

THE CALL BEYOND

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Generosity

Generosity is to find one's own satisfaction in the satisfaction of others.

The Mother

Highlights

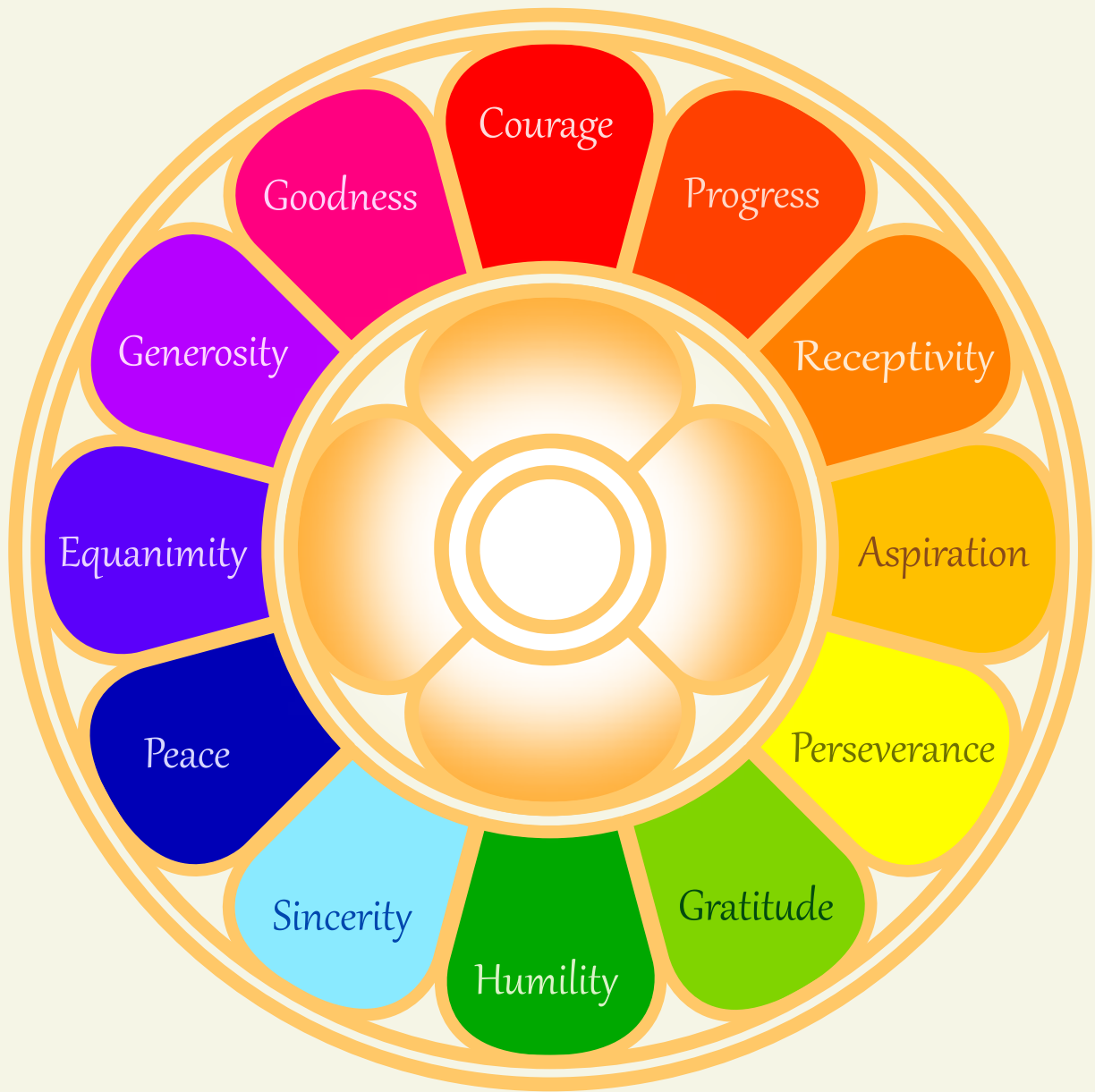
Generosity ... Pages 5, 7, 15 & 16

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Our Green Friends ... Page 25



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SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM - DELHI BRANCH



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.

A stylized signature or flourish consisting of a series of connected lines, ending in a horizontal stroke.

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celebrating 100 years

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What Does Da Stand For?

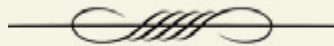
Nobleness and generosity are the soul's ethereal firmament; without them, one looks at an insect in a dungeon.

Sri Aurobindo

An ancient legend says that once humans, demons and gods realized that there was something wanting in the way they lived. Thank God for the humility that, for once, brought them together! So, they decided to approach God to find out how they should live. They went to meet Him, and as always, God was in a state of eternal repose, seemingly immune to all disturbance. So, they waited patiently, till He took notice of them. Finally, He did. They asked Him, "Our Lord, please tell us how we should live." God must have been surprised, and pleased, to see these diverse species of His creation united in a common and noble mission. After a long pause, he muttered just one syllable, 'da', and motioned them to leave. After coming out, they started discussing what the Lord might have meant. Humans thought that probably He meant daana (giving, or charity). They realized that they are very miserly, and so the Lord must have told them to be generous. Demons thought that probably He meant dayaa (compassion). They realized that they are very cruel, and so the Lord must have told them to be compassionate. Gods thought that probably He meant daman (destruction). They realized that they still have many weaknesses, and so the Lord must have told them to get rid of those weaknesses. There are six fundamental weaknesses (*shadripu*, six enemies), namely, lust, anger, greed, attachment, arrogance and jealousy. Mythological tales of the Hindu tradition are full of stories that suggest that even gods are not exempt from at least one or the other of these weaknesses. The question arises that with at least some weaknesses still intact, how did they become gods. The answer probably is that gods are at least, unlike humans, fully aware of their weaknesses, and can control them better than humans.

The legend has a lesson for we, the humans – part animal and part divine – neither here nor there. Humans can sometimes be as cruel as demons, and are in no way free from the six fundamental weaknesses. However, returning to humans, who thought that ‘da’ stood for daana, giving generously is probably one of the most difficult things for us to do. Generosity is one of the twelve ‘qualities’ in the Mother’s symbol. Just by being generous, we can fix many other weaknesses, including the notorious six.

PETAL OF THE MONTH: Generosity



A poor man is a man having no qualities, no force, no strength, no generosity. He is also a miserable, unhappy man. Moreover, one is unhappy only when one is not generous – if one has a generous nature which gives of itself without reckoning, one is never unhappy. It is those who are coiled up on themselves and who always want to draw things towards themselves, who see things and the world only through themselves – it is these who are unhappy. But when one gives oneself generously, without reckoning, one is never unhappy, never. It is he who wants to take who is unhappy; he who gives himself is never so.

The Mother

Happy to Give

An extremely rich man may be terribly poor from Mahalakshmi's point of view. And a very poor man may be very rich if his heart is generous.

The Mother



Garden balsam, Rose balsam
(Botanical name: *Impatiens balsamina*)

Spiritual significance given by The Mother: Generosity

Gives and gives itself without bargaining.

(Flowers in Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, near the entrance. Photo: Naval Singh)

There is a story of a place of worship where a bowl was circulated among a gathering for collecting money for maintaining the place. The priest told the gathering that they could contribute any amount that would not hurt them. One person did not put any money in the bowl because, he said, “The very idea hurts.” Thus, generosity is an attitude. Attitudes depend on the personality. Personality has three basic components. Tamas, the principle of ignorance and inertia; Rajas, the principle of passions, desires and activity; and Sattva, the principle of knowledge, value-based dispassionate thinking, and harmony. In each one of us these three components are mixed up in different proportions; the proportion may change temporarily in different situations; and the proportion can change permanently through personal effort.

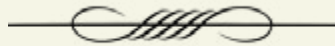
One may associate generosity with sattva, but that is not entirely true. *Tamasic generosity* may lead to giving to an undeserving person, or for a wrong cause, or for a wrong

reason, because of ignorant or confused thinking. What may look like generosity may also be the result of laziness, which is a tamasic characteristic. For example, if a person gives generously to a beggar in the hope that the good karma will make him a millionaire overnight without doing any work, it reflects both bewildered thinking and laziness. *Rajasic generosity* aims at pampering the ego. The person is generous, but makes no secret of it, and uses it unabashedly not only to win applause but may also use it to be in the good books of powerful people who can help him fulfill worldly ambitions. *Sattvic generosity* leads to giving to the right person for the right reason at the right time. The person makes an outer effort to keep the generous act a secret, and also makes an inner effort to stop his generosity from boosting his ego.

Generosity has little to do with wealth. A poor person may be generous; a rich person may not be. A poor person cannot give much, but may give a little even if it hurts. The paradox is that even when giving hurts the person financially, it makes the person happy. A rich person may give nothing, even if he can give much. He saves money, but is still unhappy. The Mother has said that the irony is that the poor, in general, are more generous than the rich. Perhaps that is one reason why the rich are not necessarily happy. The Mother has assured that “if one has a generous nature which gives of itself without reckoning, one is never unhappy.” Further, it is not only money with which one can be generous. One can be generous with time, with sharing knowledge, with just about anything that the person has and somebody else needs. The Mother has also talked of moral generosity. Moral generosity is genuine and unmixed happiness at a friend’s success.

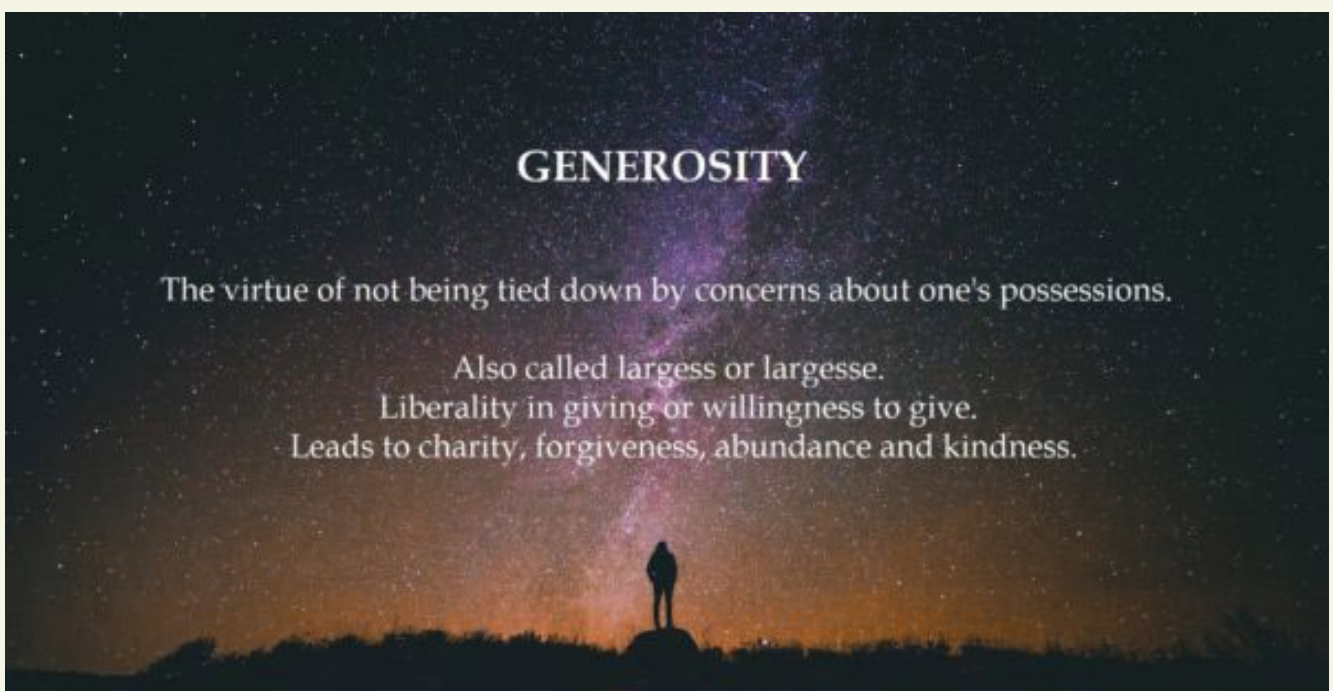
True generosity is an expression of love. Love is a uniting force. Hence, love dissolves the boundary between two individuals. Love leads to giving based on need. If meeting

that need hurts the one who gives, the hurt is accepted gladly. It is this type of love that makes parents generous with their children. A person who has gone beyond the ego; beyond *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*; finds no boundary between himself and the rest of the creation. Therefore, he finds it easy to be generous to anybody who happens to be around. To him, what matters are his capacity to give and the intensity of the need. The relationship does not matter; or rather, he is related to all. *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*: the world is indeed a family.



True generosity is an offering; given freely and out of pure love. No strings attached. No expectations. Time and love are the most valuable possession you can share.

Suze Orman



Many a bud never bloom for want of care. The country is full of budding young people handicapped by the environment in which they grow up, which prevents them from realizing their full potential. Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch has had the privilege of nurturing thousands of such boys and girls, and also the joy of seeing them bloom. In this column, we shall bring you stories of the difference that the Ashram made to their lives.

Artist Unleashed



Naval with Chachaji

Naval Singh, born in 1966 in a village in Rajasthan that did not even have a school that could take him beyond Class 8, luckily had a father who had a friend in a nearby town, Kishangarh, which did have a high school. And, the friend, Shri Madan Gopal Kalla, was close enough for Naval to go and stay there so that his schooling could

continue. But Naval's luck did not stop there. Naval's guardian ran a Sri Aurobindo Centre in Kishangarh, and his father, Shri Ram Gopal Kalla, was living in Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. In the summer vacation of 1982, soon after Naval had taken the Class 10 exam, his guardian brought him along to the Delhi Ashram. Within a day of his arrival in Delhi, Naval had met Chacha-ji (the founder of the Ashram) and Tara Didi (the founder's daughter), and it was decided that Naval could go and work in the Printing Press. (Those days the Ashram did have a small old-fashioned letter-press.)

This was a turning point in Naval's life. Now the Ashram became his school, and in this new school he spent about 18 years,



Naval with Tara Didi

almost without a break. About four years after Naval came to the Ashram, the Hand-made Paper Department was established, and Naval became one of the first persons to join it, and the only one among his contemporaries who stayed on in that department for 14 years. He helped the department grow, and the department helped him grow. The hand-made paper department provided an outlet for his latent artistic talents, and showed up in the objects he created out of paper and his calligraphic skills. While he became synonymous with the hand-made paper department, he did not remain confined to it. Those days, there was a very competent and committed Homeopathic doctor, Dr. K. M. Aggarwal, who volunteered some time in the Ashram in the evenings. Not being interested in sports and meditation, Naval preferred to spend the evening time assisting Dr. Aggarwal, and in the bargain picked up some homeopathy. That is what integral education is about – each one is free to progress at his pace in the direction for which he is most suited. The Ashram also makes all efforts to improve the personality of the youngsters who associate with it. That is why, looking at the ground realities in the country, it tries hard to help the youngsters improve their English. In case of Naval, this was done by sending him and a few other young boys for some classes in the British School, and by asking them to take classes from Shri M.L. Parashar (commonly called Masterji), who was staying in the Ashram. Further, the atmosphere of the Ashram itself provides opportunities that are impossible to imagine even for city boys, leave aside those in far-flung villages. For example, in the Ashram Naval got an opportunity to present some handicrafts made in his Department to His Holiness, the Dalai Lama.



Naval with H.H. the Dalai Lama

In Naval's life, one turning point was to visit the Ashram; the second turning point came in 1997 when he and another youngster, Tapan, who was interested in photography, were sent by the Ashram on a European tour. The countries they visited included the U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Netherlands.

And everywhere they went, they made it a point to visit museums, art galleries and parks. That brought Naval, about age 30 by then, face-to-face with the physical perfection characteristic of Europe in the field of art and aesthetics. He now had a new benchmark to aim at. The tour also created in him the urge to explore the wider world outside the Ashram. And, through another set of synchronicities, which only the Mother can arrange, his wish was granted. The Rotary Club had donated to Modern School a plant for making hand-made paper, which had been lying idle for some time because nobody knew how to use it. An art teacher of Modern School had met Naval in the Ashram and seen what he was doing. So, he told Naval to bring some of his work and meet the Principal. She was a new Principal, who had just joined in June 2000. She liked Naval's work, and in September 2000, Naval joined the school in the Department of Creative Skills.



Naval at King's College, Cambridge, the college which Sri Aurobindo joined in 1890



Naval at the Kennedy Space Centre

Within a short time of his joining Modern School, like all ‘products’ of the Ashram, Naval established his reputation as a morally upright, disciplined and responsible teacher. The result was that in 2004, the Principal took him along with her to a UN Peace Camp in Barcelona. After that, there has been no looking back. Sometimes with the Principal, sometimes with a group of teachers, and still more often as an escort with groups of students, he has been going outside the country almost every three years, which has given him a

wide variety of experiences, including lunches with astronauts at the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida, USA.

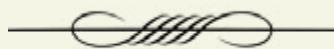
Currently, Naval Singh is in-charge of the Department of Creative Skills, and the Archives, at Modern School. He is busy with the celebrations of the Hundredth Anniversary of Modern School, which falls this year. The celebrations have been dampened by the coronavirus pandemic, but that is only challenging his creativity even more.

Naval has come a long way from Village Udaipur Khurd to Modern School. But he has never forgotten the Ashram. He ascribes his meteoric rise to The Mother’s Grace, and is always happy and willing to give time to the Ashram. He has the time, partly because he never got married. But looking at his three siblings, who are all married, he does not regret having missed the problems inevitably associated with marriage! He is an artist, and recognizes that the greatest artist is Nature itself. He is fond of capturing the beauty of Nature with his camera, for which he does not have to search hard in the Ashram. He loves plants – not just looking at them, but also planting them.



Naval, with one of his recent creations in the lawns of the Ashram

The greenery in the Ashram is due to team work, the leaders of the team being Tara Didi and Naval; it is difficult to say who loves the plants more. But anybody can see both of them taking a walk every evening, admiring and examining the plants, and planning which new plants may be planted in the coming season. Seasons come and go, but Naval never runs out of ideas about what else might be done to make the Ashram even more of a visual treat than it already is.



I want to speak of moral generosity. To feel happy, for example, when a comrade is successful. An act of courage, of unselfishness, a fine sacrifice, have a beauty in them which gives you joy. It may be said that moral generosity consists in being able to recognize the true worth and superiority of others.

The Mother

Money is Valuable When Spent



It is infinitely more difficult to be good, to be wise, to be intelligent and generous, to be more generous, you follow me, when one is rich than when one is poor. I have known many people in many countries, and the most generous people I have met in all the countries, were the poorest. And as soon as the pockets are full, one is caught by a kind of illness, which is a sordid attachment to money. I assure you it is a curse.

So the first thing to do when one has money is to give it. But as it is said that it should not be given without discernment, do not go and give it like those who practise philanthropy, because that fills them with a sense of their own goodness, their generosity and their own importance. You must act in a sattwic way, that is, make the best possible use of it. And so, each one must find in his highest consciousness what the best possible use of the money he has can be. And truly money has no value unless it circulates. For each and every one, money is valuable only when one has spent it.

The Mother ('The Great Adventure', p. 269)

The Universal Consciousness



I have encountered in my life several examples of people living or trying to live in the universal consciousness and it seemed to me that it rendered them less compassionate, less humane, less tender to the sufferings of others. It seems to me that if it is necessary not to remain in the individual consciousness when it is a question of our own sufferings, it is otherwise when it is a question of sympathising with the sufferings of others. In my opinion we feel more keenly the troubles of our brothers in humanity if we remain in the individual consciousness. But I may be mistaken and ask only to be enlightened by you on this point.

Is it certain that such people are living in the universal consciousness? or, if they are, is it certain that they are really less humane and compassionate? May they not be exercising their humanity in another fashion than the obvious and external signs of sympathy and tenderness? *If a man is really insensible to the experiences of others in the world, he is not living in the full universal consciousness.* Either he has shut himself up in an experience of an individual peace and self-content, or he is absorbed by his contact with some universal principle in its abstract form without regard to its universal action, or he is living inwardly apart from the universe in touch with something transcendent of world-experience. All

these states are useful to the soul in its progress, but they are not the universal consciousness. When a man lives in the cosmic self, he necessarily embraces the life of the world and his attitude towards that world struggling upward from the egoistic state must be one of compassion, of love or of helpfulness. The Buddhists held that immersion in the infinite non-ego was in itself an immersion in a sea of infinite compassion. The liberated Sannyasin is described in the Gita and in other Hindu books as one whose occupation is beneficence to all creatures. But this vast spirit of beneficence does not necessarily exercise itself by the outward forms of emotional sympathy or active charity. We must not bind down all natures or all states of the divine consciousness in man to the one form of helpfulness which seems to us the most attractive, the most beautiful or the most beneficent. There is a higher sympathy than that of the easily touched emotions, a greater beneficence than that of an obvious utility to particular individuals in their particular sufferings. The egoistic consciousness passes through many stages in its emotional expansion. At first it is bound within itself, callous therefore to the experiences of others. Afterwards it is sympathetic only with those who are identified in some measure with itself, indifferent to the indifferent, malignant to the hostile. When it overcomes this respect for persons, it is ready for the reception of the altruistic principle. But even charity and altruism are often essentially egoistic in their immediate motive. They are stirred by the discomfort of the sight of suffering to the nervous system or by the pleasurable appreciation of our kindness or by the egoistic self-appreciation of our own benevolence or by the need of indulgence in sympathy. *There are philanthropists who would be troubled if the poor were not always with us, for they would then have no field for their charity.* We begin to enter into the universal consciousness when, apart from all

Essays in
Philosophy and Yoga



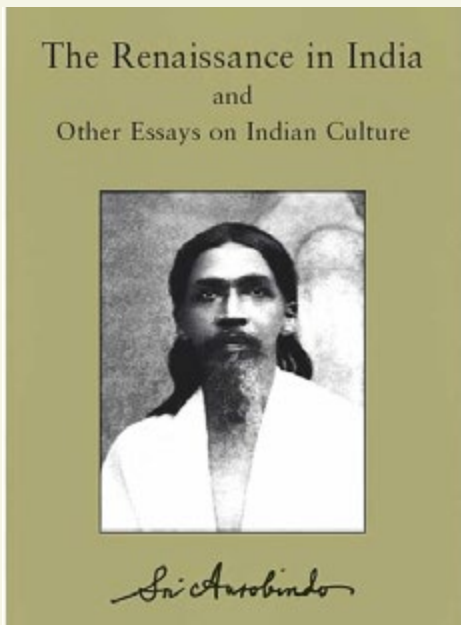
Sri Aurobindo

individual motive and necessity, by the mere fact of unity of our being with all others, their joy becomes our joy, their suffering our suffering. But we must not mistake this for the highest condition. After a time we are no longer overcome by any suffering, our own or others', but are merely touched and respond in helpfulness. And there is yet another state in which the subjection to suffering is impossible to us because we live in the Beatitude, but this does not deter us from love and beneficence,—any more

than it is necessary for a mother to weep or be overcome by the little childish griefs and troubles of her children in order to love, understand and soothe. Nor is detailed sympathy and alleviation of particular sufferings the only help that can be given to men. *To cut down branches of a man's tree of suffering is good, but they grow again; to aid him to remove its roots is a still more divine helpfulness.* The gift of joy, peace or perfection is a greater giving than the effusion of an individual benevolence and sympathy and it is the most royal outcome of unity with others in the universal consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo ('Essays in Philosophy and Yoga', pp. 453-455. Originally published in the 'Arya' 15 January 1915, in response to a question from a European reader)

A Defence of Indian Culture



... the modern man, even the modern cultured man, is or tends to be to a degree quite unprecedented political, economic and social being, valuing above all things the efficiency of the outward existence and the things of the mind and spirit mainly, when not exclusively, for their aid to humanity's vital and mechanical progress: he has not that regard of the ancients which looked up towards the highest heights and regarded an

achievement in the things of the mind and the spirit with an unquestioning admiration or a deep veneration for its own sake as the greatest possible contribution to human culture and progress. And although this modern tendency is exaggerated and ugly and degrading in its exaggeration, inimical to humanity's spiritual evolution, it has this much of truth behind it that while the first value of a culture is its power to raise and enlarge the internal man, the mind, the soul, the spirit, its soundness is not complete unless it has shaped also his external existence and made of it a rhythm of advance towards high and great ideals. This is the true sense of progress and there must be as part of it a sound political, economic and social life, a power and efficiency enabling a people to survive, to grow and to move securely towards a collective perfection, and a vital elasticity and responsiveness that will give room for a constant advance in the outward expression of the mind and the spirit. If a culture does not serve these ends, then there is evidently a defect somewhere either in its essential conceptions or its wholeness or in its application that will seriously detract from its claims to a complete and integral value.

The ideal that governed the spirit and body of Indian society were of the highest kind, its social order secured an inexpugnable basic stability, the strong life force that worked in it was creative of an extraordinary energy, richness and interest, and the life organised remarkable in its opulence, variety in unity, beauty, productiveness, movement. All the records of Indian history, art and literature bear evidence to a cultural life of this character and even in decline and dissolution there survives some stamp of it to remind however faintly and distantly of the past greatness.

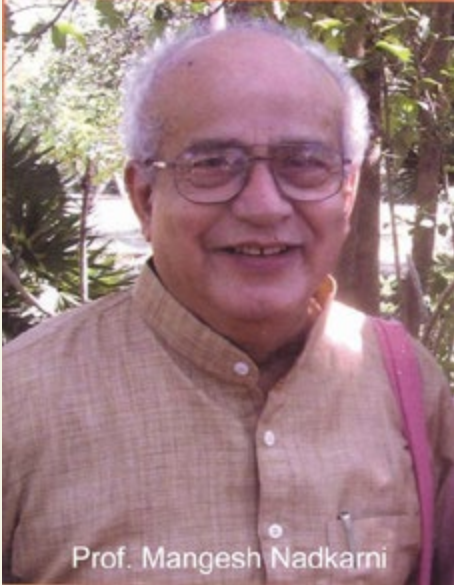
Sri Aurobindo (In the Arya, Vol. 7, No. 3, 15 October 1920, pp. 167-168)

◀ Culture of India ▶



The Five Dreams of a Revolutionary

Prof. Mangesh V. Nadkarni



15 August 1947, India's Independence Day, was also the 75th birthday of one of her most illustrious sons, Sri Aurobindo. Beginning his life as one of the leaders of India's struggle for freedom and as the inspirer of a secret revolutionary party, Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) went on to initiate a movement to free man's terrestrial life from its subjection to Nature and to ignorance, death and incapacity.

In a message he gave on the occasion of India's first independence day Sri Aurobindo spoke of the five dreams which he had cherished all his life. He mentioned them in the following order: a revolution which would achieve India's freedom and unity, the resurgence and liberation of Asia, the emergence of 'One World' in the place of warring nationalisms, the appreciation and recognition from the world of the spiritual contribution that India has to make, and, finally, a revolution in human consciousness that would enable man to make this earthly life the life divine.

Freedom came to India but only "a fissured and broken freedom." The tragic consequences of the partition are there for all to see. Sri Aurobindo believed that India and Pakistan had a common destiny and that the partition would one day be replaced by a confederation or a sub-continental economic community. There are growing signs that Sri Aurobindo's prophecy may come to be fulfilled sooner than we dare hope.

As regards the second dream, Asia has now fully arisen and it is slowly and yet unmistakably rising to its rightful destiny. In large parts of the subcontinent, a process of churning, often accompanied by violent convulsions, is now in progress. But there is no doubt that Asia will come into its own before long.

Judging from present appearances, his third dream of the unification of mankind still seems as far off as ever. However, certain initiatives to achieve a federation of free nations have already been taken. But the present efforts, Sri Aurobindo has cautioned us, are unlikely to succeed for two reasons. First, there is little reason to suppose that any of today's nations, big or small, would agree to part with their sovereignty unless compelled by circumstances or by a superior power. Second, the nations of today do not enjoy anything like an equality of political, economic and military status, whatever might be their pretensions to 'equality before law'. It is the fear of another global war, far more devastating than the first two, and the danger of a serious economic disorder, which have prevented us from pulling down the UNO.

There is a growing recognition in the world today of the relevance of spiritual values and of the great role India has played down the ages in fostering them. *"India has always implied for the world at large the inward light of the spirit; and this light is more needed today because of the dark mists of scientific barbarism which seems to be closing in upon the world from all sides."*... ..

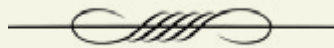
This spiritual knowledge and the remoulding of the human consciousness in its light are needed not only for ensuring human unity but also to safeguard man's evolutionary future in the face of the multiple crises that are threatening to wipe out the human race today. Whether it is the threat of nuclear holocaust, or of population explosion, or of man slowly

poisoning his rivers and lakes and his entire ecological system, it is clear that no purely mental solutions, however clever, are going to solve any of these problems. If mankind is to survive, man has to change from within radically.

Sri Aurobindo devoted a major part of his life to initiate and lead a revolutionary movement which would enable mankind to ascend on the evolutionary ladder several rungs higher than mental consciousness and to tap the resources of the supramental consciousness. No lover of humanity has bequeathed greater dreams to mankind. But what this great revolutionary has brought to mankind is not just dreams but also the certitude that:

*Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life becomes the life divine.*

Reproduced from *The Call Beyond*, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 6, 1995



To practice five things under all circumstances constitutes perfect virtue; these five are gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness.

Confucius

Real generosity is doing something nice for someone who will never find out.

Frank A. Clark

Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present.

Albert Camus

The War

The “Arya”, a Review of pure Philosophy, has no direct concern with political passions and interests and their results. But neither can it ignore the enormous convulsion which is at present in progress, nor at such a time can it affect to deal only with the pettier happenings of the intellectual world as if men were not dying in thousands daily, the existence of great empires threatened and the fate of the world hanging in the balance. The War has its aspects, of supreme importance to a synthetic Philosophy, with which we would have the right to deal. But now is not the hour, now in this moment of supreme tension and wide-spread agony. Therefore, for the time, we suppress this heading in our Review and shall replace it by brief notes on subjects of philosophical interest, whether general or of the day. Meanwhile, with the rest of the world, we await in silence the predestined result.

Sri Aurobindo, The ‘Arya’, 15 September 1914

[Editor’s comment: The similarity between a war and the coronavirus pandemic is unmistakable. Sri Aurobindo wrote the above note in the ‘Arya’ at the beginning of the first world war. As then, so today, as the Master said, “*with the rest of the world, we await in silence the predestined result.*”]

Sustainability, ensuring the future of life on Earth, is an infinite game, the endless expression of generosity on behalf of all.

Paul Hawken

Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need.

Khalil Gibran

Charged with the Spirit, Rooted in the Earth

The distinction between animal and plant life is unreal and that between the animate and the inanimate unessential.

Sri Aurobindo ('Essays in Philosophy and Yoga', p. 471)

Sweet Children of the Sweet Mother,



If you go to a forest, you would see that amidst the thick foliage, each plant still manages to catch some sunlight. In order to do so, the plant turns and twists in a hundred ways if necessary, as if it has an intense aspiration to move from darkness towards light (tamaso

maa jyotirgamaya!). Plants not only aspire, they also love, and want to express the love by giving. The blooming of a flower is an expression of love, because the flower gives visual delight as well as fragrance to all of us. The positive impact of a flower, however, extends beyond beauty and fragrance, and is specific to each flower. The Mother entered into contact with the nature of a flower, and discovered the unique spiritual significance of the flower. One by one, she gave us the spiritual significance of about 900 flowers. For example, the spiritual significance of Rose is 'Love for the Divine' and that of China Rose is 'Power'.



Left: Rose: 'Love of the Divine' (Picture taken in Madhuban, Talla Ramgarh).

Right: China Rose: 'Power of Progress' (Picture taken in Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch)

Fragrant Prayers

Flowers speak to us when we know how to listen to them – it is a subtle and fragrant language.

Flowers are very receptive and they are happy when they are loved.

Plants have feelings, they are alive, they should not be treated brutally.

As a rule, plants suffer if they are kept shut up in a room.

The Mother

Vegetables talk

The Mother used to grow vegetables in her garden in France, and later also in Japan. When she wanted to take some vegetables to be eaten, she could ‘hear’ some vegetables say, “No, no, no, no,” whereas some others seemed to say, “Take me, take me, take me!” The Mother loved her plants so much that they helped her by telling her when they were ripe and ready to be eaten. Till then, they told her not to take them, because they were still not ripe enough to eat.

Trees complain

Once a huge tree had spread so much that it was not letting other plants grow nearby. A sadhak (spiritual seeker), who used to look after the plants, decided to cut down the old tree to let new younger plants grow. The Spirit (divine essence) of the tree visited the Mother at night and pleaded that the tree be left undisturbed. The sadhak’s thoughts were read by the tree, and the tree knew whom to complain to. The next day when the Mother talked to the sadhak about it, he was surprised by the way she had come to know his intentions. The Mother told the sadhak to leave the tree alone.

Before leaving for the day, once a worker stuck a huge knife in the trunk of the large Banyan tree at Auroville. Probably the worker thought that was a safe place to leave the knife

overnight. But the tree was hurt, and complained to the Mother. The next day the tree's distress was traced to the knife, and the worker learnt that the tree not only feels, but also knows whom to turn to when in trouble.



The Banyan Tree near Matrimandir in Auroville

Becoming one with a plant

If you are finding it difficult to believe that the plants can talk and complain, that is not all. It is possible for a human being to become one with a plant. All this seems weird because it is outside the range of our ordinary experiences. But our experiences are not the limit of what is true. We experience only water, not the hydrogen and oxygen that constitute it. We see only a leaf, not the cells that constitute it. Till we use the same methods by which water was split into hydrogen and oxygen, or cells were seen in a leaf, we have to believe these things because we trust those who say so on the basis of their experience.

When the Mother said that she discovered the spiritual significance of a flower by entering into contact with the nature of the flower, she essentially meant that she became one with the flower. One knows best what one is. This is called knowledge by identity. Therefore, one can know a plant best

by becoming one with the plant. Once the Mother became one with a cherry tree. Then the cherry tree whispered to in Her ear, "It is in the cherry-blossom that lies the remedy for the disorders of the spring." It is quite likely that the knowledge embodied in Ayurveda was revealed to the ancient rishis in a similar manner.



Marcel Vogel

Marcel Vogel (1917-1991), an American scientist, had a unique life. After establishing a successful business in 1944, he joined IBM in 1957, where he spent highly productive 27 years in which he was awarded 30 patents. Then in 1984, at age 67, he set up a lab filled with over US Dollar 500,000 of equipment donated by IBM at the time of his retirement. In this lab, with childlike curiosity, he started studying human-plant communication. He was convinced that plants have feelings, and are capable of sensing human thought, but he wanted to prove it through experiments in his lab. He found that a plant responded to human thought through a change in electrical resistance, which his equipment could measure and record. The electrical response occurred irrespective of his distance from the plant. He explained this communication between man and plant, which could be recorded from the plant, in terms of a Cosmic Energy shared by plants, animals and humans. That is essentially the same as saying that the all-pervasive presence of the Creator is shared by all creation. Then Vogel got curious and wanted to see if a sensitive person could enter a plant, as the Mother had done, and a sixteenth century German mystic Jakob Boehme had also done. Boehme had said that by mingling with the plant, by becoming a part of the plant, he had been able to share the struggle of the plant for light, its simple ambitions, and could

also “rejoice with a joyously growing leaf.” One day a quiet, self-effacing girl, Debbie Sap, who seemed to be the type of sensitive person Vogel was looking for, came to his lab. Vogel asked her to try entering a plant. Debbie went into a state of total relaxation and tried to connect with the plant. Vogel’s instruments recorded something indicating that the plant was receiving an unusual amount of energy, apparently from Debbie. Debbie, on her part said that she visualized entering the stem of the plant. “Once inside, I saw the moving cells and water travelling upward through the stem, and let myself move with this upward flow.” Her overall feeling during the experience was that of the unity of all existence.

You may not right away go as far as entering a plant and becoming one with it. But you can make a beginning with loving the plants that you take care of. As your intimacy with a plant grows, you will find that the plant responds by growing better. You will almost feel that the plant is growing better because it is happy.

Plants are considered primitive as compared to animals, but in many ways they are ahead of animals, including man. Their love is universal and unconditional, and they waste no energy on running around, thinking and speaking. They may be stationary and silent, but know how to survive and serve.

We shall continue this dialogue month after month. In the meantime, do two things. *First*, keep your ears open to the whispers of the intelligence hidden in all the plants in your surroundings. *Secondly*, if you have any questions, please send an e-mail to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in.

With love, CB

(Based on *Whispers of Nature*. Edited by Vijay. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Society, 1981, pp. 26-36)

Feedback and Encouraging Words

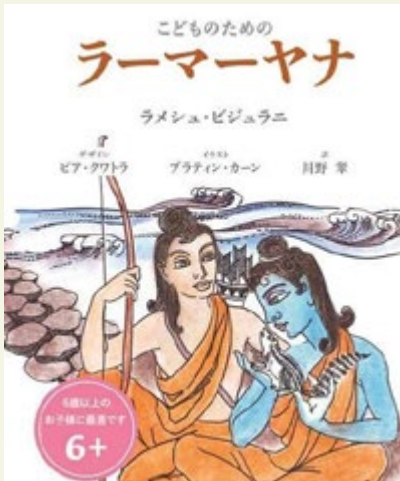
News from Alumnae of the Course on Teaching Yoga

Dear Dr. Bijlani,

I am so happy and thrilled to inform you that the Japanese version of Ramayana has finally been completed.

I have received a message from Amazon today that the Japanese Ramayana is finally posted on amazon.co.jp.

I cannot thank you enough for giving me this honoring opportunity to translate your book.



I truly hope that many Japanese children will receive a great lesson and joy from this book. I still feel like it is a dream. Thank you again for giving me great pleasure by translating your book and spreading its message to Japanese people. Thanks to that opportunity, I am being able to spend days during a pandemic with joy and happiness.

Midori (Imamura Kawano)

Alumna, Course on Teaching Yoga (2009)

(in e-mails dated 21 Sep 2020 & 6 October 2020)

[Editor's Note: The book was translated into Japanese by Ms. Midori Imamura Kawano. The Hindi and English versions, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch are available at SABDA, the bookshop on the Ashram campus, and as e-books on amazon.co.in]

Namaste Sir,

By Mother's Grace and your blessings, I had started giving online classes for physical practices of Yoga after the lockdown started. Started hesitantly though, I am pleased to inform you that I am running three batches now, including Senior citizens, Beginners and Kids. I want to thank you for giving me an edge which has helped me in many more ways than you will ever know.

Ritu (Virdi)

Alumna, Course on Teaching Yoga (2018)

(in an e-mail dated 26 Sep 2020)

Everyone wants to be appreciated. So if you appreciate someone, don't keep it a secret.

-Mary Kay Ash



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.

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Sri Aurobindo Marg

New Delhi 110 016

contact@aurobindoonline.in

91-11-2656-7863