

THE CALL BEYOND

VOLUME 45 NO. 3

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Gratitude

There is nothing which gives you a joy equal to that of gratitude.

The Mother

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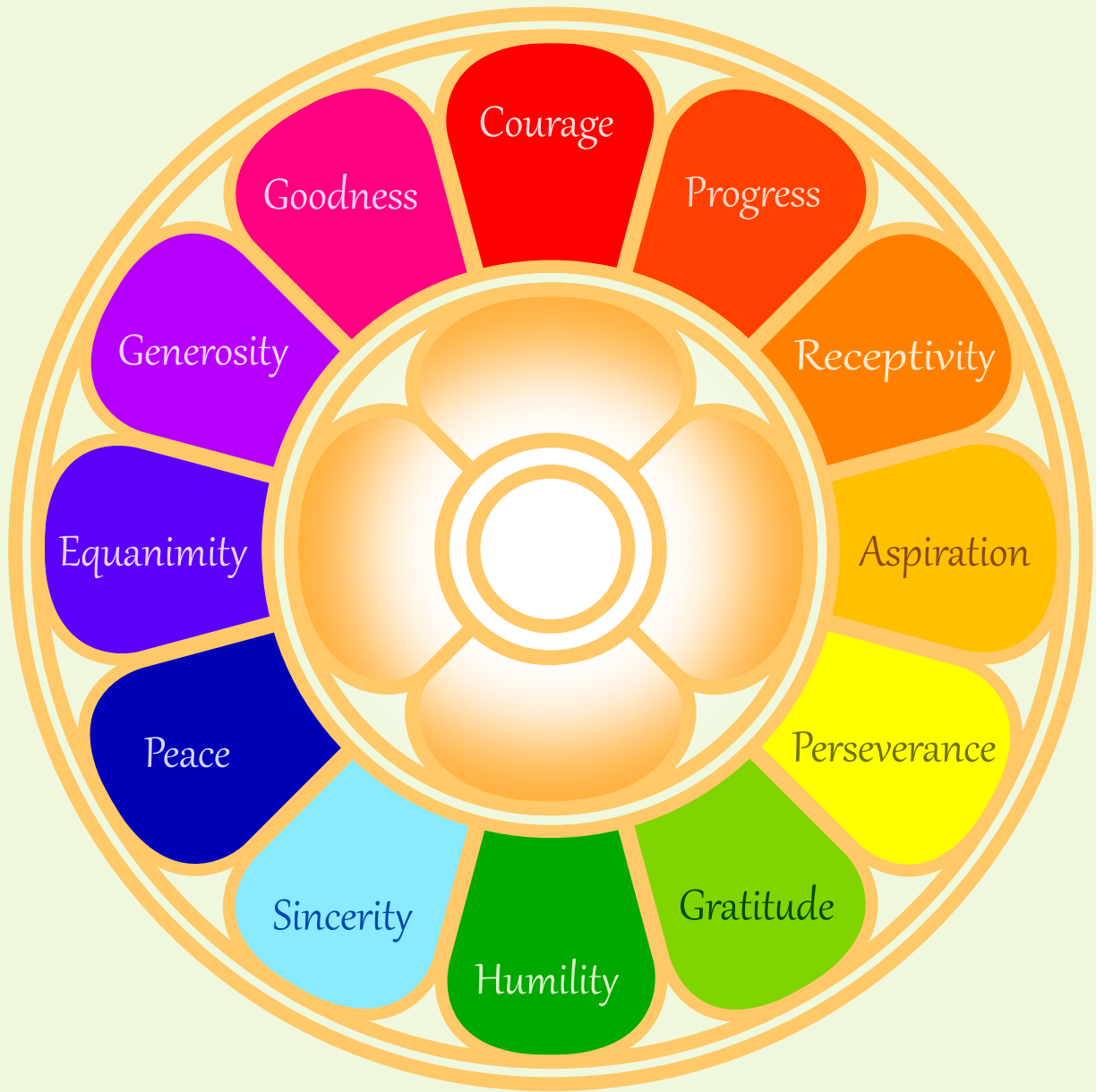
Acknowledgement

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The central circle represents the Divine Consciousness.

The four petals represent the four powers of the Mother.

The twelve petals represent the twelve powers of the Mother manifested for Her work.

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Gratitude

Be grateful for all ordeals, they are the shortest way to the Divine.

The Mother



GRATITUDE. Ipomoea carnea, the pink morning glory.

Gratitude is an attitude of thankfulness. There is much each one of us should be thankful for. Besides parents and teachers, who have done a lot for us, there are so many others who have helped us in helpless situations or showered undeserved kindness on us in the course of our lives. Above all, we should be grateful to God for

bringing in so many helpful instruments of His in our lives, and for His infinite love, mercy and forgiveness. Dada Vaswani was once asked whether counting sheep was a good way to fall asleep. He replied that counting our blessings would be better.

Gratitude incorporates several other virtues. A person with a giant-sized ego cannot be grateful. He is like a pet cat, who thinks that the master is nice to him because he (the cat) is so good. In contrast, a pet dog is always grateful because he thinks that the master is nice to him because he (the master) is very good. A person who is full of desires and ambitions will be always grumbling for more, rather than be grateful for what he has. As Om Swami has said, "Gratitude is valuing what you have and ambition is valuing what you may or may not have in the future. If you drown the voice of gratitude in the roars of your ambitions, all you will be left with is a great deal of noise and no music." Gratitude needs courage because

it is an indirect admission of our dependence on somebody else for something important. Gratitude is an indicator of generosity, because someone who is miserly even with a 'thank you' cannot be generous with anything else. Gratitude is an expression of love, as all forms of giving are. Gratitude needs sincerity and adherence to truth. In the absence of sincerity, it is easy to take credit for all that we possess, and forget the One who gave it to us in the first place. That is why, the best prayer is also probably the shortest. "Thank you, God," is a prayer that says it all without saying much.

We should be grateful to 'A' who gives us something. But 'A' could give it to us only because 'B' gave it to 'A'. And, it was 'C' who gave it to 'B', and so on. The Ultimate Giver is the One who has everything. Therefore, while we should thank 'A', we should not forget the Ultimate Giver who has actually given everything that anybody has ever received. The Mother has gone to the extent of saying that "our gratitude should go to the Divine and that as for men what is required is an attitude of goodwill, understanding and mutual help."

We should be grateful for praise, because given our human weaknesses, appreciation encourages us to keep doing good work. We should be even more grateful for criticism because that tells us the weaknesses that we have to overcome. Thus, those who criticize us give us very useful and uplifting homework. Those who are humble with us put our humility to test. Those who insult us put our equanimity to test. In the absence of opportunities, humility and equanimity remain idle ideals, which we can safely but erroneously assume we have in plenty. What we are can be quite different from what we think we are.

We should be grateful also when we give something. Without somebody to receive, how can we get the joy of giving. For example, the teachers give knowledge to their students, for

which the students should, of course, be grateful. But the teachers should also be grateful to the students who give them an opportunity to give knowledge. Similarly, doctors and nurses should be grateful to their patients who give them an opportunity to give care. And, parents should be grateful to their children who give them the opportunity to give what they have. In the ultimate analysis, the true purpose of life is fulfilled through love. Love is expressed by giving what we have to those who need it. The one who needs what we can give is giving us an opportunity to fulfill the purpose of our lives.

Gratitude and love are close cousins. Like love, gratitude is an attitude, a bent of mind, or a “vibration,” as the Mother calls it. It does not have to go from one person to another. It is the human mind that creates the illusion of the need for “two poles.” “When you enter into that vibration [of gratitude] in its purity, you realize immediately that it has the same quality as the vibration of love,” says the Mother.

The Mother narrates a story of a grand party going on in a celestial palace to which all the virtues had been invited. So many of them had turned up, dressed up in their resplendent robes. Last of all came a shy girl in a very simple white dress, who was let in by the guards rather reluctantly. As she walked into the party, the high and mighty virtues were all busy chatting with each other, and nobody seemed to take notice of her. Finally, Prudence stepped forward, told her that nobody at the party seemed to know her, and asked her who she was. The newcomer replied, “Alas! I am not surprised that I appear to be a stranger in this palace, for I am so rarely invited anywhere. My name is Gratitude.”

An earlier version published as a blog on Speaking Tree on 14 June 2013 under the title ‘Thank you: the best prayer’ Link: <https://www.speakingtree.in/blog/thank-you-the-best-prayer>

Love in Everyday Living

Debangshu Chaudhury

*Love must not cease to live upon the earth;
For Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent's angel here;
Love is man's lien on the Absolute.*

Sri Aurobindo (Savitri, Book 10, Canto 3, p. 633)

Apart from the almost unreal orderliness that marks the city of Singapore, there was another thing that took me by surprise – the number of strangers who would smile at you. On the roads, at the markets, in public transportations – if you had an eye contact with anyone, you could extend it with a smile. A gesture as simple as an unsolicited smile is very powerful. It has the strength to turn an ordinary day into a memorable one. It can calm a person down in one instant. It has the ability to momentarily evaporate tension. Smile brings in peace. It creates a bonding, a kind of trust between people. A smile has the ability to create an unspoken connection that could have lasting effects. Even after so many years, I can quite clearly remember the faces that extended courtesy to me with a smile. There were no reasons or purposes behind that action. I thought it be one of the most beautiful gestures requiring negligible effort. Smiling at someone not known to you. What a magnificent bridge between two souls!

In this regard, the Indian middle-class value system has often posed a slightly different opinion. Smiling at strangers is not taken as a friendly or even a sweet gesture. As children, we are in fact, taught to not smile at people unknown to us. It may send out wrong signals, we have often been told. While I am not going to deny or even negate this possibility, I unabashedly believe that smiling at a stranger may be the

easiest and the quickest way to spread goodness. A smile or a simple friendly nod at people unknown to us, I believe, has the power to reaffirm our faith in humanity and provide us with a great deal of hope. Of the foremost and basic expressions of love, one is just a smile. ++

Love brings about equilibrium. In our household, one of the simple yet effective ways of achieving this equilibrium lies in being just a little more empathetic in dealing with our domestic helpers. As radical as it would seem, this idea I feel is worth a thought – surprising your helper occasionally by cooking and having a meal with, or even partnering him/her on the chores. A gesture of this kind may sound ludicrous. But if practiced, I believe, it could well become a solid foundation for a trusting and a deep bond between two persons that could help both become better human beings. In this case, love extends itself into empathy. And empathy creates better understanding and equilibrium between two people who interact practically everyday. That in turn, creates smoother interactions and lesser friction, thereby enabling a better day-to-day functioning of the household. Wherever there arises better understanding, people often go out of their ways and bend their backs for each other, creating a more harmonious environment. Good behavior, I believe, can spark off a chain reaction of sorts; what you receive is what you give. Empathy is sure to arouse empathy. If this kind of love extends to our interactions in offices, where one is just a little bit more considerate of one's colleagues, specially subordinates, work related stress can get reduced, far greater coordination and understanding between the employees can be attained, thereby enabling greater output and a friendlier work environment.

Jostling for space creates stress. An area where an average person faces stress of extreme high levels is the road. If road behavior were to be treated as one of the benchmarks

of civility, we Indians wouldn't really be right up at the top. Having said that, I do see an opportunity here in making a positive change with a little bit of love. In this case, love would extend to courtesy, by 'giving way to others.' A little smile, better behavior, just a little consideration for a fellow road-user as we cross our paths, I believe, can go a long way in diminishing this stress. It may take practice but if we do inculcate a few changes in ourselves, I believe traffic stress can be tackled. Let us indulge in love on the road! Let us be considerate towards our fellow road-users. This is bound to make all of us respect the traffic rules just a little bit more. As we follow rules, there will form a better sense of discipline on the roads. Better discipline would result in lesser stress. And lesser traffic stress would definitely mean better traffic management. In turn, better traffic management would lead to reduction in cases of rage, accidents and casualties.

Essentially speaking, if we are able to add just a dash of love in our everyday interactions, it can be quite an accomplishment. Being polite and respectful is an empowering habit. Love usually works where most of the other methods have failed. A little bit of love can make big changes. And a little bit of love costs almost nothing. Repercussions of love can raise hopes and make the act of living stress-free to quite an extent. Love in everyday life is a choice that we make. And let this love reach out not only to our fellow humans but also to the animals and plants in the form of compassion. Let us be gentle as we observe nature more closely. Let us find time to soak in a sunrise, the chirping of birds, change in weather, a new leaf or a flower, newborn stray pups in our locality. Let us be loud and clear with our thanking to the local colony guard, to the parking attendant, to the sales boy at the mall, to the taxi driver, to the car cleaner, to the delivery boy. This kind of love is sure to benefit one and all in our society. If we give this

love a good deal of practice in our day-to-day lives, we are bound to find ourselves in a far greater harmony within our community. The only way to rekindle the romance in living that may have gotten lost in the hustle bustle of the city life is to be able to give and receive Love in our everyday living.

*Thus shall the earth open to divinity
And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
And meet the deity in common things.*

Sri Aurobindo (Savitri, Book 11, Canto 1, pp. 710-711)

By quoting the example of Singaporeans, I do not mean to put one type of society on a higher platform of civility than the other. And many would argue that an orderly society is a product of state-imposed discipline. Be that as it may, what I wish to emphasize is that an orderly situation is surely more desirable than a chaotic one. There's harmony in it. In orderliness greater number of people have the opportunity to flourish. At the same time, I would not say that orderliness is a direct byproduct of love. But I can safely say that by extending love to chaotic and crowded scenarios, the chance of gaining order becomes greater. And this becomes beneficial for one and all.

Harmony is one phase of the law whose spiritual expression is love.

- James Allen

Debangshu Chaudhury, an alumnus of The Mother's International School, did the Course on Teaching Yoga in the Ashram in 2019. This article was submitted by him as an assignment to meet one of the requirements of the course

Be Grateful When All is Well



People are not aware of the workings of Grace except when there has been some danger, that is, when there has been the beginning of an accident or the accident has taken place and they have escaped it. Then they become aware. But never are they aware that if, for instance, a journey or anything whatever, passes without any accident, it is an infinitely higher Grace. That is, the harmony is established in such a way that nothing can happen. But that seems to them quite natural. When people are ill and get well quickly, they are full of gratitude; but never do they think of being grateful when they are well; and yet that is a much greater miracle! In collective accidents, what is interesting is exactly the proportion, the sort of balance or disequilibrium, the combination made by the different atmospheres of people.

The Mother (CWM, 5:406)

A Defence of Indian Culture



The sculpture and painting of ancient India have recently been rehabilitated with a surprising suddenness in the eyes of a more cultivated European criticism in the course of that rapid opening of the western mind to the value of oriental thought and creation which is one of the most significant signs of a change that is yet only in the beginning. There have been here and there minds of a fine perception and profound originality who have seen in a return to the ancient and persistent freedom of oriental art, its refusal to be shackled or debased by an imitative realism, its fidelity to the true theory of art as an inspired interpretation of the deeper soul values of existence lifted beyond servitudes to the outsides of Nature, the right way to the regeneration and liberation of the aesthetic and creative mind of Europe. And actually, although much of Western art runs still along the old grooves, much too of its most original recent creation has elements of a guiding direction which brings it nearer to the eastern mentality and understanding. It might then be possible for us to leave it at that and wait for time to deepen this new vision and vindicate more fully the truth and greatness of the art of India.

To appreciate our own artistic past at its right value we have to free ourselves from all subjection to a foreign outlook and see our sculpture and painting, as I have already suggested about our architecture, in the light of its own profound intention and greatness of spirit. When we so look at it, we shall be able to see that the sculpture of ancient and mediaeval India claims its place on the very highest levels of artistic achievement.

The more ancient sculptural art of India embodies in visible form what the Upanishads threw out into inspired thought and the Mahabharata and Ramayana portrayed by the word in life.

Once we admit this standard, it is impossible to speak too highly of the profound intelligence of its conditions which was developed in Indian sculpture, of the skill with which its task was treated or of the consummate grandeur and beauty of its masterpieces.

Sri Aurobindo (In the Arya, Vol. 6, No. 8, 15 March 1920, pp. 482-496)



It is very difficult to keep up your gratitude; for a time it comes very strongly and again it goes back. The Divine can go on tolerating everything in spite of your ingratitude because He knows fully the how and why and wherefore of everything. He knows why you are doing a certain thing. He knows the full working and that is why He can tolerate it.

The Mother

How to Be a Better Parent

William E. Homan, M.D.

No other task in the world is so complicated and challenging, as that of raising children. Yet a career spent with youngsters and their problems has led me to this haunting conclusion: each set of new parents approaches the formidable assignment of raising humans with the least imaginable training and preparation. One is apparently assumed to come to the job of being a parent divinely endowed with knowledge and experience. And when we stumble along the path, and the resulting product is less than perfect, the world feels free to point an accusing finger at us.

How, then, does the perplexed parent avoid stumbling? What guidelines will help make him be a good parent?

To me, the good parent is simply one who more than half the time does the right thing instead of the wrong. He knows that thousands of factors contribute to and shape the final personality of a growing human being. But he realizes that in the long run only three basic needs are absolutely essential: LOVE, DISCIPLINE, INDEPENDENCE.

LOVE: Of the three fundamental requirements, the first – love – is the most important. And it is unique in that there can never be too much of it. An excess of discipline, or too much independence, can be harmful. But of love, the more the merrier.

The type of love a child needs is the kind that says, “I love you, Joe, not for what you just do or don’t do, but just because you’re you.” There is no doubt that most parents feel this sort of affection for their children, but don’t know how to express it effectively. Three precepts may prove helpful:

- *Disapprove of what a child does, not of who he is.*
- *Praise a child more for being than for doing.*
- *Communicate your love. It is not enough to feel love; you must make the recipient aware of your feeling. This can be done by a thousand little acts and gestures:*
 - *Tucking a child into bed at night, while forbearing to review his misdeeds of the day.*
 - *Offering a comforting arm or lap even though he's not hurt badly.*
 - *Being visibly proud of him when he has given you no earthly reason even to admit that he's yours.*
 - *Perhaps the most elegant way of all to communicate your love is to praise a child out loud to strangers, to relatives, to your mate, in the child's presence.*

DISCIPLINE: *Discipline is important simply because we live in an organized society where, if you have not learned life's requirements at an early age, you will be taught them later, not by those whose love tempers the lesson but by strangers who couldn't care less about the harms they do to your personality.*

"Discipline" and "punishment" are not synonymous. Punishment suggests hurting, paying someone back for a wrong committed. Discipline implies an action directed towards a goal. You discipline with the intention of helping the recipient to improve himself.

The basic rules of discipline apply equally to any teaching situation.

Establish authority: *Now don't panic, Mom and Dad. Though you may know very well that you are not absolute authorities, you must assume the disguise of authority. Here is the key: an authority is only a fellow who knows more about a subject than the person he is addressing.*

Avoid disciplining in matters which you cannot enforce. For example, it is unwise to instruct a child to “Eat your food,” “Go to sleep,” “Stop crying,” because you cannot possibly enforce the lesson.

Be consistent: Unpredictable discipline on the part of a single parent, or inconsistency between parents, produces a sense of confusion and panic within the child, so that he ultimately says, “The heck with it,” and gives up trying to follow any teaching.

Criticize the act, not the child: There is a mountain of difference between “You are a bad boy for kicking me in the shin,” and “Kicking in the shins is bad, and I won’t tolerate it.” If this seems like hair splitting, let me emphasize that this difference represents one of the major mistakes that parents make in raising children. *It is relatively harmless to attack another person’s action; after all, these he can always learn to change. But it is disastrous to attack his self-esteem.*

Don’t explain or bribe: Much nonsense has gone into the myth that one should explain to child as one disciplines him. The familiar refrain – “Anita, come in for dinner.” “Why?” “Because I say so.” – may seem hard for the child to accept. But ... *“explanations” should come only after Anita has long since mastered the fact that when Mother calls her, she had better come.*

Bribery is equally dangerous. When you say, “Bob, I am proud of the way you behaved in front of Aunt Agatha today”, you are *rewarding* Bob. When you say, “Bob, if you behave well in front of Aunt Agatha today, I’ll be proud of you,” you are offering a *bribe*. *The first is legitimate; the latter, destructive.* For a bribe, like an explanation, thrust upon the child the necessity of choosing.

INDEPENDENCE: The third factor indispensable to the development of the normal personality is the emergence of independence. The nature of independence is such that:

- *It cannot be forced.*
- *It should not be smothered.*
- *In an area that would result in permanent, serious harm to the child, it must be prohibited.*

So there it is: the triad of requirements necessary for the development of emotional health. Give away your love to your children, and you will receive back more love than you can encompass. Discipline your children to recognize reality, and in the doing you will enrich your own understanding. Welcome their evolving independence and you will be supported by the strength you have helped them attain.

From *LIVE BETTER, FEEL BETTER*, R.D.I. Print and Publishing Pvt. Ltd.

Excerpted from *The Call Beyond*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 39-40, 1995



The ego thinks of what it wants and has not. This is its constant preoccupation.

The soul is aware of what it is given and lives in endless gratitude.

The Mother

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.

The Dilemma of the Outcome

J wants to know:

I understand that I should not be attached to the outcome of my work. But what should I do if my employers expect a certain outcome?

Answer: There are layers of outcome, as there are layers of truth. The outcome expected by employers is one layer of the outcome, the outcome that a spiritual worker seeks is another layer; the two may or may not be compatible. Let me clarify a bit, to bring out what I am trying to get at.

1. The outcome set by the employer as the 'target' is likely to be a concrete and measurable outcome. The outcome that matters to the spiritual seeker is spiritual growth, which is not something concrete or measurable.
2. For the two outcomes to be compatible, the minimum requirement is that the outcome desired by the employer does not require means that are legally or morally unacceptable; ideally, the means required should be in agreement with the voice of the worker's psychic being.
3. Assuming that the two goals are compatible, the worker goes about the task as an instrument of the Divine, putting his heart and soul into the work because it has to be offered to the Divine, *expects* the outcome that he and his employer have agreed upon, *but is not attached* to the outcome. Being

not attached means that he does not insist on the outcome, and is not upset if the outcome is different from what was intended. If the outcome falls short of the expectation, or is different from the intention, the worker may lose the job. Then for the worker, that is the outcome willed by the Divine, and he accepts even that happily because he trusts that the Divine Will works always for the best.

4. If the outcome expected by the employer requires wrong means to be used, the worker on the spiritual path has to make up his mind and assert himself even if it means losing the job. He will either succeed in influencing his environment positively, or lose the job. Either way, he will not let his consciousness slide downwards.

A Tale of Divine Gratitude

The Mother met Sri Aurobindo for the first time on March 29, 1914. Following instructions given to her, at 3.30 p.m. she approached the house where Sri Aurobindo was living. She asked a man in the street, "Where does Aurobindo Ghose live?" The man silently pointed to the door of the "Guest House". The Mother ascertained this man's name and address. Thereafter, every month for the rest of his life, she sent him a fixed amount of money through Kameshwar. Later he was also permitted to see them on Darshan Days. She said that she took care of him out of gratitude because he had pointed out to her the residence of the Lord.

More Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, p. 37.

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 readers are welcome, and may be printed at the editor's discretion after editorial revision.

Write a Prayer Everyday

You should write daily a prayer, expressing your aspiration, or your gratitude, or your adoration, the progress you want to make. It does not need to be long, only a few lines; and it will help you to understand yourself. You will write as if you were speaking to him and to me directly and thus you will create an intimacy with him and myself. ...

The Mother (White Roses, p. 35)



The attitude of grateful is really neglected, an act that is not found in the world. At least it is very rare.

The Mother

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was 'thank you', that would suffice.

Meister Eckhart

Gratitude is a heightened and receptive spiritual state.

Julia Cameron

Feedback & Encouraging Words

Feedback on Orientation to Integral Yoga, 18 & 19 January 2020

The programme was brilliantly put together. I loved the simplicity with which the mentor spoke about the topics at hand. As a health and wellness journalist for around 10 years now, I believe sessions such as these are the need of the hour. Our lifestyle can be the blessing or the bane of our existence, making it of utmost importance. Simplifying it and bringing facets of corrective lifestyle measures are of paramount importance.

Regi George

The course was a very good and holistic combination of yogasanas, pranayamas, lectures on Integral Yoga and Stress Management, music, walk and food. It was a unique blend of all these things and thus, very comprehensive, useful and practical. The self-assessment questionnaire too is a unique addition to the course. I have not come across a course with all these ingredients and components. I enjoyed the course – it was relaxing and very therapeutic. The Ashram is doing very good, commendable work. Hats off to you all.

Dr. (Mrs.) Kaushikee

Thank you so much for such an informative, clear and helpful workshop. I am very excited about exploring and practising all new learnings from this program. I leave this workshop feeling more hopeful and positive about my own life, and being more loving and compassionate towards my family as well as strangers. Thank you so much for designing such a beautifully structured program.

Manjri Sewak

The program has left a remarkable and lasting impression.

Pawan Saluja

I am a student of Standard VIII in Laxman Public School. I had a lot of fun and enjoyment. In the first session covering ways of life, inner soul and our goals, I learned new things that are not taught in school. All sessions were great. The yoga session was good as it had exercises that can be practised at home. The music session as well as the food at breakfast and lunch were great. The mentor had worked hard to make this effort. I am lucky to be here with others. Hoping to come over for sessions in the future too.

Nikhilesh Valluru

I attended the program with both my children. It was an opportunity for me to be away from the regular routine and hectic life. It was a very calm, relaxing and well-planned schedule. The mentor was very effective in his sessions of Goal of Life and Stress Management. We also took a tour of the Ashram and we spent some enriching and enlightening time here. The yoga session was also very good. The breakfast provided was nourishing. I am very thankful for being a part of this program. Hope to have a change in my life.

C. Santhi

The session on stress management was deeply nourishing. It met my needs of peace of mind, clarity, connection, community and joy. I am very grateful for the wisdom, energy and sharing. I would also like to offer my energy and time for the Ashram.

Charnita

The self-assessment questionnaire tool helped me in identifying areas that need some attention in my life for a fulfilling and healthy life. I feel very grateful as it has offered me clear indication and direction to improve my life. The session on Stress Management was very helpful too. It has provided me a framework to take care of myself in stressful situations.

Jagdeep Singh

I liked the program as we could not only do the yogasanas and pranayamas but also got to know about the essence of life and stress management. It was a correct decision for me to spend my weekend doing the program.

Kartik Sai Valluru

On reaching the Ashram, I felt the positive aura of the place and the peace as the peacocks roamed around the Ashram with no fear of humans, only peace and joy. The session was comprehensive, involving in-depth and precise narration. The self-assessment questionnaire helped me to realize that my soul too needed attention. The food was nice and the place is lovely. Thanks.

Ikrao Singh Arora

Excellent workshop. Deep understanding of complex issues was presented in a very simple way that is easy to understand. Thank you for organizing this.

Rahul Garg

It was a wonderfully conducted programme and a complete relaxation package. The yoga session in the morning helped in relaxing the body. The music sessions were very mystical and rejuvenating. The self-assessment questionnaire made me understand the parameters of healthy lifestyle where I am lacking. First aid in stress management is the best part of the program. Thank you.

Pallavi Shukla

Swaranjali

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Note

In view of two major events coming: the Hundredth Anniversary of the Mother's Final Arrival in Pondicherry on 24 April 2020, and 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.

Feedback

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