

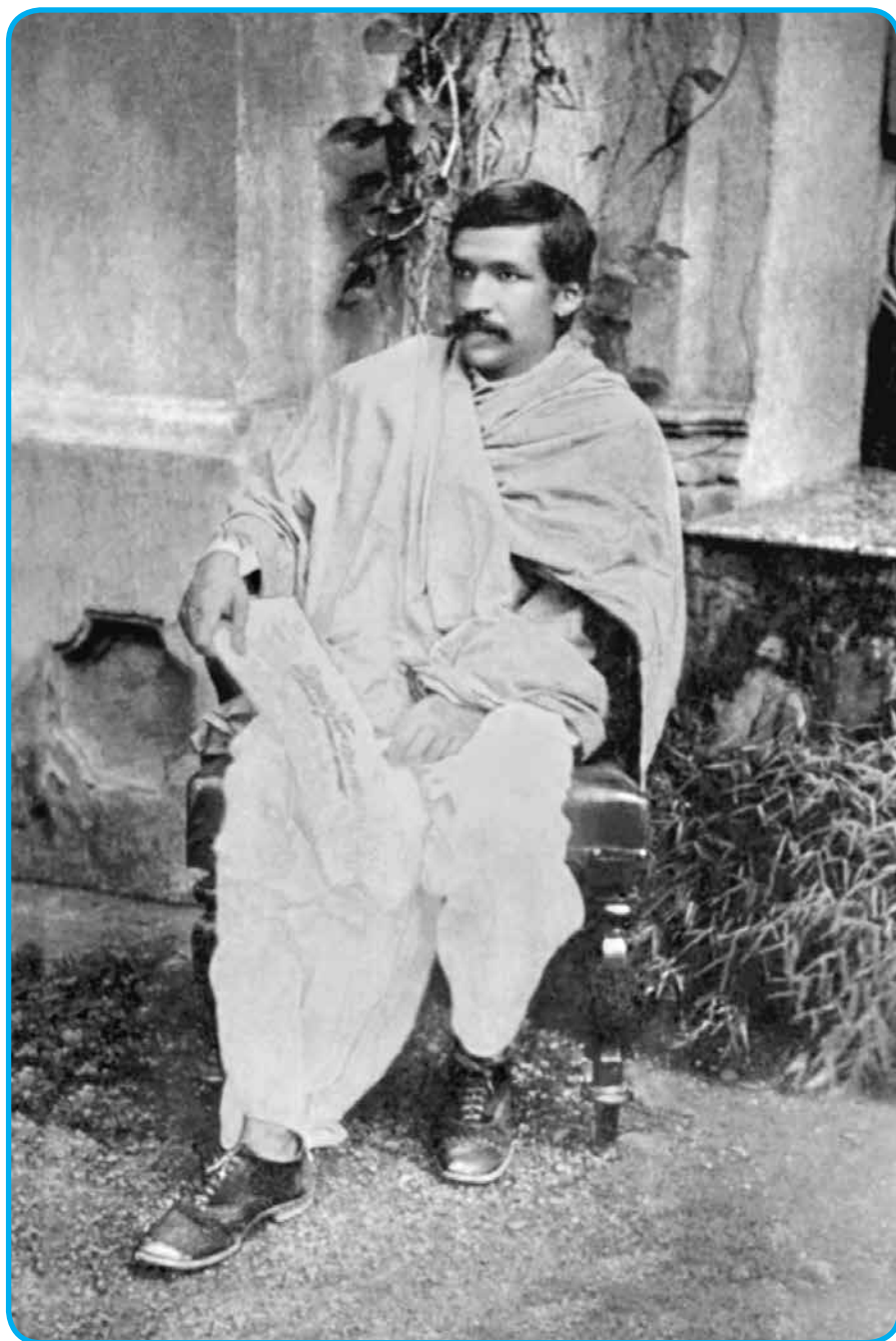


# *Sri Aurobindo's action*

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*Sri Aurobindo -  
The Perfect  
Gentleman*

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Curated by: *Manju Bonke & Sunaina Mandeem*

## Editor's Desk

### Gentleness, the Way

Gentleness — Serenity  
 In Divine Embrace  
 Within existence  
 An enchanted wand  
 Unveiling portals  
 To restful  
 Transcendental realms

On a serene afternoon I found myself leisurely strolling alongside a meandering brook, caressed by a gentle breeze that fanned my flushed face. As I immersed myself in the tranquillity, my eyes were drawn to a small rock resting in the flowing waters. To my amazement it was astonishingly smooth and felt vibrant and pulsating with gentle beats in my hands! Over the course of countless years the gentle current had silently sculpted this once rugged rock into a spontaneous work of art. Despite enduring harsh weather it was the unwavering power and tenderness of Nature — the steady flow of water, the soothing touch of warm sun rays, mellow spring moonbeams, stardust sprinkles and the harmonious symphony of crickets and honeybees — that had transformed the rock into a meditative Reality.



A rock is transformed with the strength of gentleness.

Gentleness I realised is the embodiment of the Creator, of Nature itself.

So let us embrace the practice of gentleness and allow it to mould our lives into an aura of serene bliss and world rhythm. May our footsteps align with awakened rhythms and our hearts dance to the melodies that stir our soul.

May we discover the essence of gentleness and stillness as we navigate the journey of remembering our true nature, the inherent wisdom we possess, and our divine origins, all of which guide us in fulfilling our purpose of existence on the planet. May the gentle breath of the divine spark embalm our life with the mellow light, enveloping our lives in a serene and luminous embrace.

The strength of gentleness is imbibed in us in our mother's womb. The unborn child is sheltered and nurtured surrounded by the mother's unconditional love and tender care. A wise mother knows that it is her state of consciousness that matters and her gentleness and clarity command respect.

Let us always remember that nothing is as strong as gentleness and nothing as gentle as true strength. The heart's gentleness and tenderness with a touch of laughter embody our greatest reservoir of strength — a strength that is tempered and controlled. It is the ability to stay composed and tranquil under all circumstances. Remarkable achievements can be attained through the power of gentleness, a testament to its transformative potential.

Just remember that following the path of gentleness is the spiritual way. Hindu scriptures emphasise the significance of sweetness in our speech, action and thoughts. Like honey, our words should be devoid of harshness and cruelty. The scriptures say: May the tip of my tongue be as sweet as honey, may the base of my tongue be as sweet as honey. May there always be honey like sweetness in all my actions. May that sweetness abide within my heart. (*Atharvaveda*)

Gentleness is an expression of compassion and its practice extends beyond living beings to include inanimate objects as well. If we handle things with care and reverence we can enhance the beauty and functionality of our surroundings. For instance we should remember that shoes are serving our feet and we should handle them with respect and gratitude.

There is a story of a man who urgently approached a Zen Master throwing his shoes in haste here and there and pleading to be initiated to the path of God. The Master calmly replied, "First learn to respect your shoes." This anecdote reminds us that even in our quest for higher knowledge and spiritual understanding; we should cultivate gentleness and appreciation for the simplest things in our lives.

Being gentle also means being attuned to the preferences and sensitivities of others. Occasionally, despite our best intentions we may inadvertently say something that hurts someone. At times however, we have to be stern for the sake of discipline. In the Mahabharata, Bheeshma wisely stated that one who can appropriately balance gentleness and firmness according to the situation can accomplish all tasks and overcome adversaries.

Let us embrace the virtue of gentleness and wield it skilfully and let it serve as our guiding principle in all situations.

Let us strive to be like the feather in the wind, gracefully descending upon the gentle whisper of a breeze:

*“Feather in the wind,  
Gracefully you fall  
Upon the gentleness of a breezes whisper  
Or, in the strong winds that blow a gale, strong  
Light and gentle you remain  
Calm in your outcome...”* (Amy Rose)

Embracing the spirit of a feather in the wind, let us allow gentleness to be our constant companion, guiding us through life's voyage.

Editor's note: Let us in this journal, voyage in the realms of the virtues: Gentleness and Patience.

MANJU BONKE

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### *Life, a Gift. a Gentle Wave.*

The waves came in one by one,  
Chasing, playing games,  
Rough and Tumble.  
And fall finally, gently  
Upon the soft sand.  
I looked and sighed,  
And thought of Life  
That comes to us as waves-  
Of pain,  
Of sorrow,  
Of rare ecstasy,  
Of longing,  
Of waiting, always waiting...  
And when the next wave strikes,  
It falls gentle,  
Surprising us.  
It's a gift.  
Carrying the pain and sorrow away,



Bringing that longed for day,  
Erasing the waiting, the waiting,  
To greet us anew  
On the soft and shining sand.

MARIA NETTO

## *Sri Aurobindo - The Perfect Gentleman*

Editor's Note: *This talk given by Nirodbaran on June 12, 1970 at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education was first published in Mother India. It was later compiled with several other talks of Amal Kiran in a book titled 'Light and Laughter—Some Talks at Pondicherry' published by Clear Ray Trust, 1972, pp. 70-76.*

### PART I

Friends, some of you at least must have been amused, others intrigued by the title of today's talk. Some of you may even smell some irreverence because we have been accustomed to hear of Sri Aurobindo as the Lord of Yoga, as the supreme Poet, and the greatest Philosopher — to talk of him as a perfect gentleman is rather to bring him down to our own level, because we also claim to be some sort of gentlemen. I was told that the Mother was amused to hear of this title, but I throw the whole responsibility or irresponsibility of it on the Mother's shoulders, because it was she herself who in a piquant situation remarked: "Sri Aurobindo is a perfect gentleman, I am not a gentleman."

Well, it came as a shot from a cross-bow. We laughed at this outburst of temper, being familiar with her strangely changing moods, but still at this off-hand remark of hers, I was somewhat taken aback, and it made me think a bit. Earlier I had read — and most of you, students, teachers and professors must have read too — the celebrated piece by J.H. Newman on "A Gentleman". When I read it, I thought it was something Utopian which could not be found in this world of ours — Newman's description seemed unrealisable. And when the Mother brought into our view Sri Aurobindo as the example of a perfect gentleman, I thought: "Yes, if there is anyone in the world who can be styled a perfect gentleman, it is Sri Aurobindo!" Now, for those of you who are not familiar with this passage, I shall read out some extracts, so that you may be able to see why I make this seemingly exaggerated statement.

Well, in the very first sentence, we find almost the quintessential character of a gentleman. Newman says: "It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain.... He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him; and he concurs with their movements rather than take the initiative himself." In the Gita it is said,

if I remember correctly, that a yogi never begins anything. Then — "the true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause ajar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast; all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint or suspicion or gloom or resentment; his great concern being to make everyone at their ease and at home... he guards against unreasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate... he is seldom prominent in conversation... he never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort, he has no ear for slander or gossip; he is never mean or little in disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments.... He has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries, and too indolent to bear malice. He is patient, forbearing, and resigned, on philosophical principles."

I think this is enough to give you some idea of what a true gentleman is like. From the description that I shall try to put before you, you will be able to judge for yourself how much this passage is applicable to Sri Aurobindo. For my part, I can say — correlating these two — that in every fibre of his being Sri Aurobindo was a perfect gentleman. I have chosen this subject because the others are beyond me, and on this one I can speak with some authority because, as most of you know, some of us had the great good fortune to come close to him, to see him face to face, to touch him, even to breathe him (but not to taste him!) — a subject about which I may claim, not egoistically, to have some confidence.

But before I plunge into it, let us go back a little and see whether Sri Aurobindo the gentleman was also a "gentle boy".

Very little is known of his childhood, of his youth, as a matter of fact of his whole life. You know he has said that his life has not been on the surface. It has been shrouded in deep mystery, except when he chose to lift up the veil now and then — that's all.

Now about his childhood. It was in 1956 or so that our artist sadhak, Pramode Chatterji, made a painting from Sri Aurobindo's boyhood photograph, and brought it to the Mother. We were there sitting by her side. The Mother remarked (as I noted down at the time, not knowing that it would be used today): "You have caught something of the spontaneity and freshness of the nature and something candid

with which he came into this world. His inner being was on the surface. He knew nothing of this world.” So that was an authoritative statement from the Mother. Another statement we have from his eldest brother, that he was a very nice and gentle boy except that he could be very obstinate.

Then what about the period of his youth in England? At the beginning, the brothers were very comfortable, affluent, but suddenly something went amiss: they found themselves in great penury. All the three brothers were almost stranded; the father for some mysterious reason stopped their allowances. ... He took it calmly, quietly, in spite of 2 or 3 hard years, missing a square meal, living on some sandwiches, 3 cups of tea, some sausages, and in the cold climate of London without sufficient warm clothing. But, as he has written to me, poverty was no terror for him, nor an incentive. He said that I was talking like Samuel Smiles! Then he failed in the I.C.S. riding test; he did it, as you know, deliberately by remaining absent as if by a tangle of unavoidable circumstances: in order not to hurt his hopeful father, not to inflict any pain on him, he had to resort to a trick.

[...]

At Cambridge, his tutor took upon himself, coming to know of the strained circumstances of his pupil, to write to the father in a somewhat cold tone, that the son was running the danger of being hauled to the court failing to pay up some arrears. The father at once sent the remittances but wrote an admonishing letter to his son, Aurobindo, that he was too extravagant! Sri Aurobindo said to us, smiling: “When we had not even one sufficient meal a day, where was the question of being extravagant?” But he had no feeling of resentment or bitterness towards his father; whenever he spoke of him it was always with affection and tenderness.

Then we come to the Baroda period. There again we know very little except that he knew nothing about money. He said to us: “Yes, the Maharaja offered me a job saying he would pay Rs.200. My brothers accepted, for they knew no better than I; and the Maharaja bragged that he had bagged an I.C.S. for Rs.200!” However, Sri Aurobindo left behind a reputation of fair play, sincerity, honesty; he was loved by his students and all those who came in contact with him, though he wasn't a social man at all. He had a few chosen friends, lived a very simple life, and yet he could command the respect and honour of almost all the people there, high or low, with whom he came in touch or who heard his name. Even the Maharaja of Baroda held him in high esteem. But Sri Aurobindo showed his mettle once. The Maharaja issued a circular that all the officers must attend office on Sundays and even on holidays. Sri Aurobindo didn't go. Then the Maharaja wanted to fine

him. Sri Aurobindo said: “Let him fine as much as he likes, I am not going.” The Maharaja cooled down! He saw that Sri Aurobindo couldn't be bent down by such threats.

The most revelatory remark of the period, that has come to us, was from his Bengali tutor, Dinendranath Roy, who, I suppose, was the first to say, because he lived closely with Sri Aurobindo: “Aurobindo is not a man, he is a god.”

Next he comes to Calcutta, to the political field which, you know, is not much better today, or is perhaps worse. Sri Aurobindo said to us, quoting C.R. Das's opinion that “the political field is a rendezvous of the worst kind of criminals”; and that field, when Sri Aurobindo worked in it, he raised to a level of sincerity and integrity, at least in his own example, even if others didn't always follow. He shunned crookedness, duplicity, lust for power and all the other vices of political life.

His ‘soul was like a star and dwelt apart’<sup>1</sup>. He raised the political consciousness of at least some people to his own level and he did it all because he was through and through sincere. “Sincerity,” Carlyle has said, “is the greatest virtue of a great man”. All of us know very well the Mother's emphasis on sincerity. There is a line in *Savitri* referring to Savitri herself, which can be as well applied to Sri Aurobindo by a change of gender:

His mind, a sea of white sincerity,  
Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.

In all the political disputes and negotiations, some of which are reflected in his speeches, there was never a tinge of meanness, duplicity or crookedness, that is so common, even so much courted by the politicians. Thus he acquired the esteem of all and sundry, friends and foes. Students loved him, the young revolutionaries adored him, and all the rest respected him for his integrity, for his sincerity, for his self-sacrifice.

Also, there are one or two instances of his domestic life which will be illuminating. His younger brother Barin writes that when they were living together in Calcutta their sister Sarojini used to complain to Sri Aurobindo about the misbehaviour, the rude conduct, of the cook. Sri Aurobindo paid no heed, he kept quiet; finally Sarojini applied her ‘brahmastra’ and began to weep. Now Sri Aurobindo had to do something; he called for the servant; everybody was waiting for something to happen. Addressing the servant he said, “Well, it seems you are behaving rudely. Don't do it again.” That was all, and all those people were sorely disappointed. The cook went away smiling.

<sup>1</sup> Reference to a line by William Wordsworth, from his poem titled ‘London 1802’.

The second instance. Political leaders had come to meet Sri Aurobindo. He wanted to go and meet them, he saw that his slippers were missing. What had happened? His 'mashi' had the habit of putting on his slippers and knocking about. Sri Aurobindo called out, "Mashi, Mashi, people have come to see me; bring me back my slippers!"

There is an instance, too, from his jail life. He was living for a time with all the young prisoners in one cell, and pandemonium was let loose: songs, dancing, shouting. But Sri Aurobindo was most unconcerned with what was going on there. He was absorbed in his own *sadhana*, in one corner. One day those youngsters sat together and began to discuss a very momentous affair:

"Why does Aurobindo babu's hair shine so much? Where does he get oil from? We don't get a single drop!"

A great problem was to be solved. But how? They said someone could go and ask him, but nobody dared to. Then a young chap of 16 or 17 said: "I'll go." He went and asked:

"Sir, your hair is shining so much; will you tell us where you get oil from?"

Sri Aurobindo placed his hand on his shoulder and very calmly and softly said: "Oil, my boy? I don't use any."

"But your hair is shining?"

"Yes, it is shining as a result of my practice of Yoga."

The boy went back satisfied.

In all these examples you see how far he was a gentleman. I don't need to multiply instances. I can say, again slightly adapting a verse from *Savitri*:

All in him pointed to a nobler kind.

## PART 2

Let us come now to our own period in Pondicherry. The early years of Pondicherry life when he was living with his young comrades, sharing the same food, even sharing the same towel are common knowledge. In 1930 or so, the period of correspondence began. Those of you who have gone through these volumes of letters must have noticed with what sublime patience and indulgence he has again and again written about the same subjects, to so many people in different ways, without the least annoyance or displeasure. You'll be very

much amused to hear what kind of questions some people used to ask. I've heard that someone asked:

"When I walk, shall I put my left foot first or my right foot? When I put sugar in the milk shall I stir it this way or that way?"

And Sri Aurobindo answered them calmly and quietly, in a serious manner. Of course, I had my share too, of such foolishness as you know very well. He had given me the great privilege to ask him whatever I liked. I have attacked his Yoga, I have called him inconsistent with impunity! But calmly and affably, and in a very indulgent tone, he has borne all. Those who have read the correspondence will be able to confirm this.

Then we come to the routine which he gave me when once I told him that he had plenty of time to concentrate. He wrote: "From 4 p.m.-6.30 p.m. afternoon correspondence, newspapers. Evening correspondence 7.30-9.00 p.m., 9.10 p.m. concentration, 12-2.30 a.m. bath, meal, rest. 2.30-5 or 6 correspondence, unless I am lucky."

Once he wrote:

"Correspondence suspended, resumable on notice. But under cover of your medical cloak you can carry on, only mum about it. Otherwise people might get ideas and give you a headache."

I quote another letter in which he sweetly admonishes me to become gentle with the patients. He writes:

"Well, I don't know why, but you have the reputation of being a fierce and firebrand doctor who considers it a sin for a patient to have an illness. You may be right but tradition demands that a doctor should be soft like butter, soothing like treacle, sweet like sugar and jolly like jam."

Throughout the correspondence this was the tone. Though my correspondence was specially seasoned with humour, with all people he was always gentle, very patient.

Now about the Darshans. Some people used to grumble — myself one of them — saying: "You are so grand, aloof, austere, we are afraid of coming to you." He replied to me:

"O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! every blasted thing that I never was! I groan in an un-Aurobindian despair when I hear such things."

After the correspondence period, personally, we had the privilege to serve him when he was confined to bed due to an accident. One day after my duty I had gone to have my rest; suddenly the person on duty came and said, “Sri Aurobindo is calling you, something has gone wrong.”

Much perturbed, I ran upstairs, but as I came near, he said: “Oh, it is nothing much.” He was so apologetic in his tone as if he had put me to great inconvenience by an untimely call. Then, pointing to his right thigh, he said, “There has been some pain here for sometime, can you do anything?”

Sri Aurobindo was not a person to call somebody because of a slight pain. It must have been very acute and he must have been suffering badly for a long time. But it was just like him to say: “Oh, it is nothing!” and offer me an apology! Fortunately by some adjustment the discomfort was set right.

Now a second instance. Dr. Manilal, who was our chief, advised that we should give Sri Aurobindo some massage. He had departed for Gujarat, leaving me in charge. The time that could suit Sri Aurobindo and us was a very odd one — 4 o'clock or so in the early morning. Two or three of us began to massage — the lower part of the leg particularly; he suffered the torture. After a few days he called me and asked:

“Is this massage necessary? You see, these early hours of the morning are the only time when I have some sleep. Unless it is absolutely necessary, can it be postponed or stopped?”

I said: “Certainly we can stop it.” That was his manner.

During the massage we used to talk a lot and ask him many questions. One typical answer of his was “Perhaps”! To three out of four questions he replied: “Perhaps”. Then one of us asked:

“Why do you answer by saying ‘perhaps’? Can't you give a definite answer?”

He said:

“When the Supramental will descend, I'll give a definite answer.”

One day, the Mother brought the report of a sadhaka flying into a temper and belabouring somebody, and it was not the first or the second occasion. So the Mother said to Sri Aurobindo:

“I ask for your sanction” (in the French sense).

He heard her quietly and said:

“Let him be given a final warning.”

We knew that there would be many final warnings.

Again, when he was writing *The Life Divine*, sitting on the bed, there was no ceiling fan at that time, just a table fan 2 or 3 metres away. As you know, the Pondicherry current is both weak and unreliable; the fan was just like the waft of a tiny bird's wings. But he lived in another consciousness: whether there was a fan or not did not matter to him in the least. He was writing and writing quite absorbed. When the writing was over we saw his whole *dhoti* soaked and his bedsheet underneath drenched with perspiration: he was sitting, almost literally, in a small pool of water! No complaint in the least. Then sometimes even that fan would stop, thanks to the whim of the Pondicherry electricity, but he would not ask to be cooled by a hand-fan. One of us on duty would fan him, and he would accept it, but would never ask for it.

And whenever he needed anything, he would look this way, that way, to see if the attendant was free or engaged. After being sure that he was free, he would say: “Could I have this? Could I have that?” — always in a mild and detached tone. I may mention that he could be even quite impersonal.

Purani records in the early period a typical instance of Sri Aurobindo's nature. Somewhere, on the terrace perhaps, they were all waiting. Sri Aurobindo came out of his room with a telegram in his hand and, looking at nobody, said: “I suppose this telegram has to be sent.” This was his way with us too. Those of you who have read the Talks must be thinking that we always had a familiar relation with him. In fact there was for at least half the day an impersonal attitude on his part towards everything, a notable distance which yet had nothing of an aloof “superiority”.

Another instance. He was lying in bed, the ceiling fan had been installed. It was revolving at great speed. My colleague Satyendra was on duty; he felt Sri Aurobindo wanted something; he went and asked: “Sir, are you looking for something?”

“Oh, no... Is Nirod there?”

“No, Sir, he is not there.”

Sri Aurobindo would not say anything further, but Satyendra pressed: “Can I do anything?”

“I was thinking if the speed of the fan could be reduced.”



“I can do it, Sir.”

“Oh, can you?”

Well, he inquired for me because at the very beginning, as are the Mother's ways, she had given me the charge of the fan and of some other things. Sri Aurobindo wouldn't violate that rule!

Again, he went without a real direct bath for quite a long time because there was no convenience to give it to one who had had a fracture. He had to be satisfied — well, that is our human way of putting it, for satisfaction or dissatisfaction did not apply to him in the least and it was we who were satisfied or dissatisfied — with only a sponge bath for some years, until the new bathroom was made. His long hair went unwashed for quite a time. He didn't mind at all. Not that he was indifferent to bathing or was trying to imitate Louis XIV who had only two baths in his life, 'one when he was born and the other when he died' — so goes the story. It was not that at all (you have noticed in my earlier statement that he used to take his bath at 2.30 a.m. daily), but his principle of life, as all of us are aware, was that he would not initiate anything, he left himself, entrusted himself, completely to the Divine or to the Mother. He knew very well that whatever had to be done would be done at the right time. He had no worry, he had no concern.

Once a colleague of ours, very much impressed by Sri Aurobindo's look, tried to make a plaster-cast, with the aid of a so-called sculptor from outside. He took great pride in it, and began to show it to a select few. The Mother came to know of this and didn't like the idea at all; she went and reported to Sri Aurobindo such and such a thing was being done. That he should be asked to hand over the cast at once. There you see the Mother is not a gentleman, She can be Mahakali. Sri Aurobindo said: “All right, I'll speak to him.” When the disciple came up, he called him, and in a very quiet and affectionate manner explained to him the impropriety of his action.

Again, another sadhak — I am not complaining against sadhaks, I am only trying to bring out what I have proposed to do: Sri Aurobindo's natural character — another sadhak used to write letters critical of some actions of the Mother. Sri Aurobindo tolerated them once, twice, thrice, answering his points, but when it became a little too much he said to me, a bit vexed perhaps — “Why does he write like that about the Mother?” That was all.

One thing that Sri Aurobindo didn't like was that the Mother should be criticised, and one thing that the Mother doesn't like is that Sri Aurobindo should be criticised! But when he answered

— I know because at that time he used to dictate letters to me — the tone betrayed nothing of the irritation or vexation — all he sent was very calm and quiet reasoned argument. And to this same sadhak, when once he was finding it very difficult to stay here and wanted to leave the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo wrote back — the sadhak told me himself — “I beg of you, I pray to you.” Sri Aurobindo saying this to a disciple, however cherished he might be — what humility! It reminds me of Sri Krishna, who, it seems, washed the feet of the Brahmins in some sacrifice. So there you have Sri Aurobindo.

About his food we saw that his lunch started being at 10 o'clock and gradually shifted to 3 or 4. He waited patiently — perhaps I shouldn't use this adverb, it is too ordinary — he just waited without a word till the Mother would be free from her work and bring the food. Only on a single occasion, later on, after 1945 or so, we heard him saying: “I am terribly hungry.” Not that he was taking anything in between — except at times a simple glass of water.

He was very much concerned that the Mother should not be, in any way, tied to his convenience or comfort. His whole programme was made in such a way as to suit that of the Mother. He gave us an injunction — perhaps it is not the right word — that the Mother should not be kept waiting in any case. We must keep things ready. Because, as you know, from early morning till late midnight, every moment is precious for the Mother; so he didn't want her time to be wasted.

I shall finish by giving one instance more — from our Talks. The War was on, Hitler was in the ascendant. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother declared that Hitler represented a hostile force and so we must all side with the Allies who were on the side of the Divine. But still many in India and Europe were much enchanted by Hitler and wanted him to win. Even in our camp, knowing very well that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were supporting the Allies, some had the temerity to wish for Hitler's victory. Of course the root cause was not that they loved Hitler but that they did not love the Britishers, India's rulers. So when Sri Aurobindo heard about it, he told us:

“It seems it is not five or six of our people but more than half that are in sympathy with Hitler, and want him to win. It is a very serious matter. The Government can dissolve the Ashram at any moment. The whole of Pondicherry is against us. Only because Governor Bonvin is friendly to us, they can't do anything.... If these people want that the Ashram should be dissolved, they can come and tell me, and I will dissolve it instead of the police doing it. They have no idea about the world, and talk like children. Hitlerism is the greatest menace that the world has ever met.”

Mark the tone. From what depth of sorrow Sri Aurobindo must have said this! He could easily have sent away all these ignorant and harmful people. Now, if I have been able by all these instances to prove to you that Sri Aurobindo was a perfect gentleman, I'll be satisfied. If you demur to the common appellation "gentleman", let us call him a Supramental perfect gentleman. But the one impression he has left with us is that he was Shiva himself. He had a magnanimity such as the verse in *Savitri* suggests:

A magnanimity as of sea or sky  
Enveloped with its greatness all that came.

Indifferent as it were to everything that was going on in the world, his gaze fixed far away and yet in his cosmic consciousness supporting all things and each one of us — that is the impression that always floats before my eyes whenever I think of Sri Aurobindo.

NIRODBARAN

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## *Gentleness and the Virtue of Inner Life*

Anthropologists tell us that values are culture-specific in character. The notion of facial beauty in the Tahitian islands, for instance, varies widely from the one accepted as 'standard' in Asia, Europe and the Americas. Again, military prowess was considered as of paramount importance in the Greek city-state of Sparta while its counterpart, Athens promoted aesthetic excellence as of supreme virtue. The latter would be reclaimed in Victorian England by the cultural critic Matthew Arnold in his seminal work, *Culture and Anarchy*. Arnold brought back Hellenic culture as an antidote to the 'philistinism' of Victorian industrial capitalism.

There are, however, certain tenets that are common to all societies, both spatially and temporally. One such value, universally accepted, is Gentleness. In the aftermath of World War II, the core values that are said to constitute the commonality and bedrock of the human experience/civilisation have come to define the Charter of the United Nations, especially through its educational and cultural wing, the UNESCO.

Basically, stemming from the domain of religion, theology and spirituality, gentleness has come to influence and shape our secular life as well: our day-to-day quotidian experience. The best of the moral tracts and didactic literatures, the world over, bear witness to the importance of gentleness. 'Going gently into the night' as a metaphor remains a perennial reminder to the mortal man about the ideal manner, of welcoming and embracing death: the need to accept death with gentleness, peace, and serenity, death as a necessary stage in the transmigration of the soul. Similarly there is an overwhelming presence of gentleness, in the poetry of the British Romantics; the same could be found in the early Romantic poetry of W. B. Yeats. 'The Lake Island of Innisfree' serves as an apt example.

In the contemporary world, self-help groups proclaim gentleness as a necessary means for leading a life of peace and fulfilment. The progressive and enlightened sections of humanity treat gentleness as a mark of refined social order.

And thus, today, increasingly, we witness a need for an attitude of gentleness and compassion towards the old, the infirm, the disabled, the disadvantaged and the deviant. We see this viewpoint powerfully manifest in Sri Aurobindo's pivotal essay, 'Self-Determination' in his book *War and Self-Determination*, written in the aftermath of the Great War (1914-1918) during the Arya period of his writings.

Gentleness and its sister virtues: tolerance, forgiveness and atonement mark our attitude towards a cherished civic life in liberal societies, the world over. Gentleness is held as sacrosanct for a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding.

And yet, we must understand that gentleness may not be entirely appropriate to all situations in life: The general and commanding officer in battle zones, the engineer urging his workers to check flood waters, the mother cautioning her child about a lurking danger in the bush — all come with an assertive full-throated cry/ leading to a call for action. Is gentleness therefore a casualty in pressing circumstances of life: Siren, fire alarm, war drums, earthquakes, riot situations and volcanic eruptions?

Following the Mother's advice and example, we may say that what is needed is gentleness and serenity within that comes essentially from inner strength and the absence of fear.

The Mother's experience with a hissing poisonous snake whose hole was unwittingly blocked by human beings, is a

reminder of such an ideal state of mind. Such moments are seen in the Wordsworthian 'spots of time' depicted in 'The Prelude': moments of revelatory experience. These states call for deep reflection and meditation prior to action— action with inner peace and quietness within. Keeping the context in mind, in Gandhiji's terms, 'to hate the sin and not the sinner'. Or as Jesus memorably said: 'He who does not harbour sin in the mind, let him cast the first stone.' The Mother knew of the gentleness of the aesthetic-minded Japanese, but she was equally aware of the fascistic nature of the 'Black Dragon' Movement of Mitsuru Toyama that believed in machismo and violence for Japan to attain her place under the Sun.

Gentleness teaches us the need to listen to others, while holding back our own opinion, often partisan and prejudiced. It proclaims the virtue of compassion, forgiveness, and atonement for the wrongs committed against fellow beings, and against nature, both animate and inanimate.

Gentleness leads us finally to acts of healing and acts of expiation, to the regeneration of the soul. Gentleness flows from the streams of our inner being. It takes us upward in the evolutionary ladder for climbing greater heights and for more puissant realisation.

SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY

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## *Virtue of Gentleness*

**Gentleness: (*Mardavam*)** This involves being down to earth having a reduced ego (humility), being quick to let things go (forgiveness), having a soft and supportive attitude (kindness), and being oriented towards the others (kindness). Gentleness is characterised by spiritual patience. God is ever gentle with His erring children unoffended, remains quiet when they revile or ignore Him. All men who are in Divine attunement are kind and forbearing. A gentle person attracts friends on earth and more importantly tries to experience the hidden Divine presence in All. A spiritually patient man does not feel ill will towards anyone, even the last evil.

**Modesty: *Hrih*** means "sense of guilt in performing actions contrary to the injunctions of scriptures and society." The saintly nature is imbued with a ruthless inner conscience that gives one a sense of guilt in committing sinful acts.

**Forgiveness or forbearance:** This is the ability to tolerate the offences of others, without feeling the need to retaliate. Through forgiveness, one heals the emotional wounds caused by others that would otherwise fester and disturb the mind.

**Bearing enmity towards none:** Bearing enmity toward others poisons our own mind, and this becomes an impediment in the path of spiritual progress. The quality of freedom from hatred toward others is developed by realising that they are also like us, and God resides in all.

**Absence of vanity:** Self-praise, boastfulness, ostentation, etc. all stem from pride. Saintly personalities see nothing in themselves to be proud about, but instead, feel gratitude to

God for the good qualities they possess. Thus, they refrain from self-aggrandisement.

**Absence of fault-finding and Calumny (*apaisunam*):** Absence of fault-finding hastens one's spiritual evolution by freeing the mind from concentration on the weaknesses of others to focus wholly on the full-time job of bettering oneself.

**Aims of Gentleness:** The above are the prerequisite virtues that enhance interpersonal understanding, goodwill, teamwork, mutually cooperative attitude for peaceful coexistence resulting in progress and harmony of humanity. Similar emotions are generated when we interact with others. Gentleness would certainly vibrate around us and penetrate the others to eliminate all antipathy by emitting positive vibrations. We often experience this response during our routine interaction with others around us in various contexts and relationships. It is possible to act gently only if our heart is filled with love for all by forgetting and forgiving the shortcomings of others around us. It's general human Nature to spot others' errors and overlook our own often resulting in an elevated self-esteem and ego centric attitude towards the external world at large. We may develop gentleness filled with empathy towards all including flora & fauna and simultaneously extending it towards the entire inanimate matter. The primary effort to inculcate gentleness is to overcome our pride, prejudices and control the arrogant egoistic sense of superiority. "*Isha vasyamidamsarvam,*" (*Isha Upanishad*) and experience the Divine Oneness everywhere but it comes by persistent sincere sadhana only. We ourselves will experience the joy of life as we adapt gentleness towards all after it becomes a fundamental part of our inherent *swabhava*. We must

constantly be conscious of the fact that we are all inseparable parts of life upon this earth and coexistence is compulsory for our very survival.

**Gentleness as Divine virtue in Bhagavad Gita:** In its 16th chapter dedicated to illustrate the divine and daemonic nature (Daivasurasampadvibhga yoga ) enumerates 26 virtues and gentleness is one of them ( 1,2,3 slokas 16ch )  
*abhayamsattva-samsuddhir jnana-yoga-vyavasthitih  
 danamdama ca yajnas casvadyayas tapa arjavam  
 ahimsa satyamakrodhastyagah santir apaisunam  
 dayabhutesvaloluptvammardavamhriracapalam  
 tejahksamadhrtihsaucamadrohonati-manita  
 bhavantisampadamdaivimabhijatasyabharata* (BG:16:1-3)

1: Fearlessness (*abhayam*), 2: Purification of one's existence (*sattva samshuddhi*), 3: Steadfastness (*jnana-yogavyavasthithi*), 4: Alms-giving (*dana*), 5: Self-restraint (*dama*), 6: Performance of sacrifice (*yajnas* ), 7: Right study of the scriptures (*swadhyaya*), 8: Self-discipline (*tapas*), 9: Straightforwardness (*arjavam*), 10: Non-injury (*ahimsa*), 11: Truth (*satya*), 12: Absence of wrath (*akrodha*), 13: Renunciation (*tyaga*), 14: Peace (*shanthi*), 15: Absence of fault-finding and calumny (*apaishunam*), 16: Compassion toward all beings (*daya*), 17: Non-covetousness, absence of greed (*aloluptvam*), 18: Gentleness (*mardavam*), 19: Modesty (*hri*), 20: Absence of restlessness (*achapalam*), 21: Radiance of character (*tejas*), 22: Forgiveness (*kshama*), 23: Patience or fortitude (*dhriti*), 24: Cleanness of body and purity of mind (*shaucha*), 25: Non-hatred (*adroha*) 26: Lack of conceit (*naatimanita*).

**Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Gentleness:** *“The Deva nature is distinguished by an acme of the sattwic habits and qualities; self-control, sacrifice, the religious habit, cleanness and purity, candour and straightforwardness, truth, calm and self-denial, compassion to all beings, modesty, gentleness, forgivingness, patience, steadfastness, a deep sweet and serious freedom from all restlessness, levity and inconstancy are its native attributes.”* (CWSA 19: 471)

*“A respectful and modest silence is the only attitude befitting a disciple.”* (CWM 14: 206)

*“The most varied qualities met in the Indian conception of the best, śreṣṭha, the good and noble man, ārya. In the heart benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, long-suffering, liberality, kindness, patience; in the character courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, continence, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power too to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a strong independence and noble pride;... this was the total*

*ideal of the Arya, the man of high upbringing and noble nature.”* (CWSA 20: 164)

*“The greater beings are always the most simple and modest.”* (CWM, 17: 307)

*“These modes are termed in the Indian books qualities, Guṇas, and are given the names sattva, rajas, tamas. Sattva is the force of equilibrium and translates in quality as good and harmony and happiness and light; rajas is the force of kinesis and translates in quality as struggle and effort, passion and action; tamas is the force of inconscience and inertia and translates in quality as obscurity and incapacity and inaction.”* (CWSA, 23-24: 232-233)

**Gentleness is primary Attribute of Sattwa Guna:** we need to make an attempt to make *Sattwa Guna* as our *Swabhava* and gentleness as one of its attributes. Commonly this term is understood as a behavioural quality whereas it has several layers with much profounder concepts leading to mastery over negative traits like Anger, Arrogance, Antipathy and ego centric prejudices. We need to continuously practise as an inner as well as outer sadhana the attitude of Gentleness with external world starting with fellow human beings, flora and fauna simultaneously extending upto inanimate matter. We may finally arrive at a state where various parts of our being are filled with this virtue of gentleness, essentially needed for spiritual sadhana and the primary necessity for the relative self-existence upon this earth. We may gradually enhance *Sattwa Guna* as our *Swabhava* to inculcate gentleness as part of our very nature.

**Physical Gentleness:** We never behave with our own body parts roughly or with detest. If we accept that all plants and animals are extended parts of the universal Divine body and we are only one part of it, our very relationship with flora and fauna will get transformed.

The disposition of behaving roughly with others arises from insensitivity to their feelings. But as one grows in spiritual stature, one naturally sheds crudeness in behaviour. Gentleness is a sign of spiritual refinement. Gentleness with external world starting with fellow human beings and extending until inanimate matter requires continuous effort. All objects in inanimate matter too belong to the Body of Divine Universal Mother.

*“Not to take care of material things which one uses is a sign of inconscience and ignorance.”*

*You have no right to use any material object whatsoever if you do not take care of it.*

*You must take care of it not because you are attached to it, but because it manifests something of the Divine Consciousness.*” (CWM, 14: 323)

*“It is very true that physical things have a consciousness within them which feels and responds to care and is sensitive to careless touch and rough handling. To know or feel that and learn to be careful of them is a great progress in consciousness. It is so always that the Mother has felt and dealt with physical things and they remain with her much longer and in a better condition than with others and give their full use.”* (CWSA, 32:378)

**Vital and Mental Gentleness:** Newly born child is the softest in all aspects and becomes rougher as she/he grows to adulthood. Materialistic attachment and possessiveness hardens the birth tenderness. Let us remain like a child to retain the gentleness. (*Bhagavad Gita ch 2 sloka 62: While contemplating upon objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises*). We often get effected badly by others' criticism and praise and act emotionally to spoil inter personal relationships. Emotionally balanced vital and mental will behave gently without any negative reactions. Sometimes we may have to punish or be strict when handling those who are offending to follow the rules and regulations and act with criminal agenda. It is said a yogi strikes his arrow with gentle heart and not overtaken by anger or hatred. This action is motivated by gentleness of heart and mind for the protection of *Dharma*.

*“Whatever the unpleasantness of circumstances, however disagreeable the conduct of others, you must learn to receive them with a perfect calm and without any disturbing reaction. These things are the test of equality. It is easy to be calm and equal when things go well and people and circumstances are pleasant; it is when they are the opposite that the completeness of the calm, peace, equality can be tested, reinforced, made perfect.”* (CWSA, 29:14)

**Biological and health Benefits:** Gentleness in words and actions helps in protecting our overall nervous system. Bio scientists have conducted several tests to analyse our cells, nerves that react badly to external stimuli of moods. Remaining calm and gentle would protect us from several ailments like BP, Neuro Psychiatric disorders and overall physical health issues.

**Equanimity Sthitapraja:** Gentleness is one of the basic Preliminary attributes for attaining the state of Equanimity to start with the Sadhana in Integral quality. *“The first result of the equal mind and spirit is to bring about an increasing charity and inner toleration of all persons, ideas, views, actions, because it is seen that God is in all beings and each acts according to his nature, his svabhāva, and its present formulations. When there is the positive equal Ananda, this deepens to a sympathetic understanding and in the end an equal universal love.”* (CWSA, 23-24: 727)

BALA SUNDARI

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## *A Story about Gentleness*

Here is a story that helped me understand the importance of gentleness. For most of this summer, my old dog, Scout, had been very sick. Eventually, she started getting even worse. I kept telling myself that she would get better and that it wasn't time to put her to sleep yet, but deep down inside, I knew that it was close to Scout's time to go. It was really hard for me to take that, because I loved Scout so much, and she had been with me every day of my whole life, from even before I was born, and I knew it would be so hard to not be with her!

Finally, a few weeks ago, we saw in the morning that Scout had taken a big turn for the worse. She couldn't walk and wouldn't eat, and we could only get her to drink water by

giving it to her with a syringe. After a few hours, my whole family had to face the hard fact that she wasn't going to be able to recover, and it was time to put her down.

We called a vet who could do at-home euthanasia, but he couldn't come until 6 pm. So we carried Scout out to her favorite spot in our backyard, and we lay her on a comfy dog bed with blankets and food and water, and we spread beach towels on the ground all around her so that my sister and mom and dad and I could keep her company. But Scout was in pain and wouldn't stop crying, and it was awful to watch. So we all lay down around her and put our hands on her very gently, and we talked with her quietly, telling her how much we loved

her, and soon she started to become more calm. We saw that she could rest a little, and she quieted down and shut her eyes. She seemed to be comforted by having her family around her, so we stayed that way for several hours.

At about 3 pm, Scout had a few twitches, but she still looked peaceful. I saw the movements first and thought she was having a dream. My mom thought she was having a seizure. Those were actually the last movements of Scout's old body shutting down, and we knew she was about to die. We were all hugging and stroking her and telling her she was okay and telling her how much we loved her. A few minutes later, Scout passed away. Our whole family was with her when she died.

This is a day I will always remember, and it taught me how important it is to be gentle with others. If we had not been with

Scout to gently care for her that day, she would have continued to howl and cry and suffer, and her long happy life would have had a terrible end. Instead, Scout died peacefully, and we could feel glad that her passing ended up being beautiful in a way. As much as we knew we would miss our Scouty, it was easier to bear her passing because she had stopped suffering and was with God.

This experience really showed me how being gentle can ease someone else's pain. We still miss Scout a lot, but our family will always feel good that our gentleness helped our sweet old dog have a happier end.

PALOMA TORRES  
Courtesy: The Internet

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## *Gentleness, a Virtue of Love*

As students, we used to recite the below prayer in our Ashram school:

*“Permit, Sweet Mother, that we may always remember Thee.  
Learning to love Thee more each day,  
Always Thy child to be.  
Honest and Truthful, Fearless and Strong,  
Pure in body and mind,  
Choosing the right way, never the wrong, Gentle with others  
and kind.  
May our hearts fill with Thy Joy,  
Our minds fill with Thy Light,  
May we become, each girl and boy,  
More perfect in thy sight. Permit, Sweet Mother, that we may  
always remember Thee.”*

This simple prayer teaches us the various ways of being truly Mother's child. By constantly remembering the Mother, we shall imbibe in us the fundamentals of good behaviour; courage to make right choices without preferences and tread joyously on the path of truth as shown by Her.

A mind open to Her light will surely permeate with Her love, spreading kindness and compassion in every thought and feeling. Armoured with Her grace, gentleness can then be felt as a loving fragrance in all those who imbibe these boons given by Her. It is only these dictums that can salvage the world today.

Today the world is embroiled in violence with wars and climatic threats which has made life so very difficult. Gentleness is quite rare and very hard to see nowadays. Recently during our society board meeting I was witness to a sad preview of what disputes when unresolved could lead to. There was a high display of intolerance bordering to rage and the so called social norms of politeness were totally flouted. The elitist facade was mercilessly ripped off and it left me dumbfounded at the violation of all decency of behaviour. Can't we just be human and not stoop to such violence in our speech was the first question that came to my mind.

Being human seemed to me a distant probability and kept me pondering as to what it actually had signified. Humanity has, as one of its major components compassion, and gentleness makes it more potent. The possibility of being gentle despite all difference of opinion is not an utopia and it has been proven since time immemorial that even the stickiest issues get solved through the wise and gentle intervention of a compassionate listener. The oft quoted dictum by Richard Paul Evans *“sometimes it is not strength but gentleness that cracks the hardest shells”* rings so true in today's challenging times.

When children are small there is a spontaneous gentle bearing which comes so naturally to them. Observations made over the years relate how this quality is slowly defiled if it is not nurtured by parents specially. Fast forwarding is the

new tempo of today that has somehow eroded those gentle times where one could gaze and absorb the beauty of nature. The metamorphosis of nature rambles was one of the major factors of making the mind restful and gentle. Today mankind is burdened with utilitarian instincts of survival and so one often poses this as a justifiable excuse to give vent to anger and frustration. There are umpteen instances where ability to stay calm, no matter what happens is due to the boon of inner strength of gentleness.

I recollect a story that I had read which revealed several nuances of gentle behaviour. This is a story about a beloved stuffed toy that is injured through rough play. It beautifully explains how unknowingly we hurt others through our words and actions but can't always see the damage:

When Jordan's grandma returned from a holiday in Texas, she brought him a special stuffed animal — one that resembled a wolf. Jordan had never seen such a wonderful stuff toy. He loved wolves, and although he had other toy animals, Jordan had never had one that looked like a wolf.

Jordan named his new stuff toy "Wolfie". He took Wolfie to bed with him every night and felt safe when he cuddled him.

At first, Jordan was gentle with Wolfie, but soon he started treating his new stuff toy roughly. If his mom or dad did not read him an extra bedtime story, or if he had to go to bed early, he would throw Wolfie to the floor. "Don't do that," Jordan's parents cautioned, or "Wolfie will get hurt." But Jordan didn't listen. Sometimes, when he was feeling frustrated, Jordan would even punch or hit Wolfie.

One day, Jordan had a fight with his sister. While he was still feeling very angry, he went to his room and kicked Wolfie against the wall. But as Wolfie fell to the floor, Jordan noticed a large tear in Wolfie's side. Wolfie's stuffing was even starting to fall out.

Jordan called, "Mommy, I've hurt Wolfie! Come quickly!" Jordan's mother came running. When she got to his room, she found Jordan holding Wolfie and crying. She hugged Jordan and said that she would help him try to fix Wolfie. Together they picked up the stuffing and pushed it back into the large hole in Wolfie's side. Wolfie looked a little better, but he was still lumpy and torn. Jordan's mom got out her sewing machine and did her best to fix the tear.

When she was done, Wolfie looked like himself again, but he had a large scar down his side where Jordan had kicked him. Although the hole had been fixed, it was still obvious that the fabric had once been torn.

Jordan loved Wolfie as much as ever and took care to be gentle with Wolfie. Every day, when he saw the scar on his special stuffed toy, he remembered how important it was to be gentle with his toys and his friends. He didn't want to cause anymore scars.

The essential truth taught here is that toys can be repaired or replaced, but when we hurt people, we can't fix the hurt as easily. When we hurt others through using unkind words or rough actions, we can't see the pain we have caused in a person's heart.

We have the best embodiments of gentleness in our masters, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Below is a great tribute to Sri Aurobindo's magnificent stature of his range of love and care which awakened even in so called lower species the joy of devotion and love.

'Sri Aurobindo's compassion was as limitless as his consciousness. Even cats and dogs of the Ashram had their share in it. A puppy called by the Mother 'Goldie' was given to a sadhika at her request and, when grown up, it carried in its mouth a basket of flowers every day from her garden into the Mother's room and then would pass into Sri Aurobindo's Presence to receive pats and caresses. Often it would lie down below the Master's bed.'

(Narayan Prasad - Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Page 340)



GOLDY (Drawing by The Mother - June 1946)

Our Divine Mother with Her all encompassing love was the epitome of gentleness and all Her life She gently moulded and even today heals all with Her Presence in our yearning hearts. In Her all extended embrace one can imbibe deep within the depth of Her Love and gentle Light permeating our lives.

HARSHA DALAL

## India Great

### Integral Education

“Sri Aurobindo”, says the Mother, “always loved deeply his Mother-land. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interest and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift high the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind.”

But in fact, regrettably, our country has sunk to a sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interest and ignorant prejudices.

In 1965 the Mother was asked, “What is the duty of every Indian today in the present emergency?” She advised,

“Overgrow your small egoistic personality and become a worthy child of our Mother India, fulfil your duties with honesty and rectitude, and always keep cheerful and confident with a steady trust in the Divine's Grace.”

Evidently character-building education is needed for the country. Not career-making, commercialistic education, but education that assists in developing all the facets of man's personality and which has soul-emphasis also.

In reference to the Education Commission the Mother gave the following message in 1965,

“India has or rather had the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it.

The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffers badly for it.

An integral education which could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised.”

Then there are some further questions answered by her,

*“In view of the present and the future of national and international living, what is it that India should aim at in education?”*

Prepare her children for the rejection of falsehood and the manifestation of Truth.

*By what steps could the country proceed to realise this high aim? How can a beginning in that direction be made?*

Make matter ready to manifest the Spirit.

*How does the Mother view the progress of Science and Technology in India? What contribution can they make to the growth of the spirit in man?*

Its only use is to make the material basis stronger, completer and more effective for the manifestation of the Spirit.

*Education has normally become literacy and a social status. Is it not an unhealthy trend? But how to give to education its inner worth and intrinsic enjoyability?*

Get out of conventions and insist on the growth of the soul.

*What illusions and delusions our education is today beset with? How could we possibly keep clear of them?*

(a) The almost exclusive importance given to success, career and money.

(b) Insist on the paramount importance of the contact with the Spirit and the growth and manifestation of the Truth of the being.”

The education imparted at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, set up by the Mother covers mental, vital, physical as well as psychic education. No diplomas, no examinations as such, no commercial motivation for the teachers and students. In accordance with the spiritual tradition of India education is not sold here. It can very well serve as a model experiment to be adopted with local variations all over the country. At Delhi the Sri Aurobindo Education Society runs a school drawing inspiration from the Pondicherry parent institution and is attracting the attention of educationists. In Orissa such schools are coming up more and more.



## and Free

### Education of Ideal Values

Truth, progress and transformation of mankind, these are the ideal values for education but conspicuous by their absence from the present structure. An incorrect interpretation of secularism and the lure of easy comforts and materialistic life have combined to exclude the inner soul values of man from the field of education where they are most needed in the formative stage of the youth. They must be restored for the sake of the country. There is no inconsistency between Hinduism, the Sanatan Dharma and secularism. Take away the Eternal Religion and Indian classics from education, the Indian culture is lost. Take away the vision of divine life the aspiration for which has been voiced as early as in the Vedas, the soul of India is lost.

About the Gita the Mother said,

“Sri Aurobindo considers that the message of the Gita is the basis of the great spiritual movement which has led and will lead humanity more and more to its liberation, that is to say, to its freedom from falsehood and ignorance, toward the truth.

From the time of its appearance the Gita has had an immense spiritual action; but with the new interpretation that Sri Aurobindo has given to it, its influence has considerably increased and has become decisive.”

The values of Hinduism have got to be included in our educational programme for restoration of truthful conduct in life.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in *Bande Mataram*,

“The foundations of Hinduism are truth and manhood, *esa dharmah sanatanah*. Hinduism is no sect or dogmatic creed, no bundle of formulas, no set of social rules, but a mighty, eternal and universal truth. It has learned the secret of preparing man's soul for the divine consummation of identity with the infinite existence of God; rules of life and formulas of belief are only sacred and useful when they help that great preparation. And the first rule of life is that man must live the highest life of which he is capable, overcoming selfishness, overcoming fear, overcoming the temptation to palter with

truth in order to earn earthly favours. The first formula of belief is *satyānnāsti paro dharmah*, there is not higher law of conduct than truth.”

### Education for Life

“Education is training for completeness of life,” says Herbert Spencer.

Education should be liberal; it should produce gentlemen of Newman's conception.

Education should be such as to prepare men and women for the service of our Indian nation under the soul-guidance of Bharat Mata.

“What is needed now is a band of spiritual workers whose *tapāsya* will be devoted to the liberation of India for the service of humanity. The few associations already started have taken another turn and devoted themselves to special and fragmentary work. We need an institution in which under the guidance of highly spiritual men workers will be trained for every field, workers for self-defence, workers for arbitration, for sanitation, for famine relief, for every species of work which is needed to bring about the necessary conditions for the organisation of Swaraj. If the country is to be free, it must first organise itself so as to be able to maintain its freedom. The winning of freedom is an easy task, the keeping of it is less easy. The first needs only one tremendous effort in which all the energies of the country must be concentrated; the second requires a united, organised and settled strength. If these two conditions are satisfied, nothing more is needed, for all else is detail and will inevitably follow. For the first condition the requisite is a mighty selfless faith and aspiration filling the hearts of men as in the day of Mazzini. For the second, India, which has no Piedmont to work out her salvation, requires to organise her scattered strength into a single and irresistible whole.

For both these ends an institution of the kind we have named is essential. The force of a great stream of aspiration must be poured over the country, which will sweep away as in a flood the hesitations, the selfishness, the fears, the self-distrust, the want of fervour and the want of faith which stand in the way of the spread of the great national awakening of 1905. A mightier

fountain of the spirit must be prepared from which this stream of aspiration can be poured to fertilise the heart of the nation. When this is done, the aspiration towards liberty will become universal and India be ready for the great effort.

The organisation of Swaraj can only be effected by a host of selfless workers who will make it their sole life-work. It cannot be done by men whose best energies and time are given up to the work of earning their daily bread and only the feeble remnant to their country. The work is enormous, the time is short, but the workers are few. One institution is required which will train and support men to help those who are now labouring under great disadvantages to organise education, to build up the life of the villages, to spread the habit of arbitration, to help the people in time of famine and sickness, to preach Swadeshi. These workers must be selfless, free from the desire to lead or shine, devoted to the work for the country's sake, absolutely obedient yet full of energy. They must breathe the strength of the spirit, of selfless faith and aspiration derived from the spiritual guides of the institution. The material is ready and even plentiful, but the factory which will make use of the material has yet to be set on foot. When the man comes, who is commissioned by God to do it, we must be ready to recognise him."

It is hoped that the products of such an institution will be the builders of a great India. It is likely that some of them will opt for politics and when that happens it is expected to be the end of the present bleak and dark picture of degraded politicians and the re-opening of political representative assemblies for persons of intellect, talent and character. That will mean the collaboration of the government and the citizens in the work of making India great.

### National Education for Tomorrow

In his message to the Andhra University in 1948 Sri Aurobindo said,

"Andhra University has been created by a patriotic Andhra initiative, situated not in a Presidency capital but in an Andhra town and serving consciously the life of a regional people. The home of a robust and virile and energetic race, great by the part it had played in the past in the political life of India, great by its achievements in art, architecture, sculpture, music, Andhra looks back upon imperial memories, a place in the succession of empires and imperial dynasties which reigned over a large part of the country; it looks back on the more recent memory of the glories of the last Hindu Empire of Vijayanagar,—a magnificent record for any people.

"Your University can take its high position as a centre of light and learning, knowledge and culture which can train the youth of Andhra to be worthy of their forefathers: the great past should lead to a future as great or even greater. Not only Science but Art, not only book-knowledge and information but growth in culture and character are parts of a true education; to help the individual to develop his capacities, to help in the forming of thinkers and creators and men of vision and action of the future, this is a part of its work. Moreover, the life of the regional people must not be shut up in itself; its youths have also to contact the life of the other similar peoples of India interacting with them in industry and commerce and the other practical fields of life but also in the things of the mind and spirit. Also, they have to learn not only to be citizens of Andhra but to be citizens of India; the life of the nation is their life.

"An *élite* has to be formed which has an adequate understanding of all great national affairs or problems and be able to represent Andhra in the councils of the nation and in every activity and undertaking of national interest calling for the support and participation of her peoples. There is still a wider field in which India will need the services of men of ability and character from all parts of the country, the international field. For she stands already as a considerable international figure and this will grow as time goes on into vast proportions; she is likely in time to take her place as one of the preponderant States whose voices will be strongest and their lead and their action determinative of the world's future. For all this she needs men whose training as well as their talent, genius and force of character is of the first order. In all these fields your University can be of supreme service and do a work of immeasurable importance."

We can substitute the name of any Indian State for Andhra and get equally valid and needed principles and guide-lines for every Indian State University. The importance of national education for India was recognised by serious thinkers on the commencement of the present century. Sri Aurobindo was among the pioneers when he accepted the principalship of the National college at Calcutta. After independence the quality of education has been on the decline. The Indian educational system today in general is neither the British system which came in inheritance nor a national system.

The greatness of India depends on its youth. The youth needs a true national education.

Compiled and Edited by SHYAM SUNDAR  
(To be continued)

*Patience is not sitting and waiting, it is foreseeing. It is looking at the thorn and seeing the rose, looking at the night and seeing the day. Lovers are patient and know that the moon needs time to become full. — Rumi*

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## Editorial

### The Indispensable Virtue for a Spiritual Life

*Kehata Kabiraa suno bhai Sadho  
Saahib mile saburi mein.*

Says Kabir, hear me and know my friends,  
It is only in patience that the Lord can be found.

This refrain of *Sabr, Dhairya, Dheeraj* or *Porumai*—patience, endurance, perseverance, steadiness—can be found again and again in spiritual poetry across our country. It is a quality or virtue that is of greatest importance to all who want to “attain”, “realise” or become one with the Divine.

The path is long and strewn with endless obstacles. If we lose heart every time we encounter one, or deviate from the path in the face of every difficulty, our goal of union with the Divine will remain a faraway and even possibly unattainable dream. That is why in all the different paths towards this goal, the aspirant is called upon to have the utmost patience combined with perseverance, sincerity, and a single-mindedness—*ekagrata*—to fortify her/himself to stay on the path and move forward.

The Mother says, “*Patience is one of the most essential conditions of the spiritual life. One must know how to wait in order to receive.*” (CWM, 17:124) She also says, “*The path is long. That is why one must have patience and an unfailing sincerity towards oneself.*” (Ibid. 370)

Patience is something we can observe in all living creatures. Perhaps it is also there in everything in this creation, but just not as perceptible to us. How often we have seen a cat waiting most patiently, noiselessly, totally concentrated ready to pounce on her prey when the time is right. Instinctively she knows it. And more often than not, her quest is successful. We have seen this in endless videos, of a bird patiently circling over a lake or a forest, its eyes sharply scanning for its prey, be

it a fish under the waters of the lake or a little creature hidden in the branches of a tree far below. And then it swoops down and ends up catching its lunch for itself and its young ones patiently waiting in their nest.

Let us think now of the mother, willing to go through the trials and tribulations of carrying her baby for nine months. It is not easy for her, a long wait, many discomforts, and possibly the most excruciating ordeal anyone can go through, the birthing process. But she doesn't care. She knows that her patience and forbearance is going to yield her a bundle of joy beyond anything she has experienced hitherto, when she holds the little one in her arms, looks at those little eyes, the tiny nose, the smiling lips and hears her newborn's cry.

When the child grows up, a different kind of patience is required. The parents are ready to spend hours on end playing with their kids, or trying to teach them seemingly simple things. As the Mother tells us: “*One must have a lot of patience with young children, and repeat the same thing to them several times, explaining it to them in various ways. It is only gradually that it enters their mind.*” (CWM, 12: 136) Making them eat or sleep is a challenge of its own. Children love stories and reading them the same story night after night, as they love repetition too, can sometimes be exhausting. But parents have no complaints and enjoy almost every minute of the time they can spend with their little ones. All this would test the patience of even the most patient people. But parents think nothing of it.

We are ready to be patient, and do what it takes when at the end of it all there is something we desperately want, something we love or something without which we cannot live. How many times we see people who are generally impatient, who don't like to wait, want to take decisions quickly, want everything to happen in a fast and speedy manner, do a total U turn when it comes to either pursuing their passion, or trying to teach



*Deborah Smith's hand painted Golden Bridge Pottery stoneware*

something to their child or care for their ailing parents. All of this calls for tremendous patience but they are ready to do that for things that really matter to them.

Have you ever watched singers practise and do their daily *Riyaz*, sometimes repeating the same note combination or a *taan* endlessly till it becomes effortless and spontaneous? Or a potter at a wheel, as she shapes the lump of clay into a beautiful vase, slowly and carefully, almost tenderly? And then paint on a pot ready to be glazed, with a single brush stroke? It could be a dragon fly or a lotus leaf or just a sprig of bamboo. The final stroke is smooth and swift. But the preparation is meticulous, patient and exacting.

There is nothing *tamasic* about patience. It is not a sitting back and letting things take their own course, nor is it boredom or lethargy. Patience requires an inner strength, dedication and sincerity.

When we decide to dedicate our life to the Divine, work for the Divine, and take up the sadhana, besides our ardent resolve, it is patience and faith which we need. The patience of our Gurus in dealing with us, the aspirants and disciples, must become our guide every step of the way. These words of advice from Sri Aurobindo will help us along the way.

*“All who enter the spiritual path have to face the difficulties and ordeals of the path, those which rise from their own nature and those which come in from outside. The difficulties in the nature always rise again and again till you overcome them; they must be faced with both strength and patience.”* (CWSA, 31: 635)

SUNAINA MANDEEN

## *What is Patience?*



*Vital patience: indispensable for all progress.*

Perseverance is patience in action.

\*

Perseverance breaks down all obstacles.

\*

Persevere and all obstacles will be conquered.

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Patience: the capacity to wait steadily for the Realisation to come.

\*

Accomplishment is without any doubt the fruit of patience.

\*

With patience one arrives always.

\*

It is not in a day that one can overcome one's own nature. But with patience and enduring will the Victory is sure to come.

\*

With patience any difficulty can be overcome.

\*

With patience and perseverance all prayers get fulfilled.

\*

With sincerity, make an effort for progress, and with patience, know how to await the result of your effort.

\*

To know how to wait is to put Time on your side.

\*\*\*

To realise anything one must be patient. And the vaster and more important the realisation, the greater the patience must be.

In true courage there is no impatience and no rashness.

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Never mistake rashness for courage, nor indifference for patience.

THE MOTHER  
(CWM, 14: 162-170)

## *Ardour and Patience*

Whether it is in our sadhana, on our spiritual path or even in our ordinary life, patience is called for at all times. We need it most of all from our side but we also count on it or even call for it from the Divine, the guru, or even someone we are dealing with in life.

The Mother describes Her book *Prayers and Meditations* thus:

*This book comprises extracts from a diary written during years of intensive yogic discipline. It may serve as a spiritual guide to three principal categories of seekers: those who have undertaken self-mastery, those who want to find the road leading to the Divine, those who aspire to consecrate themselves more and more to the Divine Work.*

Through its pages, we learn the place of patience.

On June 27, 1913 She writes: *Thy voice is so modest, so impartial, so sublime in its patience and mercy that it does not make itself heard with any authority, any force of will but comes like a cool breeze, sweet and pure, like a crystalline murmur that brings a note of harmony to a discordant concert.*<sup>1</sup> And on July 21 She writes: *...Yet what patience is needed! How imperceptible the stages of progress!...*<sup>2</sup>

We hear of patience in several of her writings during 1914. On April 19 She writes: *But my heart is in peace, my thought free from impatience, and I entrust myself to Thy will with the smiling confidence of a child.*<sup>3</sup> A few months later, on July 13 She writes:

*Patience, strength, courage, calm and indomitable energy. . . .*

*Let the mind learn to be silent, let it not be eager to profit immediately by the forces which come to us from Thee for the integral manifestation. . . .*<sup>4</sup>

And on August 31 She writes: *In this formidable disorder and terrible destruction can be seen a great working, a necessary toil preparing the earth for a new sowing which will rise in marvellous spikes of grain and give to the world the shining harvest of a new race. . . . The vision is clear*

*and precise, the plan of Thy divine law so plainly traced that peace has come back and installed itself in the hearts of the workers. There are no more doubts and hesitations, no longer any anguish or impatience. There is only the grand straight line of the work eternally accomplishing itself in spite of all, against all, despite all contrary appearances and illusory detours.*<sup>5</sup>

On September 9 She writes:

*At times our impatience would like to know immediately the means of this manifestation. But our impatience is futile and receives no answer. For the knowledge will come at the opportune moment, at the moment of action.*

*Hence it is with the thought at peace and with the realising will calm and strong that we await the sign Thou wilt give us.*<sup>6</sup>

On October 15, 1917 She writes:

*In these hours of an extreme and anguished aspiration I see, I feel myself drawn by Thee with a dizzy rapidity along the road of transformation and my whole being vibrates to a conscious contact with the Infinite.*

*It is so that Thou givest me patience and the strength to surmount this new ordeal.*<sup>7</sup>

Impatience to achieve our inner goal leads us not towards but further away from it. The goal is lofty and far away, it needs our intense aspiration, our constant attention our ceaseless effort and ultimately our surrender as that is the only way it would even be possible. This path is tough and arduous and it is faith, perseverance and patience from our side and an answering Grace which can lead us to our goal. We have to go after it with all the intensity and power we can muster, as if we want it to be reached this very moment, and yet be ready to wait for the time it takes even if it is an eternity. The Mother describes this so beautifully during one of Her talks, using Sri Aurobindo's *Thoughts and Aphorisms* (in bold).

*Sri Aurobindo also has written this: **Aspire intensely, but without impatience.... The difference between intensity and***

<sup>1</sup> CWM, 01: 23

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 24

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 129

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 201

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 236

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 243

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 372

*impatience is very subtle—it is all a difference in vibration. It is subtle, but it makes all the difference.*

*Intensely, but without impatience. That's it. One must be in that state.*

*And for a very long time, a very long time, one must be satisfied with inner results, that is, results in one's personal and individual reactions, one's inner contact with the rest of the world—one must not expect or be premature in wanting things to materialise. Because our hastiness usually delays things. (CWM, 10: 200)*

**311 – Fix not the time and the way in which the ideal shall be fulfilled. Work and leave time and way to God all-knowing.**

**312 – Work as if the ideal had to be fulfilled swiftly and in thy lifetime; persevere as if thou knewest it not to be unless**

***purchased by a thousand years yet of labour. That which thou darkest not expect till the fifth millennium, may bloom out with tomorrow's dawning and that which thou hopest and lustest after now, may have been fixed for thee in thy hundredth advent.***

*This is exactly the attitude we should all have towards transformation: as much energy and ardour as if we were certain of achieving it in our present life, as much patience and endurance as if we needed centuries to realise it.*

29 January 1970

(CWM, 10: 301)

This is what we must aspire for, in all calmness and quiet and with total faith.

SUNAINA MANDEEN

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## The Mother Answers

(Editor's Note: *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gave detailed and personal attention to their disciples and with divine patience answered their questions, cleared their doubts and gave them hope and courage to go ahead on the path. Going through these letters one sees the importance placed by both of Them on patience. We bring you some selections of these answers as even though they were meant for someone specific, there is a lot we can learn and take from it too.*)

(From CWM, 16)

In any event, calm and patience are absolutely necessary—and you ought to have them since my blessings are with you. (pg. 54)

\*

You must not lose patience or courage; everything will turn out all right. (pg. 59)

\*

I understand your difficulty very well. It is very common and can only be solved with much endurance in the will and much patience. (pg. 136)

\*

Do not grieve. Always the same battle must be won several times, especially when it is waged against the hostile forces.

That is why one must be armed with patience and keep faith in the final victory. (pg. 184)

\*

*Sweet Mother,*

You speak (in Conversations) of the plunge we must take in order to have the true spiritual experience. Is it possible to achieve it by aspiration alone, or is there a method or discipline to be followed?

Everything is possible. All paths lead to the goal provided they are followed with persistence and sincerity.

It is best for each person to find his own path, but for this the aspiration must be ardent, the will unshakable, the patience unflinching. (pp. 321-322)

\*

*Sweet Mother,*

*What are the qualities needed for one to be called "a true child of the Ashram"?*

Sincerity, courage, discipline, endurance, absolute faith in the Divine work and unshakable trust in the Divine Grace. All this must be accompanied by a sustained, ardent, persevering aspiration and a boundless patience.

Happy New Year  
28 December 1966 (pp. 345-346)

\*

*Sweet Mother,*

*How can one remember at every moment that whatever one does is for You? Particularly when one wants to make a complete offering, how should one proceed, never forgetting that it is for the Divine?*

To achieve that, one must have an obstinate will and a great patience. But once one has taken the resolution to do it, the divine help will be there to support and to help. This help is felt inwardly in the heart.

Blessings.  
9 September 1969 (pg. 398)

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## *Sri Aurobindo Answers*

(From CWSA, 31)

It seems to me that the demand for patience is not so terribly unreasonable. (pg. 33)

\*

Do not allow yourself to admit any movement of vital depression, still less a depressed condition. As for the external being, it is always, not only in you but in everyone, a difficult animal to handle. It has to be dealt with by patience and a quiet and cheerful perseverance; never get depressed by its resistance, for that only makes it sensitive and aggrieved and difficult, or else discouraged. Give it rather the encouragement of sunlight and a quiet pressure, and one day you will find it opening entirely to the Grace. (pg. 187)

\*

The transformation of the external being is the most difficult part of the Yoga and it demands faith, patience, quietude and firm determination. (pg. 207)

\*

(From CWM, 17)

A great vigilance is required to avoid falling into the movements of the lower consciousness; and a still greater will is needed to get out of them. So arm yourself with patience and a strong will. (pg. 134)

\*

The path is long. That is why one must have patience and an unflinching sincerity towards oneself. (pg. 370)

\*

Persevere in your aspiration and effort, do not allow yourself to be discouraged by setbacks. This always happens in the beginning. But if you continue to fight without paying any attention to them, a day will come when the resistances give way and the difficulties vanish. My help is always with you, but you must learn to use it and to rely on it rather than on your own resources. (CWM, 14: 162)

THE MOTHER

It is true that anger and strife are in the nature of the human vital and do not go easily; but what is important is to have the will to change and the clear perception that these things must go. If that will and perception are there, then in the end they will go. The most important help to it is, here also, for the psychic being to grow within—for that brings a certain kindness, patience, charity towards all and one no longer regards everything from the point of view of one's own ego and its pain or pleasure, likings and dislikings. (pg. 275)

\*

They are the kind of inconveniences that one always has when people live and work together. It arises from a misunderstanding between two minds or two wills, each pulling his own way and feeling hurt or vexed if the other does not follow. This can only be cured by a change of consciousness—for when one goes into a deeper consciousness, first, one sees the cause of these things and is not troubled; one acquires an understanding, patience and tolerance that makes one free from vexation and other reactions. If both or all grow in consciousness, then



there arises a mutual understanding of each other's viewpoints which makes it easier to bring in harmony and smooth working. It is this that should be sought by the change within—to create the same harmony from outside by exterior means is not so easy, as the human mind is stiff in its perceptions and the human vital insistent on its own way of action. (pg. 323)

\*

It is necessary to have a great patience—so as to go through these conditions and not get apprehensive or restless—and a confidence that all difficulties will be overcome. (pg. 407)

\*

The effort demanded of the sadhak is that of aspiration, rejection and surrender. If these three are done, the rest is to come of itself by the grace of the Mother and the working of her force in you. But of the three the most important is surrender of which the first necessary form is trust and confidence and patience in difficulty. (pg. 676)

\*

“I want the Divine and the Divine only; since I want and need, I shall surely arrive, however long it takes, and till I do, I shall persist and endure with patience and courage.” (pg. 730)

\*

(From CWSA, 35)

Patience, quiet endurance, calm resolution to go through to the end and triumph, these are the qualities now required of you—the less spectacular but more substantial of the warrior virtues. (pg. 760).

There should be no impatience if the progress is slow or difficulties many— all should be done in a calm patience—and full reliance on the Divine Mother. This period tests the capacity of the sadhak and the sincerity of his aspiration towards the Divine. (pg. 551)

\*

Also without establishing in oneself calm, sincerity, peace, patience and perseverance this Yoga cannot be done, for many difficulties have to be faced and it takes years and years to overcome them definitely and altogether. (pg. 597)

\*

Remember that patience and equanimity and good feeling for all are the first needs of the sadhak. (pg. 752).

\*

(From CWSA, 29)

A constant trust and patience must be cultivated—must be acquired—not least when things go against—for when they are favourable, trust and patience are easy. (pg. 32)

\*

Surrender everything, reject all other desires or interests, call on the divine Shakti to open the vital nature and bring down calm, peace, light, Ananda into all the centres. Aspire, await with faith and patience the result. All depends on a complete sincerity and an integral consecration and aspiration. (pg. 76)

\*

The road of Yoga is long, every inch of ground has to be won against much resistance and no quality is more needed by the sadhak than patience and single-minded perseverance with a faith that remains firm through all difficulties, delays and apparent failures. (pg. 110)

\*

They [*patience and peace*] go together. By having patience under all kinds of pressure you lay the foundations of peace. (pg. 114)

SRI AUROBINDO

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*I am weary of the childish impatience which cries & blasphemes and denies the ideal because the Golden Mountains cannot be reached in our little day or in a few momentary centuries. – Sri Aurobindo (CWSA, 12: 464)*

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## *My Little Magpie Robin*



That time, many moons ago  
and I cannot remember exactly when –  
I wanted so much to flower.

There wasn't any particular colour or fragrance  
I had in mind, anyway it was so many moons ago  
and I can't remember when.

But I arrived a tad late, and no one brought me a flower-dress  
which fit;  
saying nothing, I sat on the hurting side of the fence – no  
tears  
welling, and the Mother whispered: wait.

The little magpie robin will take with her light patterns  
to your end of days – her sweet cries will pierce your pain  
and remember you would've flowered again

My palm petalling pink petals, dead wood, sloughing  
memories  
of tall trees and of a bud's uncertain ascend  
from your silly heart's callousness and deep philosophes

Striving to sky, sea – an unblue sun  
mix with aromas of coffee and fresh mint,  
little green fish, yellow dragonflies, dark halves of moons,  
ship horns, *Ma's* light brown eyes.

And your little magpie robin remains  
nonchalant, ripping apart precious things –  
battle cries, starry-eyes welling, cast away,  
with her relentless whistling;  
then I thought I heard,

Nothing here is left behind; nothing taken.  
And, behind the sun's shadow – when she darts  
around my breeze and salt-rimmed emptiness,  
your pink will raise its head

above the torn silences – the heavy sighs of days,  
when you become the song again your little magpie robin  
sings.

GAYATRI MAJUMDAR  
June 2023

## *On Parijat and Patience*

I have a small parijat tree in my little garden at home. In fact, one of the selling points of this house for me was this tree which was just a tiny plant at the time. Over the years the tree has suffered some harsh blows, including some cyclonic storms — it barely survived cyclone Thane! But it perseveres and continues to thrive with some tender love and care.



For the first few years after it had started to blossom and shower its fragrant flowers every dawn, I used to gather the flowers for a specific practice I had developed for myself. I named the practice – Patience through Parijat.

The gracious parijat tree, a sacred tree also known as wish-granting tree, offers to the Earth its most precious gift in the form of beautiful and delicate flowers. And I, a child of this Mother Earth, wanting to grow in my aspiration to become more patient, would gather some of these flowers and bring them indoors for my practice.

Slowly arranging these tiny and fragrant flowers so that each flower stands white-creamy side up and on its tiny orange foot was my simple practice.

Of course, the first impulse was to gather these flowers in my palm and just immerse myself for a few seconds in their divine fragrance. Having done that, the blossoms which were somewhat soiled by the wet earth needed to be tenderly cleaned making sure that neither their small white-creamy petals nor their tiny orange centres broke. As they would dry

out for a bit, I decided upon the appropriate *urli* or bowl in which to do the arrangement.

Then would start the most favourite task of picking up and arranging these tiny flowers, one by one, white side up, orange side down. My most preferred way was to float these flowers in water. Sometimes for the sake of contrast, I also alternated and put in a few blossoms upside down, but that was rather rare. There is something so beautiful about the way the tiny orange centre shines through the middle of the white-creamy petals.

The flowers stayed nice for two to three days, and interestingly even as they began to wither away, they just took on a darker creamy shade and did not really look so bad. At least to my eyes they did not! And when I was ready to give the old flowers and the used water back to the Mother Earth (by way of either putting them in a compost bin or simply sprinkling the flowers and the water under some plant or bush in the ground or in a pot), I would admire this beautiful yellow-orangeish coloured water which had taken in itself the vibrant, fiery colour from the flowers.

The orange or saffron centre of this sacred flower represents the fire in the heart, the source of all our energy, the fire that purifies, the fire of aspiration, will, and perseverance. It is believed that the dye produced from the central part of Parijat



flowers was used to colour the robes of monks and ascetics in olden times. And in our times too, we find that the Mother has given to this sacred Parijat flower a most appropriate spiritual significance — Aspiration (Innumerable, obstinate, repeating itself tirelessly).

And when I had just a little patience or wanted my practice session to be really small, I gathered only a small bunch of flowers so that I could do only a small arrangement for an offering to the Mother.

There were also those days when I did not feel like doing my lessons. Though on such occasions I would pretend to myself about not having much time, but honestly it was the patience that I lacked or the aspiration or will to practice my lesson in patience. But if I still felt like spending some time with these delicate flowers, I would just spread them out on an old brass plate and in the centre put some small vase with a few leaves for contrast.

After a few years, this practice somehow stopped with some unavoidable change in my personal routine.

But even today I remember clearly that the very act of gathering these tiny flowers one by one from the ground and spending the next half hour or so cleaning and arranging them made me forget whatever pressing demands there were on my time. And in those few minutes there was no hurry, no rush-rush to finish up the task at hand and move on to other things. There was simply a quiet joy of being with the sacred flowers. Giving myself to the moment. A self-giving. As the Mother



tells us, from a purely psychological point of view, aspiration is a movement of self-giving.

This requires tremendous patience as most of us cannot give ourselves completely without strong resistance from one or more of the various self-assertive and demanding parts that make up our outer instrumental being. Patiently, each part has to be silenced, its cravings and urges have to be carefully observed in the white light of the inmost part within, the psychic or the divine spark within—that is, if we are at all open to its influence. Only then each part and its legitimate urges for self-satisfaction or self-expression can be placed at their right place, their due place around the core, the central part of our being, the psychic entity.

All this one can learn from tiny little Parijat flowers! Such is the power of flowers. Such is the power of aspiration. Such is the power of the flowers called aspiration! These tiny and fragrant flowers can be great teachers of patience, if we approach them with an aspiration to grow in that quality. They can also help us learn the value of walking gently on the earth, and handling the gifts that Mother Nature has bestowed upon us with sensitivity, delicacy and care.

But most importantly, these delicate flowers also serve as important reminder that we must constantly intensify our aspiration but without any impatience. The legend of Parijat tree goes back to antiquity. This is truly a tree of the heavens! It is said that it was Sri Krishna, at the behest of his wife Satyabhama, who brought a branch of Parijat from the heavenly realms of Indra and planted it on earth. In his anger, Indra cursed that the tree will never bear fruit and its flowers will not stay on the tree after sunrise.

But Sri Krishna's elder wife also wanted the fragrant flowers of Parijat for her daily puja offerings to the Divine. So to please both his wives, Sri Krishna planted the tree in Satyabhama's garden in such a way that the most of the tree's flowers fell in Rukmini's garden at night.

Such stories are deeply symbolic, often hiding many truths within, waiting to be revealed. According to the Mother, aspiration represents the pure and sacred flame of the psychic fire rising from the depths of consciousness. Rukmini was an incarnation of Ma Lakshmi or Sri, with her abode in Vaikuntha. And Satyabhama was an incarnation of Mother Earth, Bhu Devi. By planting the Parijat tree in the earth, whose flowers, which symbolise aspiration, would reach the heavenly feet of the Supreme when offered by Sri Lakshmi herself — it is as if an aspiration was planted in the very heart of the earth-consciousness to aspire for a divine life.

But this earthly life also presents great resistance because of the downward pull of the matter and the inconscient. A tremendous labour of gods is needed to break such hard resistance. This requires the wisdom, equanimity and most of all patience of a yogi. Or rather many yogis who will lead the humanity on the path of a conscious integral transformation of their outer instrumental nature so that they may be ready to receive the new light and be the pioneers of a new world.

*“Education is certainly one of the best means of preparing the consciousness for a higher development,”* says the Mother.<sup>1</sup> Education must facilitate the learner to become more and more conscious of the different parts of one's being and their respective functions. But knowing alone is not enough, education must also facilitate cultivation of greater and conscious self-control and self-mastery.

An individual is not a single entity, but rather a complex being with different parts intermixed and interacting with one another. Indian yogic psychology speaks of the double nature of human beings. Ordinarily human beings primarily live in their outer nature and know themselves only through the ego-self.

Behind the surface or frontal consciousness of the outer being there is an inner or subliminal consciousness. And behind the inner being is the true, inmost being, which is a spark of the Divine Presence within the individual. This inmost part often spoken of as soul is referred to as psychic being in Integral Yoga terminology.

The external nature is determined by an intermix of three components — mind, life, and body, constituting the three parts of the outer being — the mental, the vital and the physical. Though separate and distinct, these three main divisions of the outer being are interconnected. Thus, we have several subdivisions interacting with one another. Only through close and constant self-observation and sincere analysis one can discern the workings of these parts. Each part has its own

nature or even different natures contained in the same part. And each part tries to assert its dominance and act according to its own preferences, likes and dislikes. This is what leads to a sense of ignorance about why we behave in a certain way or feel a certain emotion or sensation. This ignorance leads up to a sort of inability to gain mastery over ourselves.

The path to knowing oneself begins by knowing the working of these parts and becoming conscious of their movements. This necessitates constant self-observation and a sincere examination of our motivations for all that we choose to do or not do. The more we know about ourselves, the greater the self-control and self-mastery we can gain.

Facilitating such self-awareness for the learners must become one of the most essential goals of education. But for that to happen, the teacher herself or himself must be a living example for the pupils. Which effectively means that a teacher must not only be a complete master of his or her movements but must also have tremendous patience to guide others on this path of self-awareness and self-mastery.

*“To be a good teacher one must have the insight and knowledge of a Guru with an unflinching patience.”*<sup>2</sup>

This work is nothing short of yogic sadhana, which is why the Mother said that only a true yogi can be a true teacher! Day or night, a teacher's sadhana in becoming a master of her own movements must go on. There must be an intense but not an impatient aspiration to constantly grow inwardly so that she may bring the right example and influence in the classroom. Only then her presence and touch can awaken the aspiration in her pupils — an aspiration to grow in self-knowledge and self-mastery, an aspiration to grow in consciousness and to become a true instrument of the Divine and a conscious collaborator in bringing a true Kingdom of God on Earth.

BELOO MEHRA

<sup>1</sup> CWM, 7: 58

<sup>2</sup> CWM, 12: 370

*And above all, set them the right example.... Be yourself what you would like them to be. Give them the example of disinterestedness, patience, self-control, constant good humour, the overcoming of one's little personal dislikes, a sort of constant goodwill, an understanding of others' difficulties; and that equality of temper which makes children free from fear, for what makes children deceitful*

*and untruthful, and even cunning, is the fear of being punished. If they feel secure, they will hide nothing and you will then be able to help them to be loyal and honest. Of all things the most important is good example.*

THE MOTHER  
(CWM, 09: 81)

## *Patience and Perseverance*

(Editor's Note: This is one of the stories for children by the Mother adapted from a book published in 1911. Later on She wrote: *These stories were written to help children to discover themselves and follow a path of right and beauty.*<sup>1</sup>)

The people of the Punjab have a song which goes like this:

*The bulbul does not always sing in the garden,  
And the garden is not always in bloom;  
Happiness does not always reign,  
And friends are not always together.*

The conclusion to be drawn from this song is that we cannot expect to be always happy, and that to know how to be patient is most useful. For there are few days in our lives which do not give us the opportunity to learn greater patience.

You want to see a very busy man to ask him something. You go to his house. Already many visitors are there and he keeps you waiting a very long time before seeing you. You stay there quietly, perhaps for several hours. You are patient.

Another time, the person you wish to see is not at home when you arrive. You return again the next day, but his door is still closed. You go back a third time, but he is sick and cannot see you. You let a few days go by and then return once more. And if something new again prevents you from meeting him, nevertheless you are not discouraged, but renew the attempt until at last you see him. This kind of patience is called perseverance.

Perseverance is an active patience, a patience that marches on.

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The famous Genoese sailor Columbus set sail from Spain to cross the unknown seas of the West.

For days and weeks on end, in spite of the murmurs of his companions, he persisted in his will to reach a new land; in spite of delays and difficulties, he would not give up until he had reached the first American islands. Thus he discovered the



New World.

What did he ask of his companions? He asked them only to have patience, for they had simply to rely on him and quietly allow him to lead them. But what did he himself need to reach his goal? He needed the sustained energy and the unremitting will that we call perseverance.

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The celebrated potter, Bernard Palissy, wanted to recover the lost secret of beautiful old glazed china enamelled in rich colours.

For months and years on end, he untiringly pursued his experiments. His attempts to find the glaze remained fruitless for a long time. He devoted all he had to his search; and for days and nights together he watched over the kiln he had built, endlessly trying out new processes for preparing and firing his pottery. And not only did no one give him any help or encouragement, but his friends and his neighbours called him a madman, and even his wife reproached him for what he was doing.

Several times he had to suspend his experiments for lack of resources, but as soon as he could, he would take them up again with renewed courage. Finally one day he did not even have the wood he needed to stoke his kiln; so, disregarding the cries and threats of his household, he threw his own furniture, to the very last stick, into the fire. And when everything was burnt, he opened the kiln and found it full of the brightly glazed pottery which made him famous and which he had sacrificed so many years to discover.

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<sup>1</sup> CWM, 02: 171



What was it that his wife and friends lacked that they could not wait for his hour of success to come, without harassing him and making his task more difficult? Simply patience. And what was the only thing he himself never lacked, the only thing that never failed him and which enabled him in the end to triumph over all difficulty and scorn? It was precisely perseverance, that is to say, the mightiest force of all.

For nothing in the world can prevail against perseverance. And even the greatest things are always an accumulation of small and untiring efforts.

Enormous boulders have been completely destroyed, worn by raindrops falling one after another on the same spot.

A grain of sand is nothing very powerful, but when many come together, they form a dune and check the ocean.

And when you learn about natural history, you will hear how mountains have been formed under the sea by little animalcules piled one upon another, who by their persistent efforts have made magnificent islands and archipelagos rise above the waves.

Don't you think that your small, repeated efforts could also achieve great things?

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The famous sage Shankara whose name brought glory to the land of Malabar, and who lived about 1200 years ago, had resolved from childhood to become a Sannyasi.

For a long time his mother, although she appreciated the nobility of his wish, did not allow him to devote himself to that way of life.

One day mother and child went to bathe in a river. Shankara dived in and felt his foot suddenly seized by a crocodile. Death seemed close at hand. But even at that dreadful moment the brave child thought only of his great project and cried out to his mother, "I am lost! A crocodile is dragging me down. But let me at least die a Sannyasi!"

"Yes, yes, my son," his mother sobbed in despair.

Shankara felt such joy that he found the strength to free his foot and throw himself ashore.

From that moment he grew in learning as in years. He became a guru, and remained true to his great work of teaching philosophy to the very end of his wonderful life.

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All who love India know the beautiful poem of the Mahabharata.

It was written in Sanskrit many hundreds of years ago. Until recent times, no European could read it unless he knew Sanskrit, and that was rare. A translation into one of the European languages was needed.

Babu Pratap Chandra Rai decided to devote himself to this work. In his own land he was able to find a learned friend, Kishori Mohan Ganguly, who could translate the Sanskrit book into English, and its hundred parts were published one by one.

For twelve years Pratap Chandra Rai went on with the task he had set himself. He devoted all his resources to the publication of the book. And when he had nothing left he travelled all over India to ask help from all who were willing to give. He received help from princes and peasants, from scholars and simple folk, from friends in Europe and America.

In the course of one of his journeys he caught the pernicious fever from which he died. During his sickness all his thoughts were turned towards the completion of his work. And even when it became painful for him to speak, he would still say to his wife:

"The book must be finished. Don't spend money on my funeral rites if it is needed for the printing. Live as simply as you can so as to save money for the Mahabharata."

He died full of love for India and her great poem.

His widow, Sundari Bala Rai, faithfully carried out his great wish. One year later the translator completed his work, and the eleven volumes of the Mahabharata were presented to the European public who could now know and admire the eighteen Parvas of the splendid epic poem. And reading it, they would learn to respect the great skill and wisdom of the profound thinkers who were the poets of ancient India.

Such are the fruits borne by the efforts of all those who, like Pratap Chandra Rai and so many other useful men, know how to persevere.

And you, brave children, will you not join the great army of men and women who never tire of doing good and never abandon their task until they have completed it?

In this wide world, there is no lack of noble work to be accomplished, nor is there any lack of good people to undertake it; but what is very often lacking is the perseverance which alone can carry it through to the end.

THE MOTHER  
(CWM, 02: 198-202)

*The things to be taught to a child*

- 1) *The necessity of absolute sincerity.*
- 2) *The certitude of the final victory of Truth.*
- 3) *The possibility and the will to progress.*

*Good temper, fair-play, truthfulness.*

*Patience, endurance, perseverance.*

*Equanimity, courage, cheerfulness.*

THE MOTHER  
(CWM, 12: 152)

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