect English substitutes than from Sanskrit terms which will be a blank to his intelligence. **The mind of man demands, and the demand is legitimate, that new ideas shall be presented to him in words which convey to him some association, with which he will not feel like a foreigner in a strange country where no one knows his language nor he theirs.** The new must be presented to him in the terms of the old; new wine must be put to some extent in old bottles. What is the use of avoiding the word “God” and speaking always of the Supreme as “It” simply because the Sanskrit usually, — but not, be it observed, invariably — employs the neuter gender? **The neuter in Sanskrit applies not only to what is inanimate but to what is beyond such terms as animate and inanimate, not only to what is below gender but to what is above gender.** In English this is not the case. The use of “It” may therefore lead to far more serious misconceptions than to use the term “God” & the pronoun “He”. When Matthew Arnold said that God was a stream of tendency making towards righteousness, men naturally scoffed because it seemed to turn God into an inanimate force; yet surely such was not Arnold’s meaning. On the other side if the new ideas are presented with force and power, a reader of intelligence will soon come to understand that something different is meant by “God” from the ideas he attaches to that word. And in the meanwhile we gain this distinct advantage



that he has not been repelled at the outset by what would naturally seem to him bizarre, repulsive or irreverent.

It is true however that this translation [Sri Aurobindo's translation] will not convey a precise, full and categorical knowledge of the truths which underlie the Upanishads. **To convey such knowledge is not the object of this translation, neither was it the object of the Upanishads themselves. It must always be remembered that these great treatises are simply the gate of the Higher Knowledge; there is much that lies behind the gate.** Srikrishna has indeed said that the knowledge in the Vedas is sufficient for a holy mind that is capable of knowing God, just as the water in a well is sufficient for a man's purpose though there may be whole floods of water all around. But this does not apply to ordinary men. The ordinary man who wishes to reach God through knowledge, must undergo an elaborate training. He must begin by becoming absolutely pure, he must cleanse thoroughly his body, his heart and his intellect, he must get himself a new heart and be born again; for only the twiceborn can understand or teach the Vedas. **When he has done this he needs yet four things before he can succeed, the Sruti or recorded revelation, the Sacred Teacher, the practice of Yoga and the Grace of God.** The business of the Sruti and especially of the Upanishads is to seize the mind and draw it into a magic circle, to accustom it to the thought of God and aspirations after the Supreme, to bathe it in certain ideas, surround it with a certain spiritual atmosphere; for this purpose it plunges & rolls the mind over & over in an ocean of marvellous sound thro' which a certain train of associations goes ever rolling. In other words it appeals through the intellect, the ear and the imagination to the soul. The purpose of the Upanishad cannot therefore be served by a translation; a translation at best prepares him for & attracts him to the original. But even when he has steeped himself



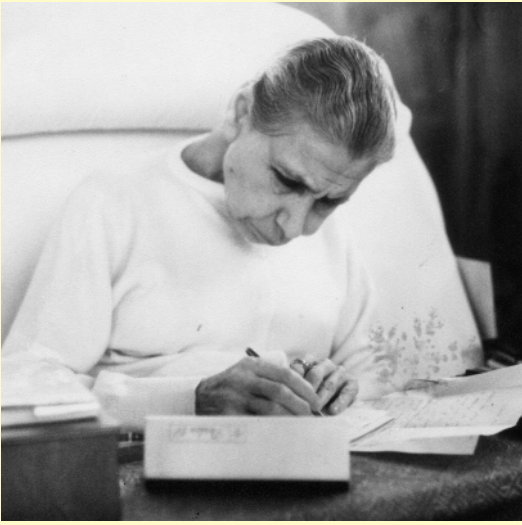
in the original, he may have understood what the Upanishad suggests, but he has not understood all that it implies, the great mass of religious truth that lies behind, of which the Upanishad is but a hint or an echo. For this he must go to the Teacher. "Awake ye, arise & learn of God seeking out the Best who have the knowledge." Hard is it in these days to find the Best; for the Best do not come to us, we have to show our sincerity, patience and perseverance by seeking them. And when we have heard the whole of the Brahmavidya from the Teacher, we still know of God by theory only; we must farther learn from a preceptor the practical knowledge of God, the vision of Him and attainment of Him which is Yoga and the goal of Yoga. And even in that we cannot succeed unless we have the Grace of God, for Yoga is beset with temptations not the least of which are the powers it gives us, powers which the ignorant call supernatural. **"Then must a man be very vigilant for Yoga, as it hath a beginning, so hath it an ending."** Only the Grace of God, the blessing of triumphant self-mastery that comes from long and patient accumulation of soul-experience, can keep us firm and help us over these temptations. "The Spirit is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning: but he whom the Spirit chooseth, he getteth the Spirit, and to him God discovereth His body." Truly does the Upanishad say "for sharp as a razor's edge is the path, difficult & hard to traverse, say the seers." Fortunately it is not necessary & indeed it is not possible for all to measure the whole journey in a single life, nor can we, or should we abandon our daily duties like Buddha and flee into the mountain or the forest. **It is enough for us to make a beginning.**

Sri Aurobindo (Kena and Other Upanishads, CWSA Vol. 18, pp. 163-170)

Please see the related Editorial, 'Max Muller and His Evolution from a Scholar to an India-lover', on page 4.



A Very Tiny Serpent



There is a great difference between pushing back a thing simply because one does not want it and changing the state of one's consciousness which makes the thing totally foreign to one's nature. Usually, when one has a movement one does not want, one drives it away or pushes it back, but one does not take the precaution of finding within oneself what has

served and still serves as a support for this movement, the particular tendency, the fold of the consciousness which enables this thing to enter the consciousness. If, on the contrary, instead of simply making a movement of reprobation and rejection, one enters deeply into one's vital consciousness and finds the support, that is, a kind of particular little vibration buried very deeply in a corner, often in a such a dark corner that it is difficult to find it there; if one starts hunting it down, that is, if one goes within, concentrates, follows as it were the trail of this movement to its origin, one finds something like a very tiny serpent coiled up, something at times quite tiny, not bigger than a pea, but very black and sunk very deeply.

And then there are two methods; either to put so intense a light, the light of a truth-consciousness so strong, that this tiny serpent will be dissolved; or else to catch the thing as with pincers, pull it out from its place and hold it up before one's consciousness. The first method is radical but one does not always have at his disposal this light of truth, so one cannot always use it. The second method can be taken, but it hurts; it hurts as badly as the extraction of a tooth; I do not know if you have ever had a tooth pulled out, but it hurts as much as that, and it hurts here, like that. [*Mother shows the centre of the*



chest and makes a movement of twisting]. And usually one is not very courageous. When it hurts very much, well, one tries to efface it like this [gesture] and that is why things persist. But if one has the courage to take hold of it and pull it until it comes out and to put it before himself, even if it hurts very much... to hold it up like this [gesture] until one can see it clearly, and then dissolve it, then it is finished.

The Mother ('The Great Adventure', pp. 68-69)

All the pages of The Mother's work, 'The Great Adventure', in Tara Didi's voice, have been uploaded on the YouTube channel of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. The link to the playlist is: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbJ59iL6vu-UXeufBeKQlUTwGf3GhZ9LJ>

Awareness means seeing the whole, perceiving the entire content and context of each moment. We can never grasp this entirely through thinking. But we can perceive it in its essence if we get beyond our thinking, to direct seeing, direct hearing, direct feeling. So mindfulness is seeing and knowing that you are seeing, hearing and knowing that you are hearing, touching and knowing that you are touching, going up the stairs and knowing that you are going up the stairs. You might respond, "Of course I know I am going up the stairs when I am going up the stairs," but mindfulness means not just knowing it as an idea, it means being with going up the stairs, it means moment-to-moment awareness of the experience. By practicing in this way, we can break loose from the automatic-pilot mode and gradually bring ourselves to live more in the present and know its energies fully. Then ... we can respond more appropriately to change and to potentially stressful situations, because we are aware of the whole and of our relationship to it.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophic Living, p. 438



Justice Goes Beyond Giving One What is His Due

Daniel Albuquerque

Instance

Aesop tells a story of a dying rich man who wanted to divide his possessions equally between his two sons. Since he knew that both his sons would fight among themselves for a greater share, he called up a notary to draw his last will and to declare who will execute it after his death. He wrote: "After my death my elder son should divide all my possessions into two portions the way he deems it fit to do. My younger son, however, should choose his share first. After this both would be at peace."

Observation, Sri Aurobindo

"What is the nature of this exchange? It is strife, eris, it is war, polemos! What is the rule and result of war? It is justice. How acts that justice? By a just tension and compensation of forces which produce the harmony of things and therefore, we presume, their stability."

"For if we see ourself in others, we shall not only be willing but delighted to yield them all that is due to them, and must shrink from wronging or doing hurt to them as naturally as we would shrink from hurting ourselves. The debts we owe to parents, family, friends... we shall discharge not as an irksome obligation, but as a personal pleasure."

Reproduced from 'The Call Beyond', 1998, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 40

—————*—————.



Love, Life and Death The Inner Turmoil Continues

Priya Pranav Gupta

*What are we doing on this earth?
How much time do we really have?
Why are we a part of the rat-race?
What is our real purpose?
Why do we spend our life accumulating possessions that we
leave behind?
What is the right way to live?*

*At times I wonder what is life?
Why can't we treat life and death alike?*

*Life thrives on attachments,
Death screams detachment.
Life creates relationships,
Death cuts off all the ties.*

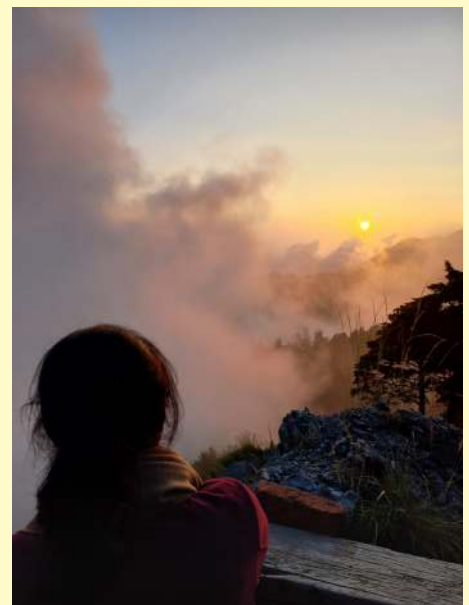
*Life says, "nurture me with love,"
Death is an ultimate calling from above.
Life says, "I want everything,"
Death says, "You own nothing."*

*Life goes in accumulation,
Death imposes renunciation.
Life is a celebration,
Death leads to frustration.*

*Life entangles,
Death de-tangles.
Life is all about I, me and mine,
Death reminds us to realign.*

*Life is Ego,
Death says, "Let go."
Life is a struggle,
Death, the last part of a jigsaw puzzle.*

*Life is awesome,
Death is gruesome.*





*Life says, "maintain the balance,"
Death throws us off-balance.*

*Death makes life unbearable,
I am torn apart.
How to live with memories,
I am yet to learn this art.*

*They say, "Love is the only way to live,"
Grief is the price for the love we give.
They say, "Love is a binding glue,"
Love unconditionally without further ado*

*Death will strike when our time will come,
You will be remembered for what you become.
Be the best, do your best,
Live in the moment, forget the rest.*

*Death is a gentle reminder,
Asks us to remove all blinders.
Live life as you must.
Be kind, compassionate and just.*

*Love yourself, love everyone
Life is short, death spares no one.
Pause, breathe, take a break,
Work on yourself, give more than you take.*

*Take care of everything around you,
Grow through what you go through.
Live with awareness, connect with the Supreme
Have faith when life pushes you to an extreme.*

*Surrender totally to the Divine will,
The chaos will settle, you will learn that skill.
Rediscover, Rebuild and Realign
It's all within you, connect to the Divine!*

Priya Pranav Gupta did a course on Teaching Yoga at Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, where she now teaches yoga. She also provides psychospiritual support to those going through a difficult phase of life, particularly to those going through the trauma of bereavement.



In this column, we try to answer three types of questions: 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 asking the question is kept confidential if the question is about a sensitive issue. The questions may be sent to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in.

Is Spirituality Impractical?

C wants to know:

Isn't spiritual life impractical? Can it work in today's world where everyone is corrupt, selfish and unprincipled?

Answer:

That is a very common question, which makes it a good and important question. First and foremost, we need not worry how everybody else is. Everybody reaps the fruits of what he sows as his karma. Karma includes not just actions but also thoughts and feelings. When, how and in what form the fruits will be reaped by each of us can, and should, be left to the Divine, with relief and pleasure. We should be content with minding our own business.

How we live does not have to be determined by how others are living. Much of mankind lives at the physical-vital level, motivated primarily by physical comforts and fleeting pleasures. If these motives are supported by enough energy and intellect, the person may achieve not only these, but also accumulate considerable wealth, power, name and fame. These are rewards that can be measured and seen, and bring happiness that is coupled with sorrow.

In spiritual life, the motive is spiritual growth. The key to spiritual growth is love. Love is expressed by giving what



we have to those who need it. By living a life based on this principle one may miss on quick material success. Not much material success may come, and that too rather slowly. But what are principles worth, if one is not prepared to pay a price for them? However, with a deeper understanding of life, it does not feel like a price paid. Although spiritual life is not motivated by rewards, rewards do come, but in another form. The rewards are joy that lasts, mental peace that lasts, and a sense of fulfilment. Fulfilment is the feeling that 'I do not need anything because I have everything'. Can any worldly achievement match that? Thus, spiritual life has its rewards – rewards that are intangible, unexpected and unforeseen; rewards that cannot be quantified; rewards that everyone wants but many miss them because they are looking for them at wrong places.



People have a keen sense of fairness.

Joseph Straub

Problems are opportunities in work clothes.

Henry Kaiser

Meaning and relationship are strands of connectedness. They weave your life as an individual into a larger tapestry, a larger whole, which you might say, actually gives your life its individuality.

Jon Kabat-Zinn ('Full Catastrophe Living', p. 220)



Feedback and Encouraging Words

Feedback on Sports Workshop for Teachers

Respected Baren bhai and Team,

I express my sincere gratitude for the outstanding effort and dedication you put into organizing the sports workshop. Your commitment to creating a valuable and enriching experience for all the participants did not go unnoticed.

The workshop was not only informative but also incredibly engaging. The choice of speakers, well-structured sessions, and the practical activities truly enhanced our understanding of sports and its various facets. Your passion for promoting sports and fostering a community of enthusiasts is truly commendable. The positive impact of the workshop extends far beyond the actual event as it has inspired many of us to further explore and embrace the world of sports.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks for your hard work and dedication. Your efforts have contributed significantly to our knowledge and appreciation of sports, and we are grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of such a well-executed workshop.

We look forward to any future events you may organize and appreciate your ongoing commitment to promoting excellence in the realm of sports.

Best Regards,

Mrs. Manjula Dani

Principal

Sri Rajeshwari Vidyaniketan

Hulkoti, Gadag District,

Karnataka

(Received in an email dated 28 November 2023)



Feedback from Vidya School

Dear Anju,

Greetings from Vidya School!

On behalf of VIDYA School, I would like to express our deepest gratitude for the incredible experience we had during our official trip to Madhuban, the Himalayan centre of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch in Talla Ramgarh. Your meticulous organization and warm hospitality made our stay truly unforgettable.

From the moment we arrived, the serene and tranquil atmosphere of the ashram embraced us, providing a perfect setting for reflection and rejuvenation. The accommodations were not just comfortable but also exuded a sense of peace and simplicity, allowing us to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of our daily lives.

The seamless coordination of all the arrangements, from lodging to meals and activities, did not go unnoticed. Your attention to detail was evident in every aspect of our stay. The delicious vegetarian meals prepared with love and care were not only a treat for our taste buds but also nourished our bodies and souls.

The meditation session led by the experienced instructor added a profound dimension to our trip. It was a rare opportunity for our staff to engage in self-reflection and mindfulness, promoting a sense of inner peace and well-being that will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on our work at VIDYA School.

The surroundings of Madhuban, with its breathtaking views of the Himalayas, provided a majestic backdrop to our time at the ashram. The serene walks, group discussions, and moments of



quiet contemplation allowed our team to bond in a way that is often challenging in the hustle of our daily routines.

Your warm hospitality and genuine care for our well-being created an environment that felt like a home away from home. It is rare to find someone so dedicated to making others feel welcome and at ease. As we return to our responsibilities at VIDYA School, we carry with us not just the memories of a beautiful trip but also a renewed sense of purpose and energy. The experience at Madhuban has left an indelible mark on each one of us, and we are sincerely grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of such a transformative journey.

Once again, thank you, Anju, for your exceptional hospitality, warmth, and the meticulous planning that made our stay at Aurobindo Ashram an experience of a lifetime. We look forward to the possibility of returning in the future and recommend your ashram to others seeking a similar enriching and rejuvenating experience.

Looking forward to meeting you in Gurgaon!

Thanks and regards,

Ila Sarin

Principal

Vidya School

*Block- S, Plot No 3126, Garden Estate, Sector- 24, DLF Phase-3,
Village Nathupur, Gurugram- 122002*

(in an email dated 29 November 2023)





Contact us

Our quarterly magazine in Hindi, '**Sri Aravind Karmadhara**', is also available on-line now, and may be viewed on our website www.sriarobindoashram.net.

For a free subscription to '**Sri Aravind Karmadhara**', please send an e-mail to sakarmdhara@gmail.com

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Note

In view of the Hundred and Fiftieth Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo on 15 August 2022, the Ashram is expanding its mailing list to reach out to more and more who may benefit from the teachings of the Master and the Mother. To get included in the Mailing List, please go to <http://erp.saaonline.net.in/addcontacts.cfm> to fill in a form, which will take you only a few minutes.



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Feedback

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