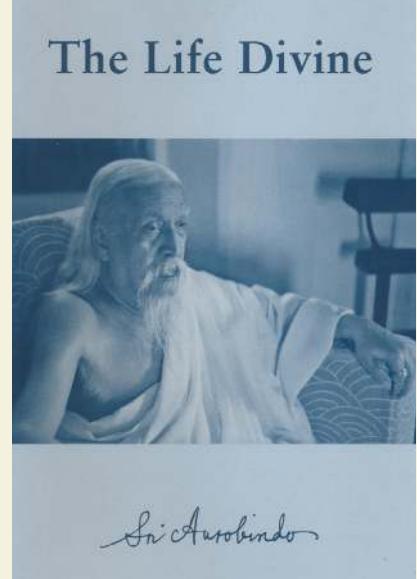
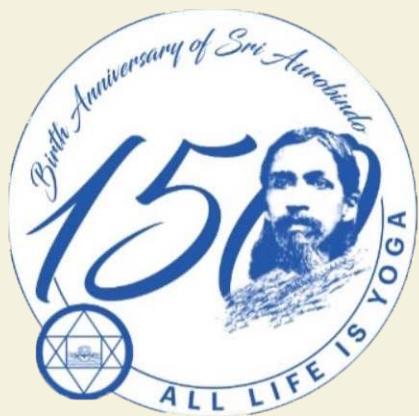




The Call Beyond





Highlights

The Life Divine Page 5

Selections from 'The Life Divine' Page 11

Some FAQs on 'The Life Divine' Page 35



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SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM - DELHI BRANCH

Contents

Editorial

- *Celebrating 150 Years of Sri Aurobindo* 4

Book of the Month

- *The Life Divine* 5

Words of the Master

- *Selections from 'The Life Divine'* 11

Words of the Mother

- *Sri Aurobindo's Yoga* 22

Article

- *Where is the Time for Spirituality?* 24

Twenty-Five Years Ago

- *Why did such a lovely flower fade away so early?* 26

Magnet

- *Nirodbaran – A Life Divine!* 31

May I Help You

- *Some FAQs on The Life Divine* 35

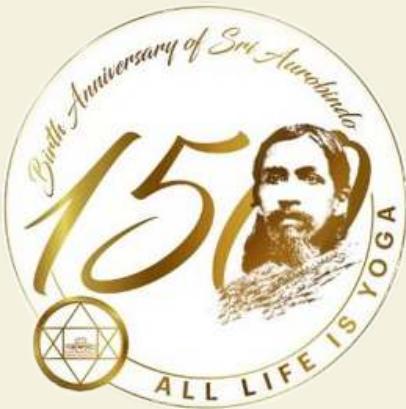
Notice Board

- *Forthcoming Events* 40

- *Contact us* 41



Celebrating 150 Years of Sri Aurobindo (1872-2022)



Who was Sri Aurobindo? **A freedom fighter**, who shook the British Empire within five years? **A poet**, who could give poetic expression to whispers from the heavens? **A writer**, who would have honoured the Nobel Prize for Literature, if it had been conferred on him? **A linguist**, who raised the level of the English

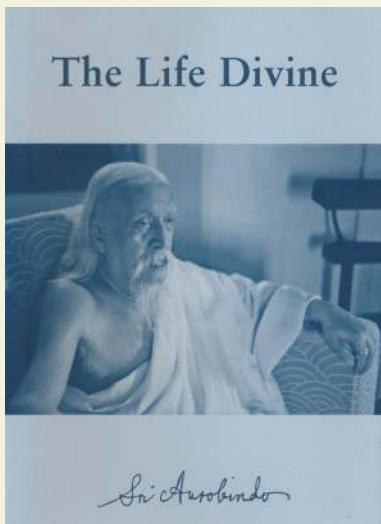
language to that of Sanskrit, and deciphered the symbolism of the Veda? **A yogi**, who gave the world Integral Yoga, a powerful synthesis that incorporated the major traditional systems of yoga, and went beyond all of them? **A rishi** (a seer) and a **muni** (a thinker) rolled in one? Or, **a spiritual master**, radical, rational and revolutionary, far ahead of his times, who is today the Guru to millions in the world?

Sri Aurobindo was all this, and more. Due to our limitations, *The Call Beyond*, however, will concentrate on Sri Aurobindo, the writer. In the category of spiritual literature rooted in the Indian tradition, the original of which was written in the English language, Sri Aurobindo's works belong to a class apart, both in quantity and quality. In his works, Sri Aurobindo has given nothing short of a prescription for sculpting humanity into a new shape that would be beyond recognition. Even through the works that have their origin in the *Arya*, which were written over a period of just six years (1914-1920), he has created enough homework for the world to stay busy with for several centuries.

The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA) run into 36 volumes. The humble offering of *The Call Beyond*, however, would be limited to bringing you every month just the glimpses of one of the works of Sri Aurobindo.



The Life Divine



In the modern world, spirituality has become a handy word for saving atheists from humiliation in a world of believers, and saving believers from the embarrassment of getting dubbed as irrelevant and obsolete. If there is one book that can help both the confirmed atheists and diehard believers, and unite both in a truth higher than either of them could imagine, it is Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*. *The Life Divine*

has been able to do this because Sri Aurobindo was a unique and rare combination. He was both a *rishi* (seer) and a *muni* (thinker). He had experienced the Highest Truth, and was also an intellectual genius.

The Life Divine is based on Sri Aurobindo's own experience of the highest, widest and deepest Truth. But *The Life Divine* also questions that experience. It rationalizes that experience. It looks at that experience in every conceivable manner in which that experience has been looked at, and also in a manner in which it has never so far been looked at.

Reading *The Life Divine* is itself an experience. It is a humbling experience for any rationalist who had taken a firm and 'final' stand on matters spiritual, and was proud of it. *The Life Divine* is an exercise in logic. It is a lesson in the right way to argue. In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo argues for a point of view opposite to his own. He does it better than his opponents could have done. He argues why that point of view also has a certain logic behind it. He argues why that point of view is a natural corollary of both logic and experience. He argues why that point of view is tempting to adopt. And then comes a 'but', which demolishes that point of view using still more incisive



logic. He then makes a case for his own point of view that does not suffer from the pitfalls of the other point of view. He makes such a powerful case for looking at the highest spiritual experience his way that one who understands what he is saying will never feel the need to look any other way.

What is *The Life Divine* about?

The Life Divine starts with the assertion that the one human aspiration that refuses to die, the aspiration that returns after each banishment, is “the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss.” Then it goes on to discuss the two poles of consciousness. At one pole is the denial of what is not in keeping with ordinary experience. ‘If something is not seen, it does not exist’ is the stand taken by the materialist. At the other pole is the refusal to see reality in ordinary everyday experience, but to accept instead what is Beyond it as the sole Reality, because only That Reality is Imperishable and Unchanging. This is the stand taken by the ascetic because he is so enamoured of the Absolute Reality that he dismisses ordinary everyday experience as a mere dream. Sri Aurobindo finds logic in both the ‘denial of the materialist’ and the ‘refusal of the ascetic’, but also explains why he accepts neither.

But Sri Aurobindo does not continue with mere intellectual arguments. Then he goes on to describe the experience that makes the Omnipresent Reality real to the person. That is why the experience is called Realization! The One Existential has the freedom to manifest or not. Even after manifesting in forms that we know, or can know by exploring the material universe, existence does not get limited to these forms. The Existential continues to exist beyond all manifestation. Further, since it is the Existential that manifests in the material universe, Its Consciousness is all-pervasive. However, the extent to which the Consciousness is expressed is restricted by the capacity of the material object. Non-living matter expresses very little; living



creatures much more. Among living creatures, man expresses more than other creatures. Thus, although the Consciousness of all forms is the same, Its expression is limited by the limitations of the form. The limitation creates ignorance, and ignorance creates incapacity. The by-products of ignorance are desire, suffering and death.

However, the progression from Matter to Man indicates at least three things. *First*, there is an evolutionary thrust that has led to a progressively greater expression of the Supreme Consciousness of the Creator. *Secondly*, since Man also expresses only a small fraction of the Consciousness, evolution has not stopped with Man. Finally, Man is the only creature who has the aspiration as well as the capacity to evolve while living on earth. Therefore, further evolution need not depend entirely on the ‘spontaneous’ thrust. **Man can collaborate with the unmistakable trend built into Its creation by the Creator. Thus, evolution beyond Man can be accelerated by Man.**

There is much in *The Life Divine* for the scientist. There is an ascending four-fold order of knowledge: separative knowledge by indirect contact; separative knowledge by direct contact; derivative knowledge by intimate direct contact; and knowledge by identity. The scientist can easily see and admit that scientific knowledge belongs primarily to the first two of these. That is one way of looking at the limitations of science. There is also plenty of discussion on the possibilities, province and potential of reason; and at the same time a reasoned discussion on the limitations of reason, and hence the necessity to go beyond reason. Sri Aurobindo excludes from a thorough and rational discussion neither Agnosticism nor Atheism, and acknowledges the merits as well as contributions of both without agreeing with them.

There is much in *The Life Divine* also for a psychologist. What is below the conscious level could be a carry-over from the past, but it can also be a precursor to what is yet to evolve.



The eminent psychologist, Professor Indra Sen, discovered in *The Life Divine* answers to the questions that decades of his study and his conversations with Carl Jung had not been able to answer. Dr. Indra Sen gave up his Professorship at the University in 1945 to go and stay at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, and went on to coin the term Integral Psychology and publish on the subject a classic based largely on *The Life Divine*.

The Life Divine has a very thorough treatment of the puzzling interrelated topics of Karma and Rebirth. The treatment is complex because the subject cannot be simplified! Simplified versions of the subject are responsible for the discrepancies that are often pointed out, and used as the justification for dismissing the ideas as superstitious. If the discrepancies have to be resolved, one also has to be prepared to digest a certain amount of complexity. However, one relatively simple idea is in order. **If the goal of human existence is the level of consciousness where the Divine can be experienced by identity, and the distance from the lowest human consciousness to the goal cannot be covered in a single lifetime, then rebirth becomes a logical necessity.** It is the variety of experiences collected by the soul in each life that form the material for the progress. If the material is used well, and that is a big 'if', even then a whole lifetime is not enough. The number of lives required becomes much more because the material is underused, misused and abused with amazing frequency, thanks to the temptations and justifications created by human ignorance. The ignorance is seven-fold, as discussed in great detail in yet another chapter of *The Life Divine*.

Human ignorance creates three major difficulties. First, the knowledge is partial; secondly, the knowledge is distorted, as partial knowledge generally is; and finally, man's body, life and mind are constantly at war. Body, life and mind are our



tools, which are generally unable and unwilling to connect to the Supreme Source of Knowledge available within, and thus end up pushing and pulling man in diverse directions. When man does connect, at least sparingly and sporadically, with that Source, it has a tendency not to trust it. It has a tendency to fall back on the sources habitually relied upon, although not trusted and true. The reference here is to Intuition, which if identified correctly, is a higher tool of knowledge and guidance than the Mind. Higher still than Intuition is the Overmind, and still higher is Supermind.

The Life Divine brings out not only the difficulties arising from ignorance but also the way out to liberation. The process consists of conscious living that leads to two successive or partly simultaneous transformations, psychic and spiritual. Psychic transformation depends upon conscious contact with the psychic being, and organizing one's life around it. Thus, this transformation is, at least apparently, personal effort, and leads to an ascent of consciousness. Spiritual transformation is the descent of the divine Light and Force into the being. Ascent prepares the soil for the descent. **Ascent is a willful weakening of the human weaknesses to attract the divine invasion called descent!** The process of transformation is completed by Supramental transformation, which cannot even begin till the previous two have completed their work, and thereby prepared the vessel for manifesting the highest evolutionary principle that had not manifested on earth till Sri Aurobindo and the Mother worked towards this end.

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy is couched deeply in the idea of evolution of consciousness. Man is a highly evolved mental being. The earth is now poised for the next leap in evolution, which will lead to the manifestation of a level higher than the mental. It is this new level of unfoldment of the Divine which has been termed the Supramental by



Sri Aurobindo. When the Supramental starts manifesting on earth on a significant scale, the human nature would change. As a result, the world will no longer be a place of misery and suffering. The human being with the Supramental Consciousness would not be a human being, but a Gnostic Being. Sri Aurobindo gives in *The Life Divine* a glimpse of the Gnostic Being and the world inhabited by Gnostic Beings. The description is an ecstatic experience that transports the reader to a world brimming with Bliss and Beatitude.

Closing thoughts

All the ideas in *The Life Divine* cannot even be enumerated in a brief article. *The Life Divine* leaves nothing out that could arouse the curiosity of anyone inclined towards an intellectual view of spirituality. Be it occultism or the universes other than ours, it is all there in it, in the right measure, with the necessary caveats and cautions. *The Life Divine* is hardly a book; it is a scripture. Scriptures which have the experiences of a rishi are called the Upanishads. ***The Life Divine is a modern Upanishad in the English language.*** But an Upanishad need not have a philosophy emerging from the experiences described. *The Life Divine* has also a philosophy emerging from the experiences of Maharshi Sri Aurobindo. *The Life Divine* does not merely knit a philosophy based on the experiences; it builds the philosophy block by block, clearing the way by taking a well-informed although critical, but sincere and sympathetic look, at previous philosophies that have emerged from peak spiritual experiences. Sri Aurobindo shuns dogma, and does not impose any dogma on anyone. He gives his insights, he shares with the reader the insights of many more, and leaves the reader to make up his mind. But rare is the mind that does not get hypnotized by Sri Aurobindo. The result is that, like Arjuna in the Gita, the reader just surrenders to Sri Aurobindo in a state of sweet supplication and desireless devotion.



Selections from '*The Life Divine*'*

Man: A Crucial Step in Evolution

It must be observed that the appearance of human mind and body on the earth marks a crucial step, a decisive change in the course and process of the evolution; it is not merely a continuation of the old lines. Up till this advent of a developed thinking mind in Matter evolution had been effected, not by the self-aware aspiration, intention, will or seeking of the living being, but subconsciously or subliminally by the automatic operation of Nature. ... But in man the necessary change has been made, — the being has become awake and aware of himself; there has been made manifest in Mind its will to develop, to grow in knowledge, to deepen the inner and widen the outer existence, to increase the capacities of the nature. **Man has seen that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own; the evolutionary oestrus is there in his parts of mind and life, the aspiration to exceed himself is delivered and articulate within him: he has become conscious of a soul, discovered the self and spirit.** In him, then, the substitution of a conscious for a subconscious evolution has become conceivable and practicable, and it may well be concluded that the aspiration, the urge, the persistent endeavour in him is a sure sign of Nature's will for a higher way of fulfilment, the emergence of a greater status.

(*Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 875-876*)

Man is Vaguely Aware Of God

Man as he is is not sufficient to himself, nor separate, nor is he the Eternal and the All; therefore by himself he cannot be the explanation of the cosmos of which his mind, life and body are so evidently an infinitesimal detail. The visible cosmos too, he finds, is not sufficient to itself, nor does it explain itself even by its unseen material forces; for there is too much that he finds both in the world and in himself which is beyond them and



of which they seem only to be a face, an epidermis or even a mask. Neither his intellect, nor his intuitions, nor his feeling can do without a One or a Oneness to whom or to which these world-forces and himself may stand in some relation which supports them and gives them their significance. He feels that there must be an Infinite which holds these finites, is in, behind and about all this visible cosmos, bases the harmony and interrelation and essential oneness of multitudinous things. His thought needs an Absolute ... a creating Power or Force or a Being who originates and upholds all these innumerable beings in the universe. Let him call it what he will, he must arrive at a Supreme, a Divine, a Cause, an Infinite and Eternal, ... or an All to which everything perpetually and invisibly amounts and without which they could not be.

(*Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine'*, CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 716-717)

Spiritual Experience Through The Lens of Reason

When we come to the experience of the spiritual which is itself the whole or contains the whole in itself, our mind carries there too its segmenting reason and the definitions necessary to a finite cognition; it cuts a line of section between the infinite and the finite, the spirit and its phenomena or manifestations, and dubs those as real and these as unreal. But an original and ultimate consciousness embracing all the terms of existence in a single integral view would see the whole in its spiritual essential reality and the phenomenon as a phenomenon or manifestation of that reality. If this greater spiritual consciousness saw in things only unreality and an entire disconnection with the truth of the spirit, it could not have — if it were itself a Truth-consciousness — any reason for maintaining them in continuous or recurrent existence through all Time: if it so maintains them, it is because they are based on the realities of the spirit. But, necessarily, when thus integrally seen, the phenomenal reality would take on another appearance than when it is viewed by the reason



and sense of the finite being; it would have another and deeper reality, another and greater significance, another and more subtle and complex process of its movements of existence. The canons of reality and all the forms of thought created by the finite reason and sense would appear to the greater consciousness as partial constructions with an element of truth in them and an element of error...

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 490-491)

What is Real And What is Unreal?

It is our first premiss that the Absolute is the supreme reality; but the issue is whether all else that we experience is real or unreal. A distinction is sometimes made between being and existence, and it is supposed that being is real but existence or what manifests as such is unreal. But this can stand only if there is a rigid distinction, a cut and separation between the uncreated Eternal and created existences; the uncreated Being can then be taken as alone real. This conclusion does not follow if what exists is form of Being and substance of Being; it would be unreal only if it were a form of Non-Being, asat, created out of the Void, *sunya*. **The states of existence through which we approach and enter into the Absolute must have their truth, for the untrue and unreal cannot lead into the Real: but also what issues from the Absolute, what the Eternal supports and informs and manifests in itself, must have a reality.** There is the unmanifest and there is the manifestation, but a manifestation of the Real must itself be real; there is the Timeless and there is the process of things in Time, but nothing can appear in Time unless it has a basis in the timeless Reality. If my self and spirit are real, my thoughts, feelings, powers of all kinds, which are its expressions, cannot be unreal; my body, which is the form it puts out in itself and which at the same time it inhabits, cannot be a nothing or a mere unsubstantial shadow.

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 494-495)



A Dealer in Possibilities

Our mind is an observer and user of actualities, a diviner or recipient of truths not yet known or actualised, a dealer in possibilities that mediate between the truth and actuality. But it has not the omniscience of an infinite Consciousness; it is limited in knowledge and has to supplement its restricted knowledge by imagination and discovery. It does not, like the infinite Consciousness, manifest the known, it has to discover the unknown; it seizes the possibilities of the Infinite, not as results or variations of forms of a latent Truth, but as constructions or creations, figments of its own boundless imagination. ... **Its limitation of Knowledge constitutes by incompleteness, but also by openness to error, an Ignorance.** In dealing with actualities it may misobserve, misuse, miscreate; in dealing with possibilities it may miscompose, miscombine, misapply, misplace; in its dealings with truths revealed to it it may deform, misrepresent, disharmonise. It may also make constructions of its own which have no correspondence with the things of actual existence, no potentiality of realisation, no support from the truth behind them; but still these constructions start from an illegitimate extension of actualities, catch at unpermitted possibilities, or turn truths to an application which is not applicable.

(*Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 449-450*)

Logic: Only a Guardian Against Error

Logical reasoning is useful and indispensable in its own field in order to give the mind a certain clearness, precision and subtlety in dealing with its own ideas and word-symbols, so that our perception of the truths which we arrive at by observation and experience or which physically, psychologically or spiritually we have seen, may be as little as possible obscured by the confusions of our average human intelligence, its proneness to take appearance for fact, its haste to be misled by partial truth, its exaggerated conclusions, its intellectual and emotional



partialities, its incompetent bunglings in that linking of truth to truth by which alone we can arrive at a complete knowledge. **We must have a clear, pure, subtle and flexible mind in order that we may fall as little as possible into that ordinary mental habit of our kind which turns truth itself into a purveyor of errors.** That clarification the habit of clear logical reasoning culminating in the method of metaphysical dialectics does help to accomplish and its part in the preparation of knowledge is therefore very great. But by itself it cannot arrive either at the knowledge of the world or the knowledge of God, much less reconcile the lower and the higher realisation. It is much more efficiently a guardian against error than a discoverer of truth, — although by deduction from knowledge already acquired it may happen upon new truths and indicate them for experience or for the higher and larger truth-seeing faculties to confirm. In the more subtle field of synthetical or unifying knowledge the logical habit of mind may even become a stumbling-block by the very faculty which gives it its peculiar use; for it is so accustomed to making distinctions and dwelling upon distinctions and working by distinctions that it is always a little at sea when distinctions have to be overridden and overpassed.

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 381-382)

Why Science Succeeds

Our mind works best and with a firm confidence when it is given a substance to work on or at least to use as a basis for its operations, or when it can handle a cosmic force of which it has acquired the knowledge, — it is sure of its steps when it has to deal with actualities; this rule of dealing with objectivised or discovered actualities and proceeding from them for creation is the reason of the enormous success of physical Science. But here there is evidently no creation of illusions, no creation of non-existence in vacuo and turning them into apparent actualities such as is attributed to the cosmic Illusion. For Mind can only



create out of substance what is possible to the substance, it can only do with the force of Nature what is in accordance with her realisable energies; it can only invent or discover what is already contained in the truth and potentiality of Nature. On the other side, it receives inspirations for creation from within itself or from above: but these can only take form if they are truths or potentials, not by the mind's own right of invention; for if the mind erects what is neither true nor potential, that cannot be created, cannot become actual in Nature.

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 450-451)

Spiritual Truths Are Not Unscientific

The greatest inner discoveries, the experience of self-being, the cosmic consciousness, the inner calm of the liberated spirit, the direct effect of mind upon mind, the knowledge of things by consciousness in direct contact with other consciousness or with its objects, most spiritual experiences of any value, cannot be brought before the tribunal of the common mentality which has no experience of these things and takes its own absence or incapacity of experience as a proof of their invalidity or their non-existence. Physical truth or formulas, generalisations, discoveries founded upon physical observation can be so referred, but even there a training of capacity is needed before one can truly understand and judge; ... **All reality, all experience must indeed, to be held as true, be capable of verification by a same or similar experience; so, in fact, all men can have a spiritual experience and can follow it out and verify it in themselves, but only when they have acquired the capacity or can follow the inner methods by which that experience and verification are made possible.** It is necessary to dwell for a moment on these obvious and elementary truths because the opposite ideas have been sovereign in a recent period of human mentality, — they are now only receding, — and have stood in the way of the development of a vast domain of possible knowledge.

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 676-677)



Imagination Can Summon Possibilities

But our mind has the faculty of imagination; it can create and take as true and real its own mental structures: here, it might be thought, is something analogous to the action of Maya. Our mental imagination is an instrument of Ignorance; it is the resort or device or refuge of a limited capacity of knowledge, a limited capacity of effective action. Mind supplements these deficiencies by its power of imagination: it uses it to extract from things obvious and visible the things that are not obvious and visible; it undertakes to create its own figures of the possible and the impossible; it erects illusory actuals or draws figures of a conjectured or constructed truth of things that are not true to outer experience. That is at least the appearance of its operation ... But it is to be noted that through the imagination it does receive a figure of truth, does summon possibilities which are afterwards realised, does often by its imagination exercise an effective pressure on the world's actualities. **Imaginations that persist in the human mind, like the idea of travel in the air, end often by self-fulfilment; individual thought-formations can actualise themselves if there is sufficient strength in the formation or in the mind that forms it. Imaginations can create their own potentiality, especially if they are supported in the collective mind, and may in the long run draw on themselves the sanction of the cosmic Will.**

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 451-452)

The Soul has a Deeper Sense Than The Mind

For much more than the mind or life which can turn either to good or to evil, it is the soul-personality, the psychic being, which insists on the distinction, though in a larger sense than the mere moral difference. **It is the soul in us which turns always towards Truth, Good and Beauty, because it is by these things that it itself grows in stature; the rest, their opposites, are a necessary part of experience, but have to be outgrown in the**



spiritual increase of the being. The fundamental psychic entity in us has the delight of life and all experience as part of the progressive manifestation of the spirit, but the very principle of its delight of life is to gather out of all contacts and happenings their secret divine sense and essence, a divine use and purpose so that by experience our mind and life may grow out of the Inconscience towards a supreme consciousness, out of the divisions of the Ignorance towards an integralising consciousness and knowledge. It is there for that and it pursues from life to life its ever-increasing upward tendency and insistence; the growth of the soul is a growth out of darkness into light, out of falsehood into truth, out of suffering into its own supreme and universal Ananda. The soul's perception of good and evil may not coincide with the mind's artificial standards, but it has a deeper sense, a sure discrimination of what points to the higher Light and what points away from it.

(*Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 632-633*)

Intelligence at the Expense of Intuition

When human intelligence adds itself to the animal basis, this basis still remains present and active, but it is largely changed, subtilised and uplifted by conscious will and intention; the automatic life of instinct and vital intuition diminishes and cannot keep its original predominant proportion to the self-aware mental intelligence. **Intuition becomes less purely intuitive: even when there is still a strong vital intuition, its vital character is concealed by mentalisation, and mental intuition is most often a mixture, not the pure article, for an alloy is added to make it mentally current and serviceable.** In the animal also the surface consciousness can obstruct or alter the intuition but, because its capacity is less, it interferes less with the automatic, mechanical or instinctive action of Nature: in mental man when the intuition rises towards the surface, it is caught at once before it reaches and is translated into



terms of mind-intelligence with a gloss or mental interpretation added which conceals the origin of the knowledge. Instinct also is deprived of its intuitive character by being taken up and mentalised and by that change becomes less sure, though more assisted, when not replaced, by the plastic power of adaptation of things and self-adaptation proper to the intelligence. **The emergence of mind in life brings an immense increase of the range and capacity of the evolving consciousness-force; but it also brings an immense increase in the range and capacity of error.** For evolving mind trails constantly error as its shadow, a shadow that grows with the growing body of consciousness and knowledge.

(*Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine'*, CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 637-638)

Freedom from Ignorance, Incapacity and Suffering

In the Ignorance one is there primarily to grow, to know and to do, or, more exactly, to grow into something, to arrive by knowledge at something, to get something done. Imperfect, we have no satisfaction of our being, we must perforce strive with labour and difficulty to grow into something we are not; ignorant and burdened with a consciousness of our ignorance, we have to arrive at something by which we can feel that we know; bounded with incapacity, we have to hunt after strength and power; afflicted with a consciousness of suffering, we have to try to get something done by which we catch at some pleasure or lay hold on some satisfying reality of life. To maintain existence is, indeed, our first occupation and necessity, but it is only a starting-point ... what to do and what to become is not clearly known to us; we get what knowledge we can, what power, strength, purity, peace we can, what delight we can, become what we can. But our aims and our effort towards their achievement and the little we can hold as our gains turn into meshes by which we are bound; it is these things that become for us the object of life: to know our souls and to be our selves, which must be



the foundation of our true way of being, is a secret that escapes us in our preoccupation with an external learning, an external construction of knowledge, the achievement of an external action, an external delight and pleasure.

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 1016-1017)

Ascent and Descent

Consciousness, as we descend the scale, becomes more and more diminished and diluted, ... thin in light, thin and weak in capacity of delight; it has to resort to a grosser thickness of its diminished stuff and to a strenuous output of its obscurer force to arrive at anything, but this strenuousness of effort and labour is a sign not of strength but of weakness. **As we ascend**, on the contrary, a finer but far stronger and more truly and spiritually concrete substance emerges, a greater luminosity and potent stuff of consciousness, a subtler, sweeter, purer and more powerfully ecstatic energy of delight. **In the descent** of these higher grades upon us it is this greater light, force, essence of being and consciousness, energy of delight that enter into mind, life, body, change and repair their diminished and diluted and incapable substance, convert it into its own higher and stronger dynamis of spirit and intrinsic form and force of reality. This can happen because all is fundamentally the same substance, the same consciousness, the same force, but in different forms and powers and degrees of itself: a taking up of the lower by the higher is therefore a possible and, but for our second nature of inconscience, a spiritually natural movement; what was put forth from the superior status is enveloped and taken up into its own greater being and essence.

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 973-974)

Supramental Resolution af A Mental Conflict

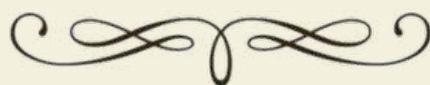
For what we most suffer from in our outer life and its reactions upon our inner life is the imperfection of our relations with the



world, our ignorance of others, our disharmony with the whole of things, our inability to equate our demand on the world with the world's demand on us. There is a conflict — a conflict from which there seems to be no ultimate issue except an escape from both world and self — between our self-affirmation and a world on which we have to impose that affirmation, a world which seems to be too large for us and to pass indifferently over our soul, mind, life, body in the sweep of its course to its goal. The relation of our course and goal to the world's is unapparent to us, and to harmonise ourselves with it we have either to enforce ourselves upon it and make it subservient to us or suppress ourselves and become subservient to it or else to compass a difficult balance between these two necessities of the relation between the individual personal destiny and the cosmic whole and its hidden purpose. But for the supramental being living in a cosmic consciousness the difficulty would not exist, since he has no ego; his cosmic individuality would know the cosmic forces and their movement and their significance as part of himself, and the truth-consciousness in him would see the right relation at each step and find the dynamic right expression of that relation.

(Sri Aurobindo: 'The Life Divine', CWSA Vols. 21 & 22, pp. 1009-1010)

*Titles added by the editor

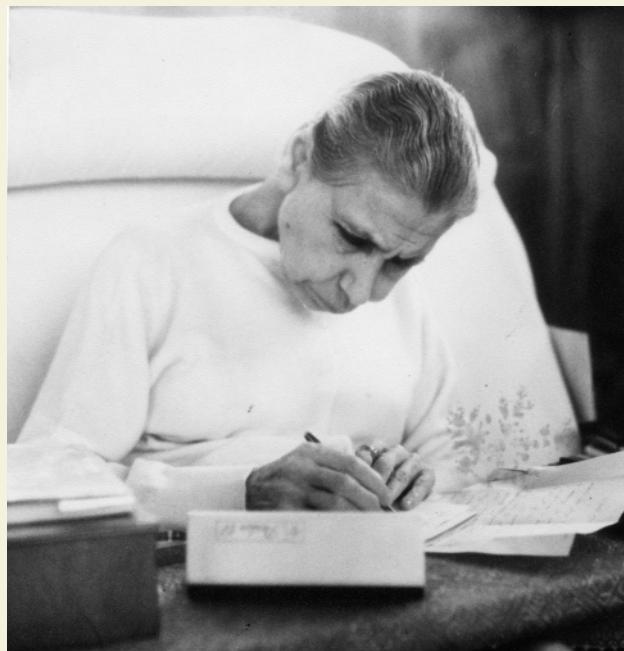


The Absolute is not a mystery of infinite blankness nor a supreme sum of negations; nothing can manifest that is not justified by some self-power of the original and omnipresent Reality.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 321)



Sri Aurobindo's Yoga



To do Sri Aurobindo's yoga is to want to transform oneself integrally, it is to have a single aim in life, such that nothing else exists any longer, that alone exists. And so one feels it clearly in oneself whether one wants it or not; but if one doesn't, one can still have a life of goodwill, a life of service, of understanding; one can labour for the Work to be accomplished more easily – all that – one can do many things. But between this and doing yoga there is a great difference.

And to do yoga you must want it consciously, you must know what it is, to begin with. You must know what it is, you must take a resolution about it; but once you have taken the resolution, you must no longer flinch. That is why you must take it in full knowledge of the thing. You must know what you are deciding upon when you say, "I want to do yoga"; and that is why I don't think I have ever pressed you from this point of view.

To do the yoga, this yoga of transformation which, of all things, is the most arduous – it is only if one feels that one has come here for that (I mean here upon earth) and that one has to do nothing else



but that, and that it is the only reason of one's existence – even if one has to toil hard, suffer, struggle, it is of no importance – "This is what I want, and nothing else" – then it is different. Otherwise I shall say, "Be happy and be good, and that's all that is asked of you. Be good, in the sense of being understanding, knowing that the conditions in which you have lived are exceptional, and try to live a higher, more noble, more true life than the ordinary one, so as to allow a little of this consciousness, this light and its goodness to express itself in the world. It would be very good."

But once you have set foot on the path of yoga, you must have a resolution of steel and walk straight on to the goal, whatever the cost.

The Mother ('The Great Adventure', pp. 43-44)

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 channel is: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcmF6JzAOsBMdqJjZbnmyng>



Mind is not sufficient to explain existence in the universe. ... For Mind is that which does not know, which tries to know and which never knows except as in a glass darkly. It is the power which interprets truth of universal existence for the practical uses of a certain order of things; it is not the power which knows and guides that existence and therefore it cannot be the power which created or manifested it.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 118)



Where is the Time for Spirituality?

Shishu

Life has to be lived in the present but can be understood in light of the past. Indians lived a meaningful life for thousands of years without calling it religious or spiritual. For them right living was a habit. There were scriptures galore, but the tyranny of the word was superfluous for a society that valued simple living and high thinking. But with time, things changed. India suffered a slow decline. There grew a dichotomy between worldly life and spiritual life. Spiritual life came to be seen as a hard and demanding ascetic life meant for a select few who tore themselves away from all worldly responsibilities. For the rest, it was worldly life with all its problems and pitfalls. The result was neglect of material life on one hand, and moral degradation on the other, for both of which the country paid a heavy price. Sri Aurobindo was among the pioneers who saw through this tragedy, and made a powerful case for a life-affirming version of spirituality.

The basic thesis underlying life-affirmation is the Vedantic assertion that the world is a manifestation of the Divine. In other words, the world is a form of the Divine. If the Divine is real, the world cannot be unreal. However, although the Divine is perfect, the world is imperfect. The world is imperfect because it does not express fully its divinity. Man, however, is unique in having the capacity to express more of his divinity. He not only has this capacity, he also has the urge to do so. Using human life to address this urge is to live a spiritual life.

Spiritual life has three basic elements. *First*, doing one's work with the feeling of being an instrument of the Divine. Further, there should be no attachment to the outcome of the work, and yet the work should be done to the best of one's ability. Work so done becomes a source of joy. *Second*, making choices



in life that are driven by universal and unconditional love, not by considerations of material gain and loss. Such choices bring immense joy and lasting mental peace. *Third*, seeing the ups and downs of life as opportunities for manifesting more of one's divinity. This dispassionate attitude to fortune and misfortune gives unshakable equanimity.

What do these three elements of spiritual life tell? *First*, spiritual life does not require seclusion in a secret sanctuary. *Second*, worldly life itself provides opportunities for practicing spirituality. *Third*, there is no aspect of worldly life that is outside the scope of spiritual life. Therefore, when people complain that there is no time for spirituality, they misinterpret spirituality. To them, practicing spirituality means setting time aside for rituals or meditation. *Finally*, spiritual life is not a dull and monotonous life. Spiritual life is a vibrant life driven by love. Timeless wisdom has confirmed repeatedly that the formula for filling life with joy, peace and fulfillment is to love more. But human resistance to the formula makes it necessary for seers like Sri Aurobindo to repeat it in every age and epoch. Sri Aurobindo does it in one line in *Savitri*: "...to feel love and oneness is to live."

Published earlier in 'Life Positive', May 2021, p. 24



Love is in its nature the desire to give oneself to others and to receive others in exchange; it is a commerce between being and being.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 204)

All affirmations are denied only to lead to a wider affirmation of the same Reality.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 33)



Why did such a lovely flower fade away so early?

(An Answer from Sri Aurobindo)

When a pupil of Dilip Kumar Roy (Uma Bose) died on her twenty-first birthday, he asked Sri Aurobindo in 1942:

"But why did such a lovely flower fade away prematurely even before blossoming—thus casting a gloom on all who knew her and loved her for her exquisite singing and snow pure character? ... I do believe in Grace but it acts, I take it, only under certain conditions which seem exceedingly unlikely to be fulfilled by recipients such as we. So why waste your precious time and energy on such a world where the divine guidance looks almost accidental and out of place, to all intents and purposes?"

Sri Aurobindo answered:

"The question you have put raises one of the most difficult and complicated of all problems and to deal with it at all adequately would need an answer as long as the longest chapter of my *The Life Divine*. I can only state my own knowledge founded not on reasoning but on experience that there is such a guidance and that nothing is in vain in this universe.

"If we look only at the outward facts in their surface appearance or if we regard what we see happening around us as definitive, not as processes of a moment in a developing whole, the guidance is not apparent; at most, we see interventions occasional or sometimes frequent. **The guidance can become evident only if we go behind appearances and begin to understand the forces at work and the way of their working and their secret significance.** After all, real knowledge—even scientific knowledge—comes by going behind the surface phenomena to their hidden process and causes. It is quite obvious that this world is full of suffering, and afflicted with transience to a degree that seems to justify the Gita's description of it as this



'unhappy and transient world,' *anityam asukham*. The question is whether it is a mere creation of chance or governed by a mechanical Inconscient Law or whether there is a meaning in it and something beyond its present appearance towards which we move. If there is meaning and if there is something towards which things are evolving then, inevitably, there must be a guidance—and that means that there is a supporting Consciousness and Will with which we can come into an inner contact. If there is such a Consciousness and Will, it is not likely that it would stultify itself by annulling the world's meaning or turning it into a perpetual or eventual failure.



Uma Bose with Dilip Kumar Roy
(Source: scroll.in)

"This world has a double aspect. It seems to be based on a material Inconscience, error and sorrow, death and suffering are the necessary consequence. But there is evidently, too, a partially successful endeavour and an imperfect growth towards

Light, Knowledge, Truth, Good, Happiness, Harmony, Beauty—at least a partial flowering of these things. The meaning of this world must evidently lie in this opposition; it must be an evolution which is leading or struggling towards higher things out of a first darker appearance. Whatever guidance there is must be given under these conditions of opposition and struggle and must be leading the individual certainly, and the world presumably, towards that higher state but through the double terms of knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, death and life, pain and pleasure, happiness and suffering; none of the terms can be excluded until the higher status is reached and established. **It is not and cannot be, ordinarily, a guidance which at once rejects the darker terms, still less a guidance which brings us solely and always nothing but happiness, success and**



good fortune. Its main concern is with the growth of our being and consciousness, the growth towards a higher self, towards the Divine, eventually towards a higher Light, Truth and Bliss; the rest is secondary, sometimes a means, sometimes a result, not a primary purpose.

"The true sense of the guidance becomes clearer when we can go deep within and see from there more intimately the play of the forces and receive intimations of the Will behind them. When we are in contact with the Divine or in contact with an inner knowledge or vision, we begin to see all the circumstances of our life in a new light and observe how they all tended without our knowing it towards the growth of our being and consciousness, towards the work we had to do, towards some development that had to be made – not only what seemed good, fortunate or successful but the struggles, failures, difficulties, upheavals. But with each person the guidance works differently according to his nature, the conditions of his life, his cast of consciousness, his stage of development, his need of further experience. We are not automata but conscious beings and our mentality, our will and its decisions, our attitude to life and demand on it, our motives and movements help to determine our course; they may lead to much suffering and evil, but through it all the guidance makes use of them for our growth in experience and consequently the development of our being and consciousness. All advance by however devious ways, even in spite of what seems a going backwards or going astray, gathering whatever experience is necessary for the soul's destiny. When we are in close contact with the Divine, a protection can come which helps or directly guides or moves us: it does not throw aside all difficulties, sufferings or dangers, but it carries us through them and out of them—except where for a special purpose there is need of the opposite.



"It is the same thing though on a larger scale and in a more complex way with the guidance of the world movement. That seems to move according to the conditions and laws or forces of the moment through constant vicissitudes; but still there is something in it that drives towards the evolutionary purpose, although it is more difficult to see, understand and follow than in the smaller and more intimate field of the individual consciousness and life. What happens at a particular juncture or the world-action or the life of humanity, however catastrophic, is not ultimately determinative. Here, too, one has to see not only the outward play of forces in a particular case but also the inner and secret play, the far-off outcome, the event that lies beyond and the Will at work behind it all. **Falsehood and Darkness are strong everywhere on the earth, and have always been so and at times they seem to dominate; but there have also been not only gleams but outbursts of the Light.** In the maze of things and the long course of Time, whatever may be the appearance of this or that epoch or movement, the growth of Light is there and the struggle towards better things does not cease. At the present time Falsehood and Darkness have gathered their forces and are extremely powerful; but even if we reject the assertion of the mystics and prophets since early times that such a condition of things must precede the Manifestation and is even a sign of its approach, yet it does not necessarily indicate the decisive victory—even temporary—of the Falsehood. It merely means that the struggle between the forces is at its acme. The result may very well be stronger emergence of the best that can be; for the world-movement often works in that way. I leave it at that and say nothing more.

"Uma Bose had reached a stage of her development marked by a predominance of the sattwic nature, but not a strong vital (which works towards a successful or fortunate life) or the opening to a higher light—her mental upbringing and



surroundings stood against that and she herself was not ready. The early death and much suffering may have been the result of past (prenatal) influences or they may have been chosen by her own psychic being as a passage towards a higher state for which she was not yet prepared but towards which she was moving. This and the non-fulfilment of her capacities could be a final tragedy if there were this life alone. **As it is, she has passed towards the psychic sleep to prepare for her life to come."**

From: 'Sri Aurobindo Came to Me' by Dilip Kumar Roy

Reproduced from 'The Call Beyond', Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 12-13, 1997

To know more about Uma Bose (21 January 1921-21 January 1942), who had been called by Mahatma Gandhi 'the nightingale of Bengal', you may visit <https://scroll.in/article/965422/remembering-uma-bose-who-presaged-a-new-era-for-vocal-music> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uma_Bose



Each form is there because it is an expression of some power of That which inhabits it; each happening is a movement in the working out of some Truth of the Being in its dynamic process of manifestation.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 646)

The supraphysical is as real as the physical; to know it is part of a complete knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 651)

Our subjective being is the basis of our objective experience, and it is not probable that only its physical objectivisations are true and the rest unreliable.

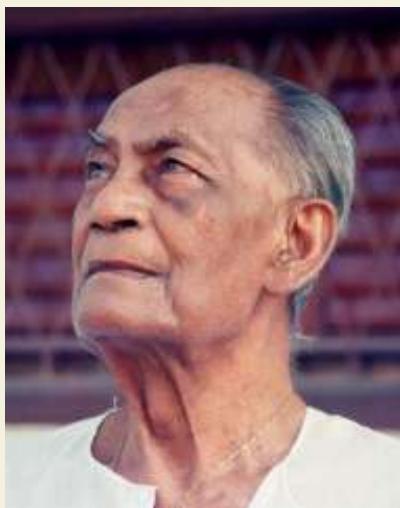
Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 773)



Whether it is the disciple who chooses the Guru, or it is the Guru who chooses the disciple may be debatable, but fascinating and often incredible are the stories behind their being brought together. This column will bring you the circumstances under which some of the foremost disciples of Sri Aurobindo felt his unmistakable magnetic pull.

Nirodbaran – A Life Divine!

R. Hemamalini



Nirod-da
(Image:
overmanfoundation.org)

If destined for a spiritual life, then no forces can keep you away from it for long. Walking on the spiritual path may not seem practical in the present materialistic world driven by a persistent hankering after unending desires. Those who seek to derive maximum pleasure out of the world around them, may not find a spiritual life exactly appealing. And yet, each of us, at some stage in life, is compelled to stop and think! And that may be the beginning of a turning point in life.

When each one of us looks back at that moment in our lives when we turned to spirituality and also delve into our upbringing, some common patterns are likely to emerge. For instance, a religious or spiritual family background, an educated mind set, a penchant for problem-solving and a crisis in life that creates a sense of helplessness – these are some of the factors that might push and pull a person towards the spiritual path. It is particularly when a person finds herself incapable of coping with the situation that she may turn to the Divine for help. At that moment, if the person stumbles upon a workable spiritual path, which can be integrated into her accustomed life, she gets drawn to the path. So, there are two aspects to consider here. One is the



mental readiness on part of the person to walk the path, and the second a 'path' which she can adopt without abandoning the commitments considered essential or at least unavoidable. One such path that does not impose renunciation of worldly life on the spiritual seeker is the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In fact, Integral Yoga considers all life, including worldly life, to be a field suitable for the practice of yoga. Hence, the celebrated quote of Sri Aurobindo, "All life is yoga."

Like many of us, Dr. Nirodbaran (1903-2006) also took the plunge into spiritual life when he was faced with unsurmountable predicaments. Coming from an affluent Buddhist, zamindar family, Nirod-da, as he is fondly called now, had lost his father at an early age and was raised by his mother. He spent a relatively carefree childhood, participated in India's freedom struggle in his youth and even went to prison. This event had several ramifications, one of which was his decision to join Sri Aurobindo Ashram many years later. After completing his matriculation from Kolkata, he wanted to study law. However, due to seemingly trivial reasons he was sent to Scotland, to do medicine instead.

After getting his medical degree, Dr. Nirodbaran's first visit to the Pondicherry Ashram in 1930 had been out of sheer curiosity, kindled by his visits to Dilip Kumar Roy in Paris. His interaction with Dilip Kumar Roy proved to be instrumental in deciding his visit. During this visit, Nirod-da showed no inclination to take to spiritual life. His visit went off well and he also acknowledges, in later accounts, having some unusual experiences during this visit. However, at that point in time perhaps his science-trained mind dismissed them as insignificant.

On his next visit, Nirod-da spent almost a month in the ashram. At the end of his stay he left the ashram after writing to Sri Aurobindo that he preferred the path of 'karma yoga' to a spiritual life, to which the Guru promptly responded with his blessings.



After this episode, Dr. Nirodbaran, went and settled in Rangoon where he "...spent a most unspiritual life." Life was easy. He established his practice and had a steady income. He settled down to lead a comfortable life filled with an indulgence that was neither spiritual nor in tune with karma yoga. However, this carefree life lasted just a year! The police raided his Rangoon residence owing to his past affiliation with the Non-Co-operation movement. This cost him his job and his life changed drastically after this event. Finances dwindled, he shifted to Chittagong and secured a Government job in Calcutta. However, as destiny would have it, on the eve of his selection, his lodgings were searched again by the police. Yet again, he lost the job. Nirod-da describes this phase of his life as a 'Plunge into Darkness' in his memoir.

He wrote to Sri Aurobindo seeking permission to return to the Ashram. In this act, he was encouraged by his niece's letter asking him why he was wasting time (by not returning to the ashram) and as to how much longer would he keep the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, waiting? As soon as he was given permission, he left for Pondicherry forever, without even informing his mother. It was only then, in retrospect, that he could clearly see the significance of the unusual experiences he had on his first Ashram visit. He also saw all the unpalatable events of his life in Rangoon and Calcutta as part of a Divine design that saved him from becoming a lifelong Government servant and also paved his way to the ashram.



Nirod-da
(Image: overmanfoundation.org)

Sometimes I imagine that God also sits in anticipation to find out the choices we make – much like a parent hovering over a child faced with a quiz question whose answer is obvious to the parent. And when we make the noblest choice, God smiles with great satisfaction, in a patronizing way,



as if to say, "This is what I expected from you, my dear child." But what about children who make the wrong choice? I imagine God just shakes his head at the erring child and tells himself with a sigh, "This child has a long way to go!".

Nirod-da may have been the erring child the first time around when he came to the ashram in 1930 and declared that he had little interest in spirituality. But after a difficult phase in his easy life, marred by his past affiliations with the freedom struggle, he decided to seek refuge in spirituality. A moment of smile for the Divine!

Nirod-da was a great asset to the ashram devotees as well as the Guru. In many ways he became the bridge between the Guru and the ordinary spiritual seeker. In that sense he became a 'medium' through which the Master spoke to the sadhakas. Nirod-da also became a writer. He wrote extensively, seeking answers to questions that emerged from his spiritual aspirations. He published collections of his poems – *Swapnadeep* and *Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran*. His correspondence with Sri Aurobindo is a treasure trove for the spiritual seeker – a kind of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) collection to answer common queries that arise in the minds of a seeker. But what he is perhaps known best for is as the scribe, to whom Sri Aurobindo dictated *Savitri*.



There are four main lines which Nature has followed in her attempt to open up the inner being, – religion, occultism, spiritual thought and an inner spiritual realisation and experience: the first three are approaches, the last is the decisive avenue of entry.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 860)



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.

Some FAQs on *The Life Divine*

In this issue, we are using the 'May I Help You' column to answer some Frequently Asked Questions about *The Life Divine*.

Is *The Life Divine* Vedanta?

The Life Divine is spiritual philosophy rooted in the Upanishads and the Gita, and is therefore Vedanta. But the Vedantic tradition itself has two major divisions: *advaita* (absolute non-dualism) and *vishishta advaita* (qualified non-dualism). Sri Aurobindo has given in *The Life Divine* his version of Vedanta, but has given it no name. A fitting name has been given to it by David Frawley: integral non-dualism (*poorna advaita*), that is, the non-dualism that leaves nothing out.

What does *advaita* really mean?

Advaita literally means 'no second'. That is more emphatic than saying 'there is only One'. 'There is no second', or 'there is no other', means that all that exists is That One. If anything is not That One, it does not exist. 'The One without a second' has been called God, the Divine, the Infinite, the Absolute Reality, and by many other names. 'The One' has assumed various forms in Its creation. Therefore, all the forms that we see are also 'The One'. But it also exists beyond all forms. If all forms are 'The One', and all that is beyond forms is also 'The One', what else can be there which is not 'The One'?



That is what the popular Sanskrit expression *tat sat* means. *Tat* means That. *Sat* means Existence. *Tat* is the Absolute Reality. *Sat* is the Universal Existence. That is the only Existent. All that exists is That. There is nothing in existence which is not That. [*Tat Sat* occurs in the Gita (17:23)]

What are the basic tenets of *advaita*?

Some of the basic tenets of *advaita* are:

1. The Creator did not create the creation; It became the creation.
2. Since the Creator became the creation, the creation is another form of the Creator.
3. Therefore, the Creator has an all-pervasive presence in the creation.
4. The universal presence of the Creator implies that each individual is also the Creator in another form.
5. The creation has not exhausted the Creator. Therefore, the Creator exists also outside the creation. That aspect of the Creator is the Transcendent.
6. The Creator plays a role in running the universe.

How does *The Life Divine* look at Maya?

Maya means an illusion. An illusion means an appearance being different from the reality. A rope may look like a snake. That is an illusion. Similarly, we see a stone, a tree, or an animal. But actually, these are all different forms of the Divine. Thus, a stone is the Divine. A tree is the Divine. An animal is also the Divine. Since the appearance is different from the reality, the stone, the tree and the animal are illusions. **However, an illusion is not falsehood.** A rope may not be a snake, but it is a real rope. Similarly, a stone is the Divine, but its being a stone is not a piece of falsehood. The stone, the tree and the animal will not last forever. What will



last forever is their deeper reality, the Divine. Even that does not mean that the stone, the tree and the animal are false. While they exist, they are a real stone, a real tree and a real animal. For example, the deeper reality of a set of pots is the clay of which they are made. But while the pots last, they are real pots.

This view of Maya has three implications.

First, Maya is a great capacity of the Divine. The One can assume so many forms, and play a role in each form so well that we cannot see the One that each form truly is. An actor with half a dozen roles in a movie is considered a great actor. Here is the greatest actor of all, playing millions of roles. How can we call Maya a fraud, as is commonly done? Maya is a great capacity for putting on different appearances.

Secondly, if the Divine is real, its forms should not be rejected as unreal. Therefore, the world and worldly life, which are different forms of the Divine, should not be condemned as a fraud (*aankhon ka dhokha*, or a fraud created by the eyes) or as a trap (*mayaajaal*, or the net of maya that traps).

Finally, the Divine is perfect, but its expression in the world is imperfect. **Therefore, we should seek to transform the world so that it becomes worthy of the One that it manifests.**

How does *The Life Divine* go beyond Vedanta?

Traditional texts on Vedanta consider individual salvation to be the goal of spiritual life. But *The Life Divine* goes beyond the individual. The goal that it sets is the evolution of the consciousness of the human race. It takes a reasoned, in-depth look at the next leap of evolution which will go beyond mental consciousness. It explains how and why that leap will change human nature. It creates a futuristic vision of how the world would become a much better place to live in as a result of this revolutionary change in human nature.



Why is *The Life Divine* difficult to understand?

Here are ten responses to this extremely common question, not all of them appropriate to every individual. If this is your question too, you may select one or more of the answers that apply to you.

1. The motive is important. One should not try to read *The Life Divine* only for the egoistic satisfaction of having read a book that most people find difficult to understand. If there is a sincere aspiration for the Divine, and one is walking the path consciously, *The Life Divine* becomes much easier to grasp.
2. As the above discussion on Maya shows, *The Life Divine* challenges many widely prevalent notions. Therefore, to learn something from it, one should be prepared to unlearn.
3. One may read *The Life Divine* to find answers to many questions, but one should be free of doubts. Instead of doubt, there should be sincere faith, and in keeping with that faith, the willingness to surrender.
4. *The Life Divine* is difficult. It is written in elegant English, as English was written about a hundred years ago by great scholars of that period. The sentences are long, and quite often commas are missing because the reader is expected to figure out where to pause to make sense of the sentence. Further, it is more than 1,000 pages of scintillating prose, dealing with a serious subject, and full of arguments put forth by an intellectual genius who had himself experienced the highest truths of existence. Therefore, if you find *The Life Divine* difficult, relax. You have plenty of company.
5. You may like to settle for relatively shorter and simpler versions of the subject matter in Sri Aurobindo's own words. Two suggestions would be to read only the last six chapters of *The Life Divine* (Book 2, Part 2, Chapters 23-28), and *Savitri* (Book 1, Canto 4, The Secret Knowledge).



6. If understood, *The Life Divine* is an intellectual feast and a highway to heaven. But the digestion needs to be strong enough for the feast. And, there are many roads to heaven: it is the goal that matters, not the road taken.
7. *The Life Divine* is difficult, but understanding it is not necessary for sadhana (personal effort for spiritual progress). Sadhana can be very simple, and consist only of work done with a sense of devotion and offered to the Divine.
8. Sadhana facilitates understanding *The Life Divine*. Sincere sadhaks (spiritual seekers) might get quite a bit from *The Life Divine* even if their command over the English language is not very good.
9. A seeker may be sincere, he may be quite intelligent, and his command over the English language also might be quite good, and yet he may not understand *The Life Divine*. In such a case, it is worthwhile reading *The Life Divine* again after a gap of a few years. As the seeker progresses on the spiritual path, he will understand *The Life Divine* better, and get from it what he could not during the previous reading. If time permits, there is no limit to the number of times *The Life Divine* can be read with great profit.
10. Sadhana is necessary for understanding *The Life Divine*. But understanding *The Life Divine* is not necessary for sadhana.



Each being reaps what he sows; from what he does he profits, for what he does he suffers.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', SABCL Edition, p. 806)



Forthcoming Events

Resumption of activities at Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch

Following the lifting of covid-related restrictions, Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch has resumed several activities such as the Sunday Satsangs, Health Centre activities, and classes on the physical practices of Yoga. For details, please see the monthly e-magazine, *Realization*, published on the first of every month.

Chanting from the Dhammapada by visiting Buddhist monks, 22 March 2022

Several sessions, spread over the day from morning to evening.

Venue: Meditation Hall

Forthcoming Sunday Satsang

Sunday, 27 March 2022, 10 am.

Topic: Living a Well-examined Life

(Based on The Mother's *Commentaries on the Dhammapada*, p. 35)

Speaker: Dr. Aditi Kaul

Musical offering by Aditya Pathak and Arunima Pathak

Venue: Meditation Hall



Contact us

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

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

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

To learn about the recent and forthcoming activities through the Ashram's e-magazine, 'Realization', send an email to: callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

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For information about Auro-Mira Service Society and the Kechla project, please visit the website www.auromira.in



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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