



# *Sri Aurobindo's action*

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## *Courage*



*Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk,  
The hand ready to smite, the eye to scout,  
Casting a javelin regard in front,  
Heroes and soldiers of the army of Light.*

Sri Aurobindo (*Savitri*)

## *Sincerity*



*Be sincere and absolute in your consecration to  
the Divine and your life will become harmonious and beautiful.*

The Mother  
22 November 1934

# *Courage and Sincerity*

Curated by BELOO MEHRA

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## Editorial

### Be Sincere, Be Courageous

As India enters the 76<sup>th</sup> year of her political independence from the British, it is appropriate to recall that Sri Aurobindo's was the first voice raised to demand complete independence (*pūrṇa swarāj*). His unparalleled work for India's freedom, while concentrated over a short period, gave the right turning and direction to the movement at the right time.

At the time when India's political leaders were busy petitioning and appealing to the British colonial masters for minor concessions, Sri Aurobindo walked on the scene and awakened the Indians to the path of courage and boldness, and struggle and sacrifice for freedom. As he remarked in one of his writings in *Bande Mataram*, politics is the work of Kshatriya and it is the virtues of Kshatriya that must be developed if India wants to win and protect her freedom.

Since the past one year the entire nation and the world have been celebrating the 150 years of Sri Aurobindo. In 1971, when someone asked the Mother on how to best celebrate the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobindo, her reply was: "Aspire and be sincere and obstinate in your endeavour," and to "Make an effort to progress in understanding." (CWM, 13: 14). These words have been our inspiration as we worked on the current double issue which brings to light some guidance from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on cultivating virtues of sincerity and courage.

### On Sincerity

Sri Aurobindo arrived in the little French colony of Pondicherry on April 4, 1910, following a divine command. It was an *ādeśh* to prepare India and Indians, the world and the humanity for a new freedom that can only come with a change of consciousness. India's political freedom was assured — it was Sri Krishna who in Alipore prison had assured Sri Aurobindo of this — and now the work that lay ahead was even bigger. It was a work to be done for the earth, to bring down a new consciousness which will chart a new course of evolution itself.

At Pondicherry, his cave of *tapasyā*, Sri Aurobindo, the mahayogi, was inwardly battling the dark forces of inconscient and subconscient planes to prepare the earth

for the Supramental descent, and outwardly also keeping a close eye on the world-forces and applying his Overmental force as and when required to guide the direction of major world-events. His was the God's labour to bring down the Supramental Consciousness. And at the same time in his Divine Compassion as a Guru and Friend he was also lovingly guiding those near him on the path of *sādhana*, helping them to turn their energies toward the one change needful — change of consciousness. As he said in a letter,

"... our attitude is that humanity cannot grow out of its limitations by the ordinary means adopted by the human mind, politics, social reform, philanthropy, etc.,—these can only be temporary or local palliatives. The only true escape is a change of consciousness, a change into a greater, wider and purer way of being, and a life and action based upon that change. It is therefore to that that the energies must be turned, once the spiritual orientation is complete." (CWSA, 29: 43)

Sincerity marks the beginning of all aspiration for a change of consciousness — sincerity in intention, in our effort and in our offering of the effort to the Divine. As the Mother once said, sincerity is the need of the hour. To progressively become more sincere instruments of the Divine's work, we must constantly invoke Her help with a child-like trust and candidness. There should be no pretension, no hypocrisy, no duplicity of any kind. Life gives us countless reminders of the need to constantly become aware of those countless little, pesky flaws in our nature that stand in the way of making the inner aspiration more sincere and true and complete.

The supremely compassionate Sri Aurobindo once wrote in a letter that for a true *sādhaka*, all outward struggles, troubles, calamities are only a means of surmounting ego and rajasic desire and attaining to complete surrender. All these are opportunities for us to grow by experiencing the consequence of our every little insincerity. These are moments life offers us to grow in sincerity.

**"Be absolutely convinced that everything that happens, happens in order to give us precisely the lesson we needed, and if we are sincere in the "sadhana", the lesson should be accepted with joy and gratitude.**

**“For one who aspires to the divine life, what can the actions of a blind and ignorant humanity matter to him?”**

The Mother, (CWM, 14: 219)

Whether it is traversing the inner or the outer paths of our journeys, sincerity is the biggest safeguard if we seek true progress. As Sri Aurobindo reminds us — what is true of the individual, is also true of the nation. We are at a point in our nation's history when we must reflect on how sincere we are as a nation — sincere in our work for the nation, sincere in our thoughts toward the nation, sincere in our effort to identify with the nation-soul of India.

The only safeguards are sincerity, honesty and straightforwardness. But none of these are easy to acquire given the admixture of truth and falsehood that are our world and life. Only a pure, intense flame of aspiration within can help us grow in sincerity.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have insisted so much on sincerity as the biggest safeguard in all inner and outer effort for progress that it is rather difficult to decide which of their passages to leave out when editing a small journal. We have made a small attempt by categorising and organising some of Their words on Sincerity in the issue. In addition to exploring the place of sincerity in *sādhana*, there are separate pieces on the significance and ways of inculcating sincerity in the children, and also on sincerity in the realm of social-political domain.

On Courage

**“Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk,”**

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 33-34: 211)

This line from *Savitri* — consciously or sub-consciously, has guided the selections that go in the section on courage. The selections highlight the truth that courage and faith, courage and truth, courage and love — these things always go together.

A sincere and deeper looking within reveals that most often disappointments in life come because of our clinging to our mental and vital preferences. These egoistic preferences prevent us from surrendering to the hidden wisdom guiding our life's journey through all the veils of ignorance. This failure to surrender indicates a lack of faith and trust in the Divine's Plan for us.

When faced with a difficulty, the right attitude is to call in the Mother's help. We must ask for courage so that we can pick ourselves up. Strengthening our faith and trust which once gave us the courage to face the challenges is essential. We must pray for the Divine Grace. But for the Grace to work sincere aspiration and steadfast effort to purify our instrumental nature are equally essential. It requires us to give up our pride, our egoistic preferences, our know-it-all ignorance, our will that life should go our way. Such surrender is not easy. But nothing that is truly worth doing is ever easy.

What is outside is a projection of what is inside.

It takes a long time for the inner 'I' to cultivate all the equanimity, trust and faith necessary for a true surrender. This is why the outer 'I' needs repeated lessons. Such training help us actually practice what the mind believes it knows in theory.

To work our way through the repeated lessons, we need immense courage. We learn to confront the various obstacles in our nature. Confronting them means not to manifest in action any movements resulting from the weaknesses and defects of our nature. It also means using our willpower to reject these movements. It necessitates that we do not rationalise or give excuses for the weaknesses. Rather we must continue to aspire for light and strength, and turn to the Divine for help.

Personal effort at rejecting the weaknesses is possible only when we call in the Divine help. We are not alone doing it all by ourselves. We can't do it by ourselves alone. The Mother is always guiding our steps, walking with us. She is protecting us as we walk through the net-practice sessions of Life. Let us never forget to call Her.

What is true of the individual is also true of the nation.

**“A brave, frank, clean-hearted, courageous and aspiring youth is the only foundation on which the future nation can be built.”**

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 8: 168)

What should be our attitude when it comes to challenges in a nation's life? Calling in for Divine Help and Grace? Yes, most certainly. Because our intellect, no matter how sophisticated and developed it is, will only show us partial truths. We will never grasp the deeper forces working themselves out and leading the nation toward its true destiny through the turmoil and struggle.

What else is needed? Rejecting all the falsehood and redundancies we have accumulated in our collective life and mind? Again, a big yes. It also requires purifying our collective ego of its biases, preferences and prejudices.

Most importantly, it requires re-kindling our aspiration to identify with the soul of the nation which unites us all despite our outer diversity. This does not mean closing our eyes to all the disunity and chaos and ugliness in our midst. It actually means rededicating ourselves to connect with the deeper light and truth within. Because that same source of light and truth also hides behind and within the outer body, life and mind of the nation.

**“We must face life as a whole, with all the ugliness, falsehood and cruelty it still contains, but we must take care to discover in ourselves the source of all goodness, all beauty, all light and all truth, in order to bring this source consciously into contact with the world so as to transform it.”**

The Mother, (CWM, 12: 243)

All this is not the work of a weak heart, mind and body.

Tremendous courage is needed. The Mother's advice – Cling to Truth – has two unspoken pre-requisites. First, we keep the inner temple clean where the Truth can take its seat. Second, we cultivate a true courage which makes it possible to cling to Truth. This requires a true warrior spirit, that of a Samurai, or as Sri Aurobindo describes, Kshatratej guided by the Brahmatej, the true Aryan spirit.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother strongly emphasise courage as one of the most important qualities to be cultivated by an aspirant on the path of yoga of transformation. This is true both at the individual and the collective levels. The present issue is our humble attempt at highlighting some of their insights on this soul-quality. We explore 'courage' through several different viewpoints, to present an integral picture.

The Mother used the art of storytelling most sweetly and effectively to inculcate higher and nobler values in children and adults. We feature a collection of a few stories told by the Mother which highlight what is true courage and how to embody it.

Sri Aurobindo once wrote: “All perfect perfection must have something in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan.” (CWSA, 13: 210) His words on the Aryan ideal of courage are a must-read for all, especially all Indians. We also



highlight some of his words on Courage and Nationalism. Courage, he says is the first quality, absolutely essential if we truly wish to work for the glory of our motherland. No half-baked, wishy-washy patriotism; the Mother asks for sacrifice. Only a complete faith in the Divine who is leading the nation to her glorious future and a total freedom from fear will make us ready if we truly want to practice the religion of nationalism.

We hope our readers will enjoy going through this special double issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together. There is no better way to close this editorial than by recalling an important guidance given by the Mother, highlighting the importance of sincerity for all our written and spoken expression.

**“If we allow a falsehood, however small, to express itself through our mouth or our pen, how can we hope to become perfect messengers of Truth? A perfect servant of Truth should abstain even from the slightest inexactitude, exaggeration or deformation.”**

The Mother, (CWM, 14: 202)

The Mother had once given an assurance that in the measure in which our “need” for Her is sincere and genuine, it will be fulfilled. With sincere hearts, we offer this work at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and pray that She may grant us more and more of this sincere need to grow in our love for Her and to progress toward Her.

In gratitude,

BELOO MEHRA

## *Sincerity and Yoga*

**Sincerity means to accept the Divine influence only and not that of lower forces.**

**Sincerity means to be turned wholly to the Divine and accept only the Divine impulses—it means also the true and constant will or effort to be like this.**

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 29: 50)

### Become Single-Minded

I have never said that Yoga or that this Yoga is a safe and easy path. What I say is that anyone who has the will to go through can go through. For the rest, if you aim high, there is always the danger of a steep fall if you misconduct your aeroplane. But the danger is for those who allow themselves to entertain a double being, aiming high but also indulging their lower outlook and hankerings. What else can you expect when people do that? You must become single-minded, then the difficulties of the mind and vital will be overcome. Otherwise those who oscillate between their heights and their abysses, will always be in danger till they have become single-minded. That applies to the “advanced” as well as to the beginner. These are facts of nature — I can't pretend for anybody's comfort that they are otherwise. But there is the fact also that nobody need keep himself in this danger. One-mindedness (*ekanisthā*), surrender to the Divine, faith, true love for the Divine, complete sincerity in the will, spiritual humility (real, not formal) — there are so many things that can be a safeguard against any chance of eventual downfall. Slips, stumbles, difficulties, upsets everyone has; one can't be insured against these things, but if one has the safeguards, they are transitory, help the nature to learn and are followed by a better progress.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 31: 674-675)

**All sincere prayers are granted, but it may take some time to realise materially.**

The Mother, (CWM, 15: 207)

### Give yourself completely without Demand

To walk through life armoured against all fear, peril and disaster, only two things are needed, two that go always together—the Grace of the Divine Mother and on your side an inner state made up of faith, sincerity and surrender. Let

your faith be pure, candid and perfect. An egoistic faith in the mental and vital being tainted by ambition, pride, vanity, mental arrogance, vital self-will, personal demand, desire for the petty satisfactions of the lower nature is a low and smoke-obscured flame that cannot burn upwards to heaven. Regard your life as given you only for the divine work and to help in the divine manifestation. Desire nothing but the purity, force, light, wideness, calm, Ananda of the divine consciousness and its insistence to transform and perfect your mind, life and body. Ask for nothing but the divine, spiritual and supramental Truth, its realisation on earth and in you and in all who are called and chosen and the conditions needed for its creation and its victory over all opposing forces.

Let your sincerity and surrender be genuine and entire. When you give yourself, give completely, without demand, without condition, without reservation so that all in you shall belong to the Divine Mother and nothing be left to the ego or given to any other power.

The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you. And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unflinching strength. For the grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 32: 8-9)

**Be honest towards yourself — (no self-deception).**

**Be sincere towards the Divine — (no bargaining in the surrender).**

**Be straightforward with humanity — (no pretence and show).**

The Mother, (CWM, 14: 70)

### Strength, Sincerity and Grace

There is nothing unintelligible in what I say about strength and Grace. Strength has a value for spiritual realisation, but to



say that it can be done by strength only and by no other means is a violent exaggeration. Grace is not an invention, it is a fact of spiritual experience. Many who would be considered as mere nothings by the wise and strong have attained by Grace; illiterate, without mental power or training, without “strength” of character or will, they have yet aspired and suddenly or rapidly grown into spiritual realisation, because they had faith or because they were sincere. I do not see why these facts which are facts of spiritual history and of quite ordinary spiritual experience should be discussed and denied and argued as if they were mere matters of speculation. Strength, if it is spiritual, is a power for spiritual realisation; a greater power is sincerity; the greatest power of all is Grace. I have said times without number that if a man is sincere, he will go through in spite of long delay and overwhelming difficulties. I have repeatedly spoken of the Divine Grace. I have referred any number of times to the line of the Gita:

*Aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā śucah*  
 “I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve.”  
 Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 29: 172)

**Be sincere and you will be helped.**

The Mother, (Agenda, 1: 46)

. . . the conversion of great sinners into great saints, of men of little or no virtue into spiritual seekers and God-lovers has frequently happened in religious and spiritual history — as in Europe St. Augustine, in India Chaitanya's Jagai and Madhai, Bilwamangal and many others. The house of the Divine is not closed to any who knock sincerely at its gates, whatever their past stumbles and errors. Human virtues and human errors are bright and dark wrappings of a divine element within which once it pierces the veil, can burn through both towards the heights of the Spirit.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 29: 42)

### Sincere and Persistent Will

Sometimes one may read a whole book of philosophy and not progress a step farther. Sometimes one may be quite a fervent devotee of a religion and not progress. There are people who have spent entire lifetimes seated in contemplation and attained nothing. There are people (we have well-known examples) who used to do the most modest of manual works, like a cobbler mending old shoes, and who had an experience. It is altogether beyond what one thinks and says of it. It is a gift, that's all. And all that is needed is to be that — to succeed in identifying oneself with it and live it. At times you read one sentence in a book and that leads you there. Sometimes you read entire books of philosophy or religion and they get

you nowhere. There are people, however, whom the reading of philosophy books helps to go ahead. But all these things are secondary. There is only one thing that's important: that is a sincere and persistent will, for these things don't happen in a twinkling. So one must persevere.

The Mother, (CWM, 6: 25-26)

### Complete Sincerity possible only by Spiritual Endeavour

Men are always mixed and there are qualities and defects mingled together almost inextricably in their nature. What a man wants to be or wants others to see in him or what he is sometimes on one side of his nature or in some relations can be very different from what he is in the actual fact or in other relations or on another side of his nature. To be absolutely sincere, straightforward, open, is not an easy achievement for human nature. It is only by spiritual endeavour that one can realise it—and to do it needs a severity of introspective self-vision, an unsparing scrutiny of self-observation of which many sadhaks or Yogins even are not capable and it is only by an illumining Grace that reveals the sadhak to himself and transforms what is deficient in him that it can be done. And even then only if he himself consents and lends himself wholly to the divine working.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 29: 51)

### The most important thing for Purification of the Heart

...the most important thing for purification of the heart is an absolute sincerity. No pretence with oneself, no concealment from the Divine or oneself or the Guru, a straight look at one's nature and one's movements, a straight will to make them straight. It does not so much matter if it takes time; one must be prepared to make it one's whole life-task to seek the Divine. Purifying the heart means after all a pretty considerable achievement and it is no use getting despondent, despairful etc. because one finds things in oneself that still need to be changed. If one keeps the true will and true attitude, then the intuitions or intimations from within will begin to grow, become clear, precise, unmistakable and the strength to follow them will grow also. And then before even you are satisfied with yourself, the Divine will be satisfied with you and begin to withdraw the veil by which he protects himself and his seeker against a premature and perilous grasping of the greatest thing to which humanity can aspire.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 30: 43)

**Be sincere. Sincerity is the gate to Divinity.**

The Mother, (CWM, 14: 65)



It is difficult for the ordinary Christian to be of a piece, because the teachings of Christ are on quite another plane from the consciousness of the intellectual and vital man trained by the education and society of Europe—the latter, even as a minister or priest, has never been called upon to practise what he preached in entire earnest. But it is difficult for the human nature anywhere to think, feel and act from one centre of true faith, belief or vision. The average Hindu considers the spiritual life the highest, reveres the Sannyasi, is moved by the Bhakta; but if one of the family circle leaves the world for spiritual life, what tears, arguments, remonstrances, lamentations! It is almost worse than if he had died a natural death. It is not conscious mental insincerity—they will argue like Pandits and go to Shastra to prove you in the wrong; it is unconsciousness, a vital insincerity which they are not aware of and which uses the reasoning mind as an accomplice.

That is why we insist so much on sincerity in the Yoga—and that means to have all the being consciously turned towards the one Truth, the one Divine. But that for human nature is one of the most difficult of tasks, much more difficult than a rigid asceticism or a fervent piety. Religion itself does not give this complete harmonised sincerity—it is only the psychic being and the one-souled spiritual aspiration that can give it.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 29: 53-54)

**If you are sure you have achieved absolute sincerity,  
you can be sure that you are immersed in falsehood!**

The Mother, (CWM, 15: 301)

To make the Material Life an Expression of One's Highest Aspiration makes One Noble, Upright and Sincere in Character

In every normal being there is the necessity, the need—an absolute need to translate into a physical form what he feels and wants internally. I consider those who always want to evade life in order to have self-realisation as abnormal and incomplete. And in fact, these are usually weak natures.

But those who have strength, force and a kind of healthy equilibrium in themselves, feel an absolute need to realise materially their spiritual realisation; they are not satisfied with going away into the clouds or into worlds where forms no longer exist. They must have their physical consciousness and even their body participate in their inner experience.

Now, it may be said that the need to adopt or follow or participate in a religion as it is found all ready-made, arises rather from the “herd instinct” in human beings. The true thing would be for each one to find that form of adoration or cult which is his own and expresses spontaneously and individually his own special relation with the Divine; that would be the ideal condition.

To adopt a religion because one is born in that religion or because the people one loves and trusts practise that religion or because when one goes to a particular place where others pray and worship, one feels helped in one's own prayer and worship, is not the sign of a very strong nature; I should say it is rather the sign of a weakness or at any rate of a lack of originality.

But to want to translate into the forms of one's physical life the inner aspiration and adoration is quite legitimate, and it is much more sincere than what is done by a man who splits himself into two, leads a physical life quite mechanically and ordinarily and, when he can do it, when he has the time or when it suits him, withdraws within himself, escapes from physical life and the physical consciousness and goes to far-off heights to find his spiritual joys.

Someone who tries to make his material life the expression of his highest aspiration is certainly more noble, more upright and sincere in character than a man who splits himself into two saying that the outer life is of no importance and will never change and must be accepted as it is, and that, in reality only the inner attitude counts.

THE MOTHER, (CWM, 8: 246-47)

## *On Sincerity*

### Sincerity: The First Condition

The first condition of the spiritual life and the last condition as well, is sincerity. One must sincerely want the spiritual life in order to have it. The soul—the psychic being—is always

sincere: it is made of the very stuff of sincerity, for it is a part, or a spark of the Divine Consciousness itself. When one feels the call, turns one's back to the worldly life, moves towards the life spiritual, one follows then the urge of one's true being, the psychic being: one is then naturally sincere, firmly and

spontaneously devoted to the Divine, unequivocally loyal and faithful to the Beloved and the Master.

This central sincerity, however, has to be worked out in actual life. For, one may be true in the spirit, but false—weak, that is to say—in the flesh. The light of the central being usually finds its way first into the mind. One becomes then mentally sincere: in other words, one has the idea, the thought that the Divine is the goal and nothing else can or shall satisfy. With the light in the mind, one sees also in oneself more and more the dark spots, the weaknesses, the obstacles—one becomes conscious of one's feelings, discovers elements that have to be corrected or purged. But this mental sincerity, this recognition in the understanding is not enough: it remains mostly ineffective and barren with regard to life and character. One appears at this stage to lead a double life: one knows and understands, to some extent at least, but one is unable to act up even to that much knowledge and understanding. It is only when the power of sincerity descends still further and assumes a concreter form, when the vital becomes sincere and is converted, then the urge is there not only to see and understand, but to do and achieve. Without the vital's sincerity, its will to be transformed, one remains at best a witness, one has an inner perception of consciousness of the Divine, but in actual living one lets the old ordinary nature to go its own way. It is the sincerity in the vital, its will to possess the Divine and the Divine alone, its ardour to collaborate with the Divine that brings about the crucial, the most dynamic change. Sadhana instead of being a mere mental occupation, an intellectual pursuit, acquires the urgency of living and doing and achieving. Finally, the vital sincerity, when it reaches its climax, calls for the ultimate sincerity—sincerity in the body. When the body consciousness becomes sincere then we cannot but be and act as decided and guided by the divine consciousness; we live and move and have our being wholly in the divine manner. Then what the inmost being, the psychic, envisages in the divine light, the body inevitably and automatically executes. There is no gap between the two. The spirit and the flesh—soul and body—are soldered, fused together in one single compact entity. One starts with the central sincerity in the psychic being and progress of sadhana means the extension of this sincerity gradually to all the outlying parts and levels of the being till, when the body is reached, the whole consciousness becomes, as it were, a massive pyramid of loyalty.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA  
(Collected Works, 3: 102-103)

### Sincerity is Victory

To be sincere and to be candid are not the same thing. To be candid means a simplicity based, in a large measure, upon an

ignorance of things. A child is candid, because he is simple and ignorant and hides nothing; he is incapable of it and has no will to deceive anyone. But sincerity is different.

Sincerity is a most difficult thing to have, but it is also the most effective of things. If you have sincerity, you are sure of victory. But it must be true sincerity. Sincerity means that all the elements of your being, all its movements, each and every one, from the most spiritual to the most physical, from the inmost to the outermost, from the top-most to the bottom-most, all parts, severally and wholly and equally are turned to the Divine, they ask for nothing else than the Divine, they live for and by the Divine.

And it is not an easy thing. To be sincere in a part, to be sincere on the whole, to be sincere at moments is easy enough; everybody can have or achieve that much. It is within the capacity of any human being with normal good will, to be sincere in his psychic movements, even if these are rare. But to be sincere in every cell of your physical body is a still rarer and arduous achievement. To make the body cells so one-pointed that they too feel they cannot live but for the Divine and in and through the Divine. That is true sincerity and that is what you must have.

First you must observe that there is not a day in your life, not an hour, not even a minute when you have not got to rectify or intensify your sincerity. I do not say that you deceive the Divine. None can deceive the divine, not even the greatest of the Asuras. When you have understood that, still then you will always find moments in your everyday life when you try to deceive yourself. Almost automatically you bring forward reasons in favour of whatever you do. I do not speak of grosser things as when you have quarrelled with a person, for example, and in your anger throw the whole blame upon him. I knew a child who gave a good blow to the door, because it thought the door was at fault. It is always the other party who is in the wrong. But even when you have passed beyond this baby stage, when you are supposed to be a little more reasonable, you do the stupidest of things and produce reasons in self-justification. The real test of sincerity, the very minimum of true sincerity lies here; in your reaction to a given situation whether you can take automatically the right attitude and do exactly the thing to be done. When, for example, one speaks angrily to you, do you catch the contagion and become angry on your side also or are you able to maintain an unshakable calm and lucidity, see the other man's point or behave as one should?

This is, I say, the very beginning of sincerity, its rudiments. And if you look into yourself with keener eyes, you will discover thousands of insincerities, more subtle, none the

less seizable. Try to be sincere, occasions will multiply when you catch yourself insincere: you will know how difficult a thing it is. You say you belong to the Divine, to the Divine alone and to nothing or to nobody else; “it is the Divine who moves me and does everything in me.” And then you do whatever pleases you; you use the Divine as a cloak to cover your indulgence of desires and passions. This also is a gross insincerity and it should not be difficult for you to detect it. Although this is a very common deception, more perhaps to deceive others than to deceive oneself. The mind catches hold of an idea, “all this is Brahman,” “I am Brahman”,—and you believe or pretend to believe that you have realised it and you can do nothing wrong. There are, however, subtler movements of insincerity or want of sincerity, even when you have not put on the divine cloak as the cover for your lapses. Even when you think you are sincere there may be movements which are not quite straight, behind which, if you probe unflinchingly, you will find lurking something undesirable. Look to the little movements, thoughts,

sensations and impulses, that crowd the margin of your daily life; how many of them are solely turned to the Divine, how many of them are fired with an aspiration towards something higher? You should consider yourself fortunate if you find a few of the kind.

When I say that if you are sincere you are sure of victory, I mean that kind of sincerity, whole and undivided: the pure flame that burns like an offering, the intense joy of existing for the Divine alone where nothing else exists, nothing has any meaning or reason for existence but in the Divine. Nothing has value or interest if it is not this call, this aspiration, this opening to the supreme truth; all this that we call the Divine. You must serve the only reason for which the universe exists: take it away, all disappears.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA  
(Collected Works, 3: 379-381)

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## *Inculcating Sincerity in Children*

Parents nearly always tell their children, “You must not lie, it is very bad to tell a lie.” But the unfortunate thing is that they lie in your presence and then you wonder why they want you to do something which they don't do themselves.

But, apart from that, why do I insist on the fact that children should be told from a very early age that it is absolutely necessary to be sincere?... Children are very often taught how to outsmart others, how to dissimulate so as to appear good in others' eyes. Some parents try to control children through fear, and that is the worst possible method of education, for it is an incentive to lying, deceit, hypocrisy and all the rest. But if you repeatedly explain to children something of this kind: If you are not absolutely sincere, not only with others but also with yourself, if at any time you try to cover up your imperfections and failings, you will never make any progress, you will always remain what you are throughout all your life, without ever making any progress. So, even if you only want to grow out of this primitive unconscious state into a progressive consciousness, the most important thing, the one absolutely important thing is sincerity. If you have done something which you ought not to have done, you must admit it to yourself; if a less-than-admirable movement has occurred in yourself, you must look it in the face and tell yourself, “It was not good,” or “It was disgusting,” or even “It was wicked.”

And don't think that there are people to whom this rule does not apply, for you cannot live in the physical world without having a share in the physical nature, and physical nature is essentially a mixture. You will see, when you become absolutely sincere, that there is nothing in yourself that is absolutely unmixed. But it is only when you look yourself in the face, in the light of your highest consciousness, that whatever you want to eliminate from your nature will disappear. Without this striving for absolute sincerity, the defect, the little shadow, will stay in a corner biding its time to come out.

I am not speaking of the vital, which is hypocritical, I am merely speaking of the mind. If you have a small, disagreeable sensation, a slight uneasiness, see how quickly the mind gives you a favourable explanation! It lays the blame on someone else or on the circumstances, it says that what you did was right and that you are not responsible, and so on. If you look carefully into yourself, you will see that it is like that and you will find it most amusing too! If a child starts examining himself carefully very early, observing himself honestly so as not to deceive himself or deceive others, it will become a habit and spare him much struggling later on.

Now I am addressing parents and teachers, for it is very important to teach children that it is absolutely useless to



“look” as if they were good, to “look” as if they were obedient, to “look” as if they were studying well, etc. Very often, the course parents and teachers adopt with their children is to encourage them to “look as if”. It often happens that if a child spontaneously confesses his mistake, he is given a scolding. This is one of the greatest mistakes of parents. You must have sufficient control over yourself never to scold a child, even if he has broken a very valuable and cherished object. You should simply ask him, “How did you do that?” “What happened?” For the child ought to see why it happened, so that he can be more careful next time. But that is all. In this way you will get the child to be sincere with you instead of trying to deceive you.

**The greatest obstacle to the transformation of one's own character is hypocrisy.**

The Mother, (CWM, 15: 298)

The greatest obstacle to the transformation of one's own character is hypocrisy. If you always keep this in mind when dealing with a child, you can do him a lot of good. Of course, you must not sermonise or lecture him, etc. You should simply make him understand that there is a nobility in the being, a great purity, a great love of beauty, which is so powerful that even the most wicked and criminal people are forced to acknowledge a truly beautiful or heroic or selfless act.

For, in human beings, there is a presence, the most marvellous Presence on earth, and except in a few very rare cases which I need not mention here, this presence lies asleep in the heart—not the physical heart but the psychic center—of all beings. And when this Splendour is manifested with enough purity, it will awaken in all beings the echo of this Presence.

The Mother, (CWM, 15: 297-299)

*Q: Why does insincerity get such a sanction from the society?*

**The Mother: Because society is obsessed with success.**

The Mother, (CWM, 15: 299)

Most parents, for various reasons, give very little thought to the true education which should be imparted to children. When they have brought a child into the world, provided him with food, satisfied his various material needs and looked after his health more or less carefully, they think they have fully discharged their duty. Later on, they will send him to school and hand over to the teachers the responsibility for his education.

There are other parents who know that their children must be educated and who try to do what they can. But very few, even among those who are most serious and sincere, know that the first thing to do, in order to be able to educate a child, is to educate oneself, to become conscious and master of oneself so that one never sets a bad example to one's child. For it is above all through example that education becomes effective. To speak good words and to give wise advice to a child has very little effect if one does not oneself give him an example of what one teaches. Sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, courage, disinterestedness, unselfishness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, self-control are all things that are taught infinitely better by example than by beautiful speeches. Parents, have a high ideal and always act in accordance with it and you will see that little by little your child will reflect this ideal in himself and spontaneously manifest the qualities you would like to see expressed in his nature. Quite naturally a child has respect and admiration for his parents; unless they are quite unworthy, they will always appear to their child as demigods whom he will try to imitate as best he can.

**Sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, courage, disinterestedness, unselfishness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, self-control are all things that are taught infinitely better by example than by beautiful speeches.**

The Mother, (CWM, 12: 10)

With very few exceptions, parents are not aware of the disastrous influence that their own defects, impulses, weaknesses and lack of self-control have on their children. If you wish to be respected by a child, have respect for yourself and be worthy of respect at every moment. Never be authoritarian, despotic, impatient or ill-tempered. When your child asks you a question, do not give him a stupid or silly answer under the pretext that he cannot understand you. You can always make yourself understood if you take enough trouble; and in spite of the popular saying that it is not always good to tell the truth, I affirm that it is always good to tell the truth, but that the art consists in telling it in such a way as to make it accessible to the mind of the hearer. In early life, until he is twelve or fourteen, the child's mind is hardly open to abstract notions and general ideas. And yet you can train it to understand these things by using concrete images, symbols or parables. Up to quite an advanced age and for some who mentally always remain children, a narrative, a story, a tale well told teach much more than any number of theoretical explanations.

THE MOTHER, (CWM, 12: 9-11)

## *Sincerity and Social Life*

**It is only in straightforwardness, sincerity and confidence that human society can progress.**

The Mother, (CWM, 13: 178)

**Incomplete Vision leads to wrong Judgements and wrong Results**

It is the present ignorance and obscurity in the world that give a deforming appearance to the divine Action; and that naturally must tend to disappear; but it is also true that there is a way of seeing things which . . . gives another meaning to their appearance — the two are there, like this (*gesture of intermixture*).  
(*Silence*)

You always come back to this, that man's judgment is wrong — wrong because his vision of things is wrong, is incomplete — and necessarily this judgment must have wrong results.

The world is perpetually changing, perpetually; not for a second is it like itself, and the general harmony expresses itself more and more perfectly; therefore nothing can remain as it is and in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the whole is always constantly progressing; the harmony is becoming more and more harmonious, the truth becoming more and more true in the Manifestation. But to see that, one must see the whole, and man sees only. . . not even the human domain, but only his



personal domain, quite small, quite small, microscopic — he cannot understand.

It is a double thing that is going on completing itself (*same gesture of intermixture*) and with a mutual action: as the Manifestation becomes more conscious of itself, its expression perfects itself, becomes also more true. The two movements go together.

(*Silence*)

**It is in a sincere consecration to the Divine that we can find relief from our too human sufferings.**

The Mother, (CWM, 14: 100)

. . . when the Manifestation will have sufficiently emerged out of the Inconscient so that all this necessity of struggle, created by the presence of the Inconscient, becomes progressively more and more useless, it will disappear quite naturally, and progress, instead of being made through effort and struggle, will begin to be made harmoniously. That is what the human consciousness foresees as a divine creation upon earth — it will still be only one step. But for the present step, it is a kind of harmonious attainment that will change the universal progress (which is ceaseless) into a progress through joy and harmony instead of a progress through struggle and suffering. . . .

. . . Contradictions always come from the inadequacy of vision and the incapacity to see a thing from all points of view at the same time.

In any case, to bring the question down to earth, no sage at any time, I think, has ever said: “Be good, and all will go well with you externally”— because it is a stupidity. In a world of disorder, in a world of falsehood, to hope for that is not reasonable. But you can have, if you are sufficiently sincere and whole and entire in your way of being, you can have the inner joy, the full satisfaction, whatever the circumstances, and that nobody and nothing has the power to touch.

THE MOTHER, (CWM, 11: 75-77)

## *Sincerity and Religious Life*

**Sincere devotion is much more effective than the Ganges water.**

The Mother, (CWM,14: 98)

### Sincere Religious Belief and Practice

All sincere religious belief and practice is really a seeking after the one supreme and universal Godhead; for he always is the sole master of man's sacrifice and askesis and infinite enjoyer of his effort and aspiration. However small or low the form of the worship, however limited the idea of the godhead, however restricted the giving, the faith, the effort to get behind the veil of one's own ego worship and limitation by material Nature, it yet forms a thread of connection between the soul of man and the All-soul and there is a response.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 19: 332)

All religious worship, sincerely done, all emotional, intellectual and spiritual realisation of that which is higher than ourselves, all steadily practised increase of essential power, purity, love or knowledge, all sacrifice and self-transcending amounts to some form of Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 18; 423)

### Religious Ceremonies and Sincerity

An act of true goodness, intelligence, unselfishness or a subtle understanding or a very sincere aspiration are for them infinitely higher than a small religious ceremony. Infinitely! There is no comparison.

The Mother, (CWM, 6: 196)

The ceremony in itself is only of secondary importance. It is merely a form and more a matter of custom than anything else.

What is important is to infuse into whatever ceremony one adopts the sincere fervour and ardent aspiration which

give life to any ceremony, whatever it may be, and yet do not depend on it.

The Mother, (CWM, 16: 269)

Sri Aurobindo said that he himself had done some religious kriyas (rituals), and added: "If they are done sincerely, one may attain the Divine. Otherwise, one generally gets the realisation of the vital gods. Men must be absolutely sincere." (Champaklal Speaks, 2002, p. 121)

### Religion, Atheism and disinterested Search for Truth

*Q: Which is better: religion or atheism?*

The Mother: So long as religions exist, atheism will be indispensable to counter-balance them. Both must disappear to make way for a sincere and disinterested search for Truth and a total consecration to the object of this search.

The Mother, (CWM, 10: 284)

### Asura Useful for intensifying the Aspiration and testing Sincerity

You know the story of Durga, don't you? Durga who every year has to destroy her asura; and always she is compelled to begin again. It goes on in this way till the end of the reign allotted to the titans. When they will be banished from this world, it will not be thus any longer. But till then, that is as long as they are useful...for intensifying the aspiration, clarifying the consciousness, for putting to the test the sincerity of people, they will be there. The day the test will not be needed, the day the sincerity will be pure and self-existent they will disappear. Then that day, Durga will no longer need to begin her battle over again every year.

THE MOTHER, (CWM, 5: 96-97)



## *Sincerity In Politics*

*Q: Sweet Mother, what should be the attitude of a true politician?*

. . . If one were a man who did not accept any kind of compromise, one could not remain in politics; one would quite simply be pushed out by the very force of things. There will be a time when all this will change, but not yet. Politics is perhaps the last thing which will change. There are many others which must change before. It is certainly one of the most recalcitrant things.

There are two things which it is very difficult to change: finance and politics; the field of money and the field of government are the two points where man is weakest and most attached to falsehood. So, probably, transformation will come there last of all. One can hope for a social transformation, an economic transformation, a transformation of education; one can hope for all this long before the transformation of politics and of finance. . . Perhaps the first thing that will be transformed will be the scientific world, it is possible; because there a very great sincerity is required and a very persevering

effort, and these already are qualities which open for you the door to a higher life. . .

The Mother, (CWM, 7: 297-98)

The conditions to organise — to be an organiser (it's not "to govern," it's to organise) — the conditions to be an organiser should be these: no more desires, no more preferences, no more attractions, no more repulsions — a perfect equality for all things. Sincerity, of course, but that goes without saying: wherever insincerity enters, poison enters at the same time. And then, only those who are themselves in that condition can discern whether another is in it or not.

At present, all human organisations are based on: the visible fact (which is a falsehood), public opinion (another falsehood), and moral sense, which is a third falsehood! (*Mother laughs*) So . . .  
(silence)

THE MOTHER, (Agenda, 11: 117-118)



## India Great

### Bande Mataram

“India is not the earth, rivers and mountains of this land,” says the Mother, “neither is it a collective name for the inhabitants of this country. India is a living being . . . India is a goddess. If she likes she can manifest in a human, form.”

And, “Even as the individual has a psychic being which is his true self, governing more or less openly his destiny, each nation too has its psychic being which is its true self, moulding its destiny from behind the veil; it is the soul of the country, the natural genius, the spirit of the people, the centre of natural aspiration, the fountain-head of all that is beautiful, noble, great and generous in the life of a country. True patriots feel its presence as a tangible reality. It is this which in India has been made almost into a divine being and all who love truly their country call it “Mother India” (Bharat Mata), and it is to her that they daily address a prayer for the welfare of this country. It is she who symbolises and incarnates the true ideal of the country, its true mission in the world.”

The ordinary conception of the nation centres round its geographical, territorial aspect. There is the passion for the land in which we dwell, ‘the land of our fathers’, ‘the land of our birth’, *country, patria, vaterland, jamnabhumi*. It is a strong and passionate emotion, it has been behind historic efforts and sacrifices; but to see and love and adore our country as a land of our birth and life is not the same as to see it as a living being, a living goddess. For us to see our country as a living mother-goddess is to see Bharat Mata. This vision is possible to us only if we go deep within instead of being confined to the surface.

It was this seer-vision which was vouchsafed to Bankim Chandra in the nineteenth century. It was this vision that made him the giver of the mantra Bande Mataram.

The mantra Bande Mataram gave a new spirit, a new life, a new power to the nation. The nation of millions, then in slumber, was awakened; it rose to break the iron chains of the foreign rule. But once the independence was achieved, the mantra was gradually pushed into the background. There

was an onrush of Western materialism; the geographical and territorial country, the country of rich rivers and minerals came to the fore. Bharat Mata, Mother India, was asked to be content with political freedom obtained by her warriors.

Here the Indian politicians did what any other materialistic country would have done but what was not expected of a country with India's spiritual heritage.

“Man is of a less terrestrial mould”, wrote Sri Aurobindo in 1908, “than some would have him to be. He has an element of the divine which the politician ignores. The practical politician looks to the position at the moment and imagines that he has taken everything into consideration. He has, indeed, studied the surface and the immediate surroundings, but he has missed what lies beyond material vision. He has left out of account the divine, the incalculable in man, that element which upsets the calculations of the schemer and disconcerts the wisdom of the diplomat.”

And in post-independence India that is what has happened. Given the brain-power, man-power and natural resources of India, any other materialistic nation would have developed much more of material prosperity than what has been achieved in our country. The neglect of spiritual values, the erosion of dharma, ethics and morality has brought unbridled selfishness, deformation and corruption in all walks of life to such an extent that even the material progress has not taken place in the desired dimensions and whatever material progress has been achieved has failed to bring commensurate happiness and enjoyment.

The slogans that came to us after 1947 are many. The slogans of big dams and big industries, the slogans of parties, the slogans of institutions have remained slogans. In this crowd the mantra that stirred the soul of the masses to win freedom has been ignored. It is that mantra which can again touch the chords of the hearts of the people of our country. It is that mantra which relates us to our living deity Bharat Mata, asks us to be in contact with our soul and the soul of the country, exhorts us to adore our country and to work for her greatness and prosperity with the simplicity of a child for his mother.

## and Free

On the momentous 15th day of August 1947, at Pondicherry the Mother invoked Bharat Mata, “O our Mother, O Soul of India, Mother who has never forsaken thy children even in the days of darkest depression, even when they turned away from thy voice, served other Masters and denied thee, now when they have arisen and the light is on thy face in the dawn of thy liberation, in this great hour we salute thee.

“Guide us so that the horizon of freedom opening before us may be also a horizon of true life in the community of the nations.

“Guide us so that we may be always on the side of great ideals and show to men thy true visage, as a leader in the ways of the spirit and a friend and helper of all the peoples.”

The mantra *Bande Mataram* has to be restored to the people of the country; Bharat Mata has to be invoked by the people of the country for guidance. By the worship of lesser godheads of money and selfish power-hunting India is not going to be great. With a sincere heart, with true adoration, we have to look to Mother India, we have to work for the high ideals set by her, we have to endeavour for the peaks of greatness which are India's destiny.

### India, That is Bharat

“There are deeper issues for India herself,” Sri Aurobindo said in a message in the second year of India's liberation, “since by following certain tempting directions she may conceivably become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organisation of social and political life, an immense military strength practising power-politics with a high degree of success guarding and extending zealously her gains and interests, dominating even a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us.

“There is a question whether she may prosper more harmlessly in the outward life yet lose altogether, her richly

massed and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving light. This must not and will surely not happen: but it cannot be said that the danger is not there.

“There are indeed other numerous and difficult problems that face this country or will very soon face it. No doubt we will win through, but we must not disguise from ourselves the fact that after these long years of subjection and its cramping and impairing effects a great inner as well as outer liberation and change, a vast inner and outer progress is needed if we are to fulfil India's true destiny.”

When India was not free Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Karmayogin*, “Our leaders and our followers both require a deeper Sadhana, a more direct communion with the Divine Guru and Captain of our movement, an inward uplifting, a grander and more impetuous force behind thought and deed ... it is the spirituality of India, the Sadhana of India, *tapasya*, *jnanam*, *sakti* that must make us free and great. And these great things of the East are ill-rendered by their inferior English equivalents, discipline, philosophy, strength. *Tapasya* is more than discipline; it is the materialisation in ourselves by spiritual means of the divine energy creative, preservative and destructive. *Jnanam* is more than philosophy, it is the inspired and direct knowledge which comes of what our ancients called *dristi*, spiritual sight. *Sakti* is more than strength, it is the universal energy which moves the stars, made individual. It is the East that must conquer in India's uprising. It is the Yogin who must stand behind the political leader or manifest within him; Ramdas must be born in one body with Shivaji, Mazzini mingle with Cavour.”

“Either India will be rationalised and industrialised out of all recognition”, Sri Aurobindo had warned, “and she will be no longer India or else she will be the leader in a new world-phase, aid by her example and cultural infiltration the new tendencies of the West and spiritualise the human race. That is the one radical and poignant question at issue. Will the spiritual motive which India represents prevail on Europe and create there new forms congenial to the West, or will



European rationalism and commercialism put an end for ever to the Indian type of culture?"

This is the question which has to be clearly understood and clearly answered. During more than 35 years since 1947 this deep issue has been neglected. Attracted by the glamour of the western materialistic progress the country has run after rationalism and commercialism. The political system for the governance of the country has been also borrowed from the West. In this process the soul, the *swadharma* of the nation has not been consciously respected. This is the biggest stumbling block on the way of India's greatness.

The Gita says that it is better to die in one's law of being than to adopt an alien law of being however well-wrought the latter may be. And what justification there can be to run after alien laws when our own law of being is so high and great?

"In spite of all drawbacks and in spite of downfall the spirit of Indian culture, its central ideas, its best ideals have still their message for humanity and not for India alone. And we in India

hold that they are capable of developing out of themselves by contact with new need and idea as good and better solutions of the problems before us than those which are offered to us secondhand from Western sources."

For, "If the spiritual ideal points the final way to a triumphant harmony of manifested life, then it is all-important for India not to lose hold of the truth, not to give up the highest she knows and barter it away for a perhaps more readily practicable but still lower ideal alien to her true and constant nature."

At present our country has the remarkable characteristic of adopting a name given to her by an alien country. The first article of our constitution says "India, that is Bharat". Due to some reasoning the own name of the country 'Bharat' was not adopted. Yet there was a stir inside somewhere and this name was also mentioned in the Constitution. Was it a remembrance of the soul of the country?

Compiled by SHYAM SUNDER



## Courage and Yoga

**. . . truth is the foundation of real spirituality and courage is its soul.**

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA,19: 45)

A real Aspiration is full of Courage

*Curator's note: We begin this section on Courage with a prayer from the Mother's 'Prayers and Meditations', which reminds us to become a strong and courageous being, to break all the resistances and surrender completely to the Supreme Mother, and to aspire to become Her true instrument. The Mother's Prayers and Meditations, according to Sri Aurobindo are prayers from the Divine to the Divine.*

“The Prayers are mostly written in an identification with the earth-consciousness. It is Mother in the lower nature addressing the Mother in the higher nature, the Mother herself carrying on the Sadhana of the earth-consciousness for the transformation, praying to herself above from whom the forces of transformation come. This continues till the identification of the earth-consciousness and the higher consciousness is effected.” (Sri Aurobindo's letter dated 21 August 1936, CWM, 1: 383)

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What kind of courage is mine that I always try to avoid the fight? What kind of energy is mine, that I am instinctively frightened of the new effort to be made and try, without being aware of it, to go to sleep passively, relying upon the results of previous efforts? In order to act, I have to be compelled and my mute contemplation is partly made of laziness.... All this is becoming more and more clearly apparent to me. All that I have done till now seems to me to be nothing. The poverty and limitations of the instrument I put at Thy service, Lord, are evident to me, and I laugh a little sorrowfully at the idea that at times I could have a good opinion of my being, its efforts and their results. This threshold of the true life that I always think I have reached is like a hope bestowed upon me but never a tangible realisation; it is the toy promised to a child, the reward held out for a moment before the weak.

When shall I become a truly strong being, made entirely of courage, energy, valour and calm perseverance; when shall I have forgotten my own person completely enough to be nothing but an instrument moulded solely by the forces it

has to manifest? When will my consciousness of unity be no longer tinged with any inertia; when will my feeling of divine love be no longer mixed with any weakness?

O Lord, all thought seems dead within me, now that I have asked these questions. I search for my conscious mind and I do not find it; I search for my individuality and I cannot discover it anywhere; I search for my personal will and it is not there. I search for Thee, and Thou art silent.... Silence, silence....

Now I seem to hear Thy voice: “Never hast thou known how to die integrally. Always something in thee has wanted to know, to witness, to understand. Surrender completely, learn how to disappear, break the last barrier that separates thee from me; accomplish unreservedly thy act of surrender.” Alas, O Lord, for a long time have I wanted it, but I could not. Now wilt Thou give me the power to do so?

O Lord, my sweet eternal Master, break this resistance which fills me with anguish... deliver me from myself!

The Mother, (CWM, 1: 119)

**“He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite.”**

**Never forget this promise of Sri Aurobindo and keep courage in spite of all difficulties. You are sure to reach the goal, and the more you keep confidence, the quicker it will come.**

The Mother, (CWM, 16: 144)

I remember that once we spoke of courage as one of the perfections; I remember having written it down once in a list. But this courage means having a taste for the supreme adventure. And this taste for supreme adventure is aspiration—an aspiration which takes hold of you completely and flings you, without calculation and without reserve and without a possibility of withdrawal, into the great adventure of the divine discovery, the great adventure of the divine meeting, the yet greater adventure of the divine Realisation; you throw yourself into the adventure without looking back and without asking for a single minute, “What's going to happen?” For if you ask what is going to happen, you never start, you always remain stuck there, rooted to the spot, afraid to lose something, to lose your balance.

That's why I speak of courage—but really it is aspiration. They go together. A real aspiration is something full of courage.

The Mother, (CWM, 8: 40-41)

## Our Yoga is not for Cowards

*Curator's note: In the following commentaries on two aphorisms of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother emphasises the necessity of getting rid of fear, distrust, despair and face all challenges in life with courage and strength if we aspire to walk the path of sadhana.*

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Sri Aurobindo's Aphorism 5—If mankind only caught a glimpse of what infinite enjoyments, what perfect forces, what luminous reaches of spontaneous knowledge, what wide calms of our being lie waiting for us in the tracts which our animal evolution has not yet conquered, they would leave all and never rest till they had gained these treasures. But the way is narrow, the doors are hard to force, and fear, distrust and scepticism are there, sentinels of Nature, to forbid the turning away of our feet from her ordinary pastures.

### The Mother's Comments:

What Sri Aurobindo has written, the words ["caught a glimpse"] which have been translated as *entrevoient*, means to see something in its totality, but for a very brief moment. It is obvious that a constant vision of all these wonders would automatically compel you to set out on the path. It is also certain that a little fragmentary glimpse is not enough—it would not have enough weight to compel you to follow the path.

But if you had a total vision, however brief, you would not be able to resist the temptation of making the effort needed to realise it. But, in fact, the total vision is exceptional, and that is why Sri Aurobindo says to us: "If mankind only..."

To tell the truth, it very seldom happens that those who are ready, who are undoubtedly meant for realisation, do not have, at a certain moment in their lives, even if only for a few seconds, the experience of what this realisation is.

But even those whose destiny is certain have to struggle mightily, resolutely, against this "something" which one seems to take in with the very air one breathes: this fear, this

dread of what may happen. And this is so stupid, because, in the final analysis, the destiny of each individual is the same: you are born, you live—more or less satisfactorily—and you die; then you wait for a certain length of time, and again you are born, you live—more or less satisfactorily—and again you die, and so on indefinitely, until you feel you have had enough of it.

Fear of what? Fear of coming out of the rut? Fear of being free? Fear of no longer being a prisoner?

**Courage is the total absence of fear in any form.**

The Mother, (CWM, 10: 282)

And then, when you have enough courage to overcome this, when you say, "Come what may! After all, there's not much to lose", then you become wary, you wonder if it is reasonable, if it is true, if all that is not an illusion, if you are not just imagining things, if there is really any substance to it....And mind you, this mistrust seems stupid, but you encounter it even in the most intelligent, even in those who have repeatedly had conclusive experiences—it is something that you take in with the food you eat, the air you breathe, your contacts with others; and that is why you can speak of the "tentacles of Nature", everywhere, in all things, like an octopus stealing in and catching you and binding you.

Even when you have overcome these two obstacles, when the experiences are so strong that you can no longer doubt, that doubt becomes impossible—like doubting one's own life—then there remains something awful, petty, dry, corrosive: scepticism. And this is founded on human pride, that is why it lasts so long. You want to think that you are above all these things, "Oh, I am not one to fall into those traps! I am a reasonable man, I see things from a practical point of view; I'm not so easily deceived." It is awful!... It is sordid. But it is dangerous.

**To conquer [scepticism], one must be a mighty warrior. One must struggle against all the obscurities of Nature, against all her tricks, all her temptations.**

The Mother, (CWM, 10: 12)

Even in moments of greatest enthusiasm, even when one is filled with an exceptional, marvellous experience—it rises from the lowest depths. It is ugly, slimy, disgusting. And yet it rises, and spoils everything.

To conquer it, one must be a mighty warrior. One must struggle against all the obscurities of Nature, against all her tricks, all her temptations.

Why does she do this? It is as if she were moving away from her own goal. But I have already explained this to you many times. Nature knows very well where she is going and what the outcome is. She wants it, but... in her own way. She does not feel that any time is being wasted. She has all eternity before her. She wants to follow her own way as she likes, meandering as much as she likes, going back on her tracks, straying from the straight path, starting the same thing all over again several times to see what will happen. And these enlightened cranks, who want to get there at once, as soon as possible, who thirst for truth, light, beauty, balance—they bother her, they urge her on, they tell her that she is wasting her time. Her time! She always replies, “But I have all eternity before me. Am I in a hurry? Why are you in such a hurry?” And again, with a smile: “Your haste is all too human; widen yourselves, become infinite, be eternal, and you will no longer be in a hurry.”

There is so much fun on the way, for her... but not for everyone.

This is what happens when one sees things from a great height, from a great distance, when one's view is vast, almost infinite. Everything that upsets human beings and makes them suffer, disappears; so those who are very wise, who have abandoned life for the sake of higher wisdom tell you with a smile, “Why suffer? Come out of it and you will suffer no more.” That is all very well individually but, in fact, if you think about others you may wish this rather tragic comedy would come to an end sooner. And it is very justifiable to feel tired of living like a beast at pasture, of roaming from one patch of grass to another, of ruminating in a corner, of having such narrow horizons and of missing all the splendours of life.

Perhaps it amuses Nature that we should be like that, but we are tired of it, we want to be different.

And that is it. When you have truly had enough of it and want things to be different, then you have the courage, the strength, the capacity to conquer these three terrible enemies: fear, doubt and scepticism. But I repeat, it is not enough to sit down one fine day, watch yourself be, and struggle with these things inside you once and for all. You have to do it and do it again and again and continue in a way which seems almost endless, to be sure that you have got rid of it all. In reality, you are perhaps never truly rid of it, but there comes a time when inside yourself, you are so different that you can no longer be touched by these things. You can see them, but you see them with a smile, and at a simple gesture they go away, back to where they came from, perhaps a little changed, perhaps

a little less strong, less obstinate, less aggressive—until the time when the Light is so strong that all darkness vanishes.

As for the marvels Sri Aurobindo tells us about, it is better not to describe them, because each individual feels them, undergoes them, experiences them in his own way—and for each person that is the best way. One must not adopt another's way, one must go one's own way, then the experience has its full value, its full inestimable value.

And finally, I wish that you may all have these experiences yourselves. And for that, faith, confidence, much humaneness and great goodwill are needed.

Open, aspire, and... wait. It will surely come, the Grace is there. It asks only to be able to work for everyone.

The Mother, (CWM, 10: 10-14)

**Our yoga is not for cowards; if you have no courage, better leave it – your fears will bring disasters.**

The Mother, (CWM, 14: 241)

### Faith, Endurance and Courage

Sri Aurobindo's Aphorism 31—What I wished or thought to be the right thing does not come about; therefore it is clear that there is no All-Wise one who guides the world but only blind Chance or a brute Causality.

### The Mother's Comments:

*Disciple: For some people events are always contrary to what they desire or aspire for or believe to be good for them. They often despair. Is this a necessity for their progress?*

Despair is never a necessity for progress, it is always a sign of weakness and tamas; it often indicates the presence of an adverse force, that is to say, a force that is purposely acting against sadhana.

So, in all circumstances of life you must always be very careful to guard against despair. Besides, this habit of being sombre, morose, of despairing, does not truly depend on events, but on a lack of faith in the nature. One who has faith, even if only in himself, can face all difficulties, all circumstances, even the most adverse, without discouragement or despair. He fights like a man to the end. Natures that lack faith also lack endurance and courage.



Sri Aurobindo tells us that for human beings the degree of success in physical life depends on the degree of harmony between the individual and universal physical Nature. Some people have a will which is spontaneously in tune with the will of Nature, and they succeed in everything they undertake; others, on the contrary, have a will which is more or less totally out of tune with the will of cosmic Nature and they fail in everything they do or try to do.

As for the question of what is necessary for progress, in an evolving world everything is necessarily a help to progress; but individual progress extends over a considerable number of lives and through innumerable experiences. It cannot be judged on the basis of a single life between birth and death. On the whole, it is certain that the experience of a life of failure and defeat is just as useful to the soul's growth as the experience of a life of success and victory; even more so, no doubt, than the experience of an uneventful life, as human existence usually is, in which success and failure, satisfaction and disappointment, pleasure and pain mingle and follow one another—a life that seems “natural” and does not require any great effort.

The Mother, (CWM, 10: 55-56)

### Courage in the face of Pain and Grief

**Pain and grief are Nature's reminder to the soul that the pleasure it enjoys is only a feeble hint of the real delight of existence. In each pain and torture of our being is the secret of a flame of rapture compared with which our greatest pleasures are only as dim flickerings. It is this secret which forms the attraction for the soul of the great ordeals, sufferings and fierce experiences of life which the nervous mind in us shuns and abhors.**

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 13: 205)

Quite naturally we ask ourselves what this secret is, towards which pain leads us. For a superficial and imperfect understanding, one could believe that it is pain which the soul is seeking. Nothing of the kind. The very nature of the soul is divine Delight, constant, unvarying, unconditioned, ecstatic; but it is true that if one can face suffering with courage, endurance, an unshakable faith in the divine Grace, if one can, instead of shunning suffering when it comes, enter into it with this will, this aspiration to go through it and find the luminous truth, the unvarying delight which is at the core of all things, the door of pain is often more direct, more immediate than that of satisfaction or contentment.

I am not speaking of pleasure because pleasure turns its back constantly and almost completely on this profound divine Delight.

Pleasure is a deceptive and perverse disguise which turns us away from our goal and we certainly should not seek it if we are eager to find the truth. Pleasure vaporises us; it deceives us, leads us astray. Pain brings us back to a deeper truth by obliging us to concentrate in order to be able to bear it, be able to face this thing that crushes us. It is in pain that one most easily finds the true strength again, when one is strong. It is in pain that one most easily finds the true faith again, the faith in something which is above and beyond all pain.

When one enjoys oneself and forgets, when one takes things as they come, tries to avoid being serious and looking life in the face, in a word when one seeks to forget, to forget that there is a problem to solve, that there is something to find, that we have a reason for existence and living, that we are not here just to pass our time and go away without having learnt or done anything, then one really wastes one's time, one misses the opportunity that has been given to us, this—I cannot say unique, but marvellous opportunity for an existence which is the field of progress, which is the moment in eternity when you can discover the secret of life; for this physical, material existence is a wonderful opportunity, a possibility given to you to find the purpose of life, to make you advance one step towards this deeper truth, to make you discover this secret which puts you into contact with the eternal rapture of the divine life.

(*Silence*)

I have already told you many a time that to seek suffering and pain is a morbid attitude which must be avoided, but to run away from them through forgetfulness, through a superficial, frivolous movement, through diversion, is cowardice. When pain comes, it comes to teach us something. The quicker we learn it, the more the need for pain diminishes, and when we know the secret, it will no longer be possible to suffer, for that secret reveals to us the reason, the cause, the origin of suffering, and the way to pass beyond it.

The secret is to emerge from the ego, get out of its prison, unite ourselves with the Divine, merge into Him, not to allow anything to separate us from Him. Then, once one has discovered this secret and realises it in one's being, pain loses its justification and suffering disappears. It is an all-powerful remedy, not only in the deeper parts of the being, in the soul, in the spiritual consciousness, but also in life and in the body.

There is no illness, no disorder which can resist the discovery of this secret and the putting of it into practice, not only in the higher parts of the being but in the cells of the body.

If one knows how to teach the cells the splendour that lies within them, if one knows how to make them understand the reality which makes them exist, gives them being, then they too enter the total harmony, and the physical disorder which causes the illness vanishes as do all other disorders of the being.

But for that one must be neither cowardly nor fearful. When the physical disorder comes, one must not be afraid; one must not run away from it, must face it with courage, calmness, confidence, with the certitude that illness is a *falsehood* and that if one turns entirely, in full confidence, with a complete quietude to the divine Grace, It will settle in these cells as It is established in the depths of the being, and the cells themselves will share in the eternal Truth and Delight.

The Mother, (CWM, 9: 41-43)

### Courage and Karma from Past Lives

This sort of fatality that one sometimes feels weighing heavy on one's life, which is called Karma in India, is the result of past lives; indeed, it is something that has to be exhausted, something that weighs on one's consciousness.

This is how things happen: the psychic being passes from one life to another, each life on earth being the occasion and means for a further progress, for a further growth. But it can happen that the psychic takes birth with the intention of going through a certain experience, of learning a certain thing, of developing a certain faculty through a definite experience. Then, in that life, in the life in which that experience has to be gone through, for one reason or another—there may be several—the soul does not fall exactly on the spot where it should: a displacement of some kind can occur, a set of contrary circumstances—it can happen—and in that case the incarnation miscarries totally and the soul goes away to wait for a better occasion. But in other cases, the soul simply does not find it possible to do exactly what it wants and finds itself dragged into untoward circumstances—untoward not merely from the objective point of view, but untoward for its own growth. And that makes it necessary to begin the experience again, often under much more difficult conditions.

And if—anything can happen, you see—if this second attempt is also a failure, if conditions make it impossible once again for what the psychic wants to do, if, for example, it is in a body with an inadequate will or a deformation in the thought or too tough an egoism and the attempt ends in suicide, then it is something frightful. I have seen it many times; it creates a dreadful Karma which may repeat itself life after life before the soul becomes capable of conquering and doing what it wants to do. And each time the conditions become more and more difficult, each time a considerably greater effort is demanded. It has sometimes been said that one cannot get out of it. Indeed, the subconscious memory of the past creates a sort of irresistible desire to avoid the difficulty and one begins again the same stupidity or an even greater stupidity, and to the difficulty already so great is added yet another. Also, there are moments—moments or circumstances—when nobody is there to help you, to instruct you, to guide you. You are all alone, not knowing what to hang on to. The situation then becomes so terrible, the circumstances are so abominable.

But if only once the soul has made an appeal, if once it has made contact with the Grace, then in the following life, one immediately finds oneself in conditions where everything can be swept away at one stroke. At that moment you need to have a great courage, a great endurance, though at times a true love is sufficient. And if there is faith—a little, a very very little is enough—then everything is swept away. But in most cases what you need is a great stoic courage, a capacity to endure and to hold out: the resistance, especially in the case of a previous suicide, resistance to the temptation to again begin this foolishness—because it makes a terrible formation. There is also this habit of not looking the difficulty straight in the face, which is translated by taking flight. When suffering comes, fly, fly, instead of absorbing the difficulty, instead of holding tight, that is to say, not stirring within, not yielding, yes, above all, not yielding when you feel within: “I cannot bear it any longer.” Hold your head as quiet as possible, do not follow the movement, do not obey the vibration.

That is what is needed, just that: faith in the Grace, perception of the Grace, or else, intensity of call, or better still, the response, the response, the knot opening, breaking, the response to this wonderful love of the Grace.

It is difficult without a strong will, and above all, above all, the capacity to resist the temptation which has been the fatal temptation through all the lives because of its accumulated power. Each defeat gives fresh force to it. A small victory can dissolve it.

The most terrible thing is when you do not have the strength, the courage, something indomitable. How often they come and tell me: “I want to die, I want to run away, I want to die.” They get the answer: “Well, then, die to yourself! You are not asked to let your ego survive! Die to yourself since you want to die! Have that courage, the true courage to die to your egoism.”

But because it is a Karma, you have to do something yourself. Karma is a construction of the ego; the ego must do something, everything cannot be done for it. The truth is this: Karma is the result of the actions of the ego, and it is only when the ego abdicates that Karma is dissolved. You can aid the ego, you can assist it, you can give it force and infuse it with courage, but it must use them.

There is such a gulf between what we truly are and what we are at present that it turns your head giddy at times. You must not yield to the giddiness. Do not move. Be still like a stone until the thing passes away.

Generally, when the time has come for a Karma to be conquered and absorbed by the Grace, there also comes the

image or the knowledge or the experience of the exact facts that are the cause of the Karma, and then at that moment you can start the cleaning.

But it is just at the most painful point, there where the suggestions are the strongest, that you must bear the blow. Otherwise you will always have to start over again, always start over again.

One day a moment comes when the thing has to be done, when one must make the true inner gesture that liberates. To tell the truth, just now there is upon earth an opportunity which presents itself only after thousands of years, a conscious help with the necessary power. It was once believed that nothing had the power to wipe away the consequences of a Karma, that it was only by exhausting it through a series of purificatory acts that the consequences could be transformed, exhausted, effaced. But with the supramental power, this can be done without the need of going through all the steps of the process of liberation.

THE MOTHER, (CWM, 15: 371-374)

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## *The Aryan Ideal Of Courage*

**Curator's note:** *This landmass of India was known by the name of Aryavrata. The journal in which all of the major works of Sri Aurobindo were first serialised was also named by him as 'Arya'. What is the true meaning and significance of this term? In an important writing, published in Arya in September 1914, when explaining the significance of the term "Arya" Sri Aurobindo speaks of the ideal of courage which is inherent in this term. A few excerpts from that writing are shared here.*

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. . . the word in its original use expressed not a difference of race, but a difference of culture. For in the Veda the Aryan peoples are those who had accepted a particular type of self-culture, of inward and outward practice, of ideality, of aspiration. The Aryan gods were the supraphysical powers who assisted the mortal in his struggle towards the nature of

the godhead. All the highest aspirations of the early human race, its noblest religious temper, its most idealistic velleities of thought are summed up in this single vocable.

In later times, the word Arya expressed a particular ethical and social ideal, an ideal of well-governed life, candour, courtesy, nobility, straight dealing, courage, gentleness, purity, humanity, compassion, protection of the weak, liberality, observance of social duty, eagerness for knowledge, respect for the wise and learned, the social accomplishments. It was the combined ideal of the Brahmana and the Kshatriya. Everything that departed from this ideal, everything that tended towards the ignoble, mean, obscure, rude, cruel or false, was termed un-Aryan. There is no word in human speech that has a nobler history.

In the early days of comparative Philology, when the scholars sought in the history of words for the prehistoric

history of peoples, it was supposed that the word Arya came from the root *ar*, to plough, and that the Vedic Aryans were so called when they separated from their kin in the north-west who despised the pursuits of agriculture and remained shepherds and hunters. This ingenious speculation has little or nothing to support it. But in a sense we may accept the derivation. Whoever cultivates the field that the Supreme Spirit has made for him, his earth of plenty within and without, does not leave it barren or allow it to run to seed, but labours to exact from it its full yield, is by that effort an Aryan.

If Arya were a purely racial term, a more probable derivation would be *ar*, meaning strength or valour, from *ar*, to fight, whence we have the name of the Greek war-god Ares, *areios*, brave or warlike, perhaps even *aretē*, virtue, signifying, like the Latin *virtus*, first, physical strength and courage and then moral force and elevation. This sense of the word also we may accept. "We fight to win sublime Wisdom, therefore men call us warriors." For Wisdom implies the choice as well as the knowledge of that which is best, noblest, most luminous, most divine. Certainly, it means also the knowledge of all things and charity and reverence for all things, even the most apparently mean, ugly or dark, for the sake of the universal Deity who chooses to dwell equally in all. But, also, the law of right action is a choice, the preference of that which expresses the godhead to that which conceals it. And the choice entails a battle, a struggle. It is not easily made, it is not easily enforced.

Whoever makes that choice, whoever seeks to climb from level to level up the hill of the divine, fearing nothing, deterred by no retardation or defeat, shrinking from no vastness because it is too vast for his intelligence, no height because it is too high for his spirit, no greatness because it is too great for his force and courage, he is the Aryan, the divine fighter and victor, the noble man, *aristos*, best, the *śreṣṭha* of the Gita.

Intrinsically, in its most fundamental sense, Arya means an effort or an uprising and overcoming. The Aryan is he who strives and overcomes all outside him and within him that stands opposed to the human advance. Self-conquest is the first law of his nature. He overcomes earth and the body and does not consent like ordinary men to their dullness, inertia, dead routine and tamasic limitations. He overcomes life and its energies and refuses to be dominated by their hungers and cravings or enslaved by their rajasic passions. He overcomes the mind and its habits, he does not live in a shell of ignorance, inherited prejudices, customary ideas, pleasant opinions, but

knows how to seek and choose, to be large and flexible in intelligence even as he is firm and strong in his will. For in everything he seeks truth, in everything right, in everything height and freedom.

Self-perfection is the aim of his self-conquest. Therefore what he conquers he does not destroy, but ennobles and fulfils. He knows that the body, life and mind are given him in order to attain to something higher than they; therefore they must be transcended and overcome, their limitations denied, the absorption of their gratifications rejected. But he knows also that the Highest is something which is no nullity in the world, but increasingly expresses itself here,—a divine Will, Consciousness, Love, Beatitude which pours itself out, when found, through the terms of the lower life on the finder and on all in his environment that is capable of receiving it. Of that he is the servant, lover and seeker. When it is attained, he pours it forth in work, love, joy and knowledge upon mankind. For always the Aryan is a worker and warrior. He spares himself no labour of mind or body whether to seek the Highest or to serve it. He avoids no difficulty, he accepts no cessation from fatigue. Always he fights for the coming of that kingdom within himself and in the world.

The Aryan perfected is the Arhat. There is a transcendent Consciousness which surpasses the universe and of which all these worlds are only a side-issue and a by-play. To that consciousness he aspires and attains. There is a Consciousness which, being transcendent, is yet the universe and all that the universe contains. Into that consciousness he enlarges his limited ego; he becomes one with all beings and all inanimate objects in a single self-awareness, love, delight, all-embracing energy. There is a consciousness which, being both transcendental and universal, yet accepts the apparent limitations of individuality for work, for various standpoints of knowledge, for the play of the Lord with His creations; for the ego is there that it may finally convert itself into a free centre of the divine work and the divine play. That consciousness too he has sufficient love, joy and knowledge to accept; he is puissant enough to effect that conversion. To embrace individuality after transcending it is the last and divine sacrifice. The perfect Arhat is he who is able to live simultaneously in all these three apparent states of existence, elevate the lower into the higher, receive the higher into the lower, so that he may represent perfectly in the symbols of the world that with which he is identified in all parts of his being,—the triple and triune Brahman.



## *Stories On Courage told by The Mother*

**Curator's note:** *The Mother used the art of storytelling most sweetly and effectively to inculcate higher and nobler values in children and adults. Presented here is a collection of a few stories told by the Mother that highlight what is true courage and how to embody it. The titles to the stories are added by the curator.*

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### **Moral Courage, the Courage to Speak Truth**

I shall tell you the story of Vibhishan the hero. He braved a danger that was greater than the danger of death: he braved the fury of a king and gave him the wise advice that others dared not voice.

The demon-king of Lanka was Ravana of the Ten Heads.

Ravana had stolen lady Sita away from her husband and carried her off in his chariot to his palace on the island of Lanka.

Sumptuous was the palace and delightful the garden in which he imprisoned the princess Sita. Yet she was unhappy and every day she would shed tears, not knowing whether she would ever see her Lord Rama again.

Glorious Rama learnt from Hanuman the monkey-king where his wife Sita was held captive. He set out with noble Lakshman, his brother, and a great army of heroes to the rescue of the prisoner.

When the demon Ravana learnt of the arrival of Rama, he trembled with fear.

The advice he received was of two kinds. A crowd of courtiers thronged around his throne saying:

“All is well; have no fear, O Ravana. Gods and demons you have conquered: you will have no difficulty in conquering Rama and his companions, the monkeys of Hanuman.”

When these noisy counsellors had left the king, his brother Vibhishan entered, knelt and kissed his feet. Then he rose and sat at the right hand of the throne.

“O my brother,” he said, “if you wish to live happily and keep the throne of this beautiful island of Lanka, give back

the lovely Sita, for she is the wife of another. Go to Rama and ask his forgiveness, and he will not turn away his face. Be not arrogant and foolhardy.”

A wise man, Malyavan, heard these words and was glad. He exclaimed to the king of demons:

“Take your brother's words to heart, for he has spoken the truth.”

“Both of you have evil designs,” replied the king, “for you take the side of my foes.”

And the eyes of his ten heads flashed with such fury that Malyavan fled from the room in terror. But Vibhishan, in the bravery of his soul, remained.

“Sire,” he said, “in the heart of each man there is both wisdom and foolishness. If wisdom dwells in his breast, life goes well with him; if it is foolishness, all goes ill. I fear that you harbour foolishness in your breast, O my brother, for you give ear to those who give bad advice. They are not your true friends.”

He fell silent and kissed the feet of the king.

“Wretch!” cried Ravana. “You too are one of my enemies. Speak no more senseless words to me. Talk to the hermits in the woods but not to one who has been victorious over all the enemies he has fought.”

And as he shouted he kicked his brave brother Vibhishan.

So, with a heavy heart, his brother rose and left the king's house.

Knowing no fear, he had spoken frankly to Ravana; and since the ten-headed one would not listen, Vibhishan had no choice but to leave.

Vibhishan's act was one of physical courage, for he did not fear his brother's blows; but it was also an act of mental courage, for he did not hesitate to utter words that the other courtiers, physically as brave as he, would not have let fall from their lips. This courage of the mind is known as moral courage.

[ . . . ]

**True Bravery needs no Clamour and Clash**

The Rajah of Almora, in order to repel some invaders who had raided his mountain country, enrolled a number of men in a new regiment and provided each one with a good sword.

“Forward, march!” commanded the Rajah.

Instantly the men unsheathed their swords with a great clang and flourished them with loud cries.

“What is this?” demanded the Rajah.

“Sire,” they replied, “we want to be ready so that the enemy does not take us by surprise.”

“You can be of no use to me, you nervous and excitable men,” he told them. “Go home, all of you.”

You will notice that the Rajah was not impressed by all this noise and waving of swords. He knew that true bravery needs no clamour and clash.

In the following story, on the other hand, you will observe how calmly the people behaved and yet how brave they were in face of mortal peril at sea.

Towards the end of March 1910, a Scottish vessel was carrying passengers from Australia to the Cape of Good Hope. There was no trace of a cloud in the sky and the sea was calm and blue.

Suddenly the ship struck a reef six miles off the west coast of Australia.

Immediately the whole crew was on the move, each man hurrying as whistles were blown. But this noise was not the result of confusion and panic.

An order rang out: “Man the boats!”

The passengers put on their life-belts.

A blind man led by his servant walked across the deck. Everyone made way for him. He was helpless and all wanted him to be the first to be saved.

A short time later the ship had been evacuated, and soon it sank.

On one of the life-boats a woman began to sing. And in spite of the sound of the waves which at times drowned her voice, the oarsmen could hear the refrain which put strength into their arms:

*Pull for the shore, sailors,*

*Pull for the shore.*

The shipwrecked people reached the shore at last and were taken in by some good fishing folk.

Not one passenger had been lost. In this way four hundred and fifty people had saved themselves by their quiet courage.

**Courage can make one Walk on Water**

Let me tell you more about this calm courage that accomplishes useful and noble things without show or flourish.

A deep river ran past an Indian village of five hundred houses.

The people of this village had not yet heard the teachings of Lord Siddhartha, and the Blessed One decided to go to them and speak to them of the Noble Path.

He sat beneath a great tree which spread its branches over the riverside, and the villagers gathered on the opposite bank. Then he began to speak and preached his message of love and purity. And his words were carried over the flowing waters as if by miracle. Yet the people of the village refused to believe in what he taught them, and murmured against him.

Only one of them wanted to know more and wished to come closer to the Blessed One.

There was neither bridge nor ferry. And the old legend tells that, strong in his courage, the man began to walk upon the deep water of the river. And so he reached the Master, greeted him and listened to his words with great joy.

Did this man really cross the river, as we are told? We do not know. But in any case he had the courage to take the path that leads towards progress. And the people of

his village, touched by his example, then paid heed to the teachings of the Buddha; and their minds were opened to nobler thoughts.

There is a courage which can make you cross rivers and another that enables you to take the right path; but even more courage is needed to stay on the right path than to enter it.

Listen to the parable of the hen and her chicks:

Siddhartha, the Blessed One, used to instruct his disciples to do their best and then to trust that the best would bear its fruit.

“Just as,” he said, “a hen lays eggs and broods on them and never thinks of fretting: ‘Will my little chicks be able to break out of their shells with their beaks and see the light of day?’ you too should have no fear: if you are persistent in the Noble Path, you also will come to the light.”

And this is true courage: to walk the straight path, to brave storm, darkness and suffering and to persevere, moving ever forward, in spite of everything, towards the light.

### **Courage Opens the Gates to Victory**

Long, long ago, when Brahmadatta ruled in Benares, one of his enemies, king of another land, trained an elephant to wage war on him.

War was declared. The splendid elephant bore the king his master up to the walls of Benares.

From the top of the walls, the people of the besieged city hurled down boiling hot liquids and shot stones with their slings. At first the elephant retreated before this terrifying rain.

But the man who had trained him ran towards him crying:

“O elephant, you are a hero! Act like a hero and pull the gates to the ground!”

Encouraged by these words, the great creature charged and burst through the gates, leading his king to victory.

This is how courage triumphs over obstacles and difficulties and opens the gates to victory.

THE MOTHER, (CWM, 2:180-186)

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## *Courage and Nationalism*

**Curator's note:** While all of Sri Aurobindo's writings and speeches during his revolutionary days were fiery and awakened the people to take the path of courage and boldness in their work for India's freedom, we have selected a few excerpts from four writings from *Bande Mataram*, dated between 1908-1909, especially for their continued significance for today.

We live in times when the word 'nationalism' has somehow become questionable primarily because of West-centric limited and narrow meanings that have gotten attached to it. But Sri Aurobindo has given us a deeper, more psycho-spiritual understanding of the truth of nation and nationalism. As India celebrates 75 years of political independence, as Indians we must honestly ask ourselves — to what extent are we still carrying on with a colonised mind and a colonial view of the

world and India's place in the forward march of humanity? Do we have the intellectual, moral and spiritual courage to speak of and live by the truth of our nation's soul, her inherent genius? Courage, Sri Aurobindo, says is the first quality, absolutely essential if we truly wish to work for the glory of our motherland. No half-baked, wishy-washy patriotism; the Mother, *Mā Bharati*, asks for sacrifice. Only a complete faith in the Divine who is leading the nation to her glorious future and a total freedom from fear will make us ready if we truly want to practice the religion of nationalism.

Like most of the political writings of Sri Aurobindo, the passages presented here also speak of truths which are timeless, and hence remain relevant for our times and the work ahead — that of decolonising our minds and to work diligently for building a new India that is in harmony with

*her true genius, her inner temperament, her nation-soul. The headings to the passages have been given by the curator.*

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### Needed: Brahmatej and Kshatriya Spirit

We shall remember once more that the movement is a spiritual movement for prophets, martyrs and heroes to inspire, help and lead, not for diplomats and pinchbeck Machiavels; we shall realise that the spirit of India reawakened is the life of the movement and not a borrowed Western patriotism; we shall shrink once more from accommodation and paltering with the high call of our conscience as a fatal concession to the adversary and feel again that only by perfect faith, perfect self-sacrifice, perfect courage can we generate that Brahmatej in the nation which will raise up the Kshatriya spirit to protect it. Without this Brahmatej, this spiritual force in our midst, all else will be vain; Swadeshi will cease, National Education fail, the great hopes and schemes now forming in our midst disappear like idle wreaths of smoke and the whole movement stain the pages of history as an abortive and premature impulse, a great chance of freedom lost because the body of the nation was not strong enough and the soul of the nation was not pure enough to sustain the tremendous inrush of spiritual force which had suddenly come upon it.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 7: 913)

### Let us all be Prepared to repay our Debt to the Nation

Nations do not prosper without self-sacrifice. None should turn back. . . from repaying his debt to the nation. We do not want laziness, legerdemain or acting. Matured circumspection, limited and carefully adopted remedies will not do; one should rush forth. The self-respect of the nation is our religion, self-sacrifice is our only action or duty. We ought to give proper scope for the divine qualities in us to shine forth. Trifling emotions ought to be given up. Do not be afraid even if you are required to die. Do not retreat; bear pain for the sake of the nation. God is your support. If you do this, the Indian nation will, in an instant, get back its former splendour and glory. It will take its place at the side of the independent nations of the world; it will educate other nations; it will shed the lustre of true knowledge, and it will inculcate the principles of Vedanta. Our nation will come forward to benefit the human race and the whole world. Before it the whole world will tremble! But when? Only when we all are prepared to repay our debt to the nation.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 7: 860)

### Nationalism Demands Heart that is Free from Fear, the Spirit that is Full of Faith, the Soul that is Passionate for Realisation

Only that cause is God-created, entrusted with a mission, sure of victory which can stand by itself in a solitude, absolute and supreme, without visible shield or sword, exposed to all that the powers of the world can do to slay it, and yet survive. The powers of the world are the servants of God commissioned to test the purity of His workers, their faith, their courage, their self-devotion, His angels of destruction who put forth their whole strength to uproot the infant faith and scatter its followers, so that the wheat may be sifted from the chaff, the true believers from the half believers, and the new religion grow by suffering to its intended stature. Every religion therefore has to begin with a period of persecution. The religion of Nationalism is already far on in this period. . . So much chaff has been sifted from the wheat, so many stones have been rejected by the great Builder from His material for the house He is building for our Mother. As time goes on, the test will be fiercer, the sifting more violent and the heavier part of the chaff, if any remains, will follow the lighter. Only the heart that is free from fear, the spirit that is full of faith, the soul that is passionate for realisation will remain for the final test and the last purification. . . To all who have an emotional preference for the new ideas without a clear understanding of their supreme and urgent necessity, to all who understand the new ideas with their intellects only but have them not in their hearts, to all who, while loving and understanding the new ideas, have not faith to put aside the cloaks of prudence and dissimulation or courage to avow their faith openly before the world, the position is one of great perplexity. God is a hard master and will not be served by halves. All evasions, all subterfuges He cuts away and puts the question plain and loud; and before all mankind, before the friend ready to cut the ties of friendship asunder, before the enemy standing ready with lifted sword to slay the servants of God as soon as they confess their faith, it has to be answered: "Who is on the Lord's side?" Not once, not twice, but always that question is being put and the answer exacted. If you are unwilling to answer, either you do not believe that it is God's work you are doing and are therefore unfit for it, or you have insufficient faith in His power to get His work done without the help of your diplomacy and cunning, or you are unwilling to meet any plain risks in His service. To serve God under a cover is easy, to stipulate for safety in doing the work is natural to frail human nature, to sympathise and applaud is cheap; but the work demands sterner stuff in the men who will do it and insists on complete service, fearless service and honest service. The waverer must make up his mind either to answer



God's question or to give up the work. There is plenty for him to do in a cheap, safe and easy way if he cannot face the risks of self-devotion. He can hold Conferences, enrol himself as a member of the Convention's District Associations, open funds for national purposes, pass resolutions, sign petitions, hold patriotic interviews with Magistrates, Commissioners, Lieutenant-Governors, Governors and even perhaps with a live Viceroy; he can, if he is a barrister, plead in Swadeshi cases; he can take shares in profitable Swadeshi investments and boast himself a great Swadeshi worker, a captain of industry, a solid patriot; he can do real good to the country without peril to himself by subscribing to help National Education. In these and other ways he can satisfy his secret proclivities for the service of his country. But the days when this easy service could pass for Nationalism are numbered.

The work now before us is of the sternest kind and requires men of an unflinching sternness to carry it out. The hero, the martyr, the man of iron will and iron heart, the grim fighter whose tough nerves defeat cannot tire out nor danger relax, the born leader in action, the man who cannot sleep or rest while his country is enslaved, the priest of Kali who can tear his heart out of his body and offer it as a bleeding sacrifice on the Mother's altar, the heart of fire and the tongue of flame whose lightest word is an inspiration to self-sacrifice or a spur to action, for these the time is coming, the call will soon go forth. . . . Whoever feels the power of service within him, let him make sure of himself while there is yet time; for the present is an hour of easy probation, of light tests in which the punishment of failure is also light, but whoever fails in the day that be coming, will be thrown away not into the rubbish heap . . . into the fire of a great burning. For all who now declare themselves Nationalists the tests will be far severer than that before which the place-hunter, the title-hunter, the popularity-hunter, the politician of mixed motives and crooked ways, the trimmer, the light speaker and ready swearer of the old politics have paled and recoiled so early and so easily. The

profession of Nationalism should not be lightly made but with a full sense of what it means and involves. The privilege of taking it is attended with severe pains and penalties for those who take it lightly. If we are few, it matters little, but it is of supreme importance that the stuff of which we are made should be sound. What the Mother needs is hard clear steel for her sword, hard massive granite for her fortress, wood that will not break for the handle of her bow, tough substance and true for the axle of her chariot. For the battle is near and the trumpet ready for the signal.

Sri Aurobindo, (CWSA, 7: 1057-1060)

### Unceasing Struggle

While admitting the stains and defects which long subjection has induced upon our native capacity and energy, we are conscious of that capacity and energy reviving in us. We point to the unexampled national vigour which has preserved the people of this country through centuries of calamity and defeat, to the great actions of our forefathers continued even to the other day, to the many men of intellect and character such as no other nation in a subject condition has been able to produce, and we say that a people capable of such unheard-of vitality is not one which can be put down as a nation of children and incapables. We are in no way inferior to our forefathers. We have brains, we have courage, we have an infinite and various national capacity. All we need is a field and an opportunity. That field and opportunity can only be provided by a national government, a free society and a great Indian culture. So long as these are not conceded to us, we can have no other use for our brains, courage and capacity than to struggle unceasingly to achieve them.

Our ideal of Swaraj involves no hatred of any other nation nor of the administration which is now established by law in this country.

SRI AUROBINDO, (CWSA, 8:152-153)



## *Speaking of the Mother*

*Mother is not this, yet she is this.  
Mother is not that, yet she is that.*

*Mother is both this and that,  
and still much more.*

*Mother is as tender as a flower,  
she is also as hard as steel.*



*Mother is as far as the farthest horizons,  
she is also as close as our heart.*

*Mother may be serious when she smiles,  
she may be light of heart when she looks serious.*

*Mother constantly calls us,  
she also awaits our call.*

*Mother acts in response to our call,  
she also acts without our call.*

*Mother is everywhere in the world,  
yet she is nowhere in the world.*

*Mother is what she seems to be,  
she is also what she does not seem to be.*

*Mother is the Energy behind Shiva's dance,  
she is also the Delight behind Krishna's dance.*

*Mother is the thunder of Rudra's war drum,  
she is also the sweetness of Krishna's flute.*

*Mother is kind when she looks kind,  
she is also kind when she does not look kind.*

*Mother reveals herself when in hiding,  
she hides herself in manifestation.*

*Mother hides herself in the atom,  
she hides herself in the universe as well.*

*Mother reveals herself in the Universe,  
she reveals herself in the atom as well.*

*Mother may be what she appears to be,  
she may also be what she does not appear to be.*

*Mother looks different at different times,  
she also ever looks the same.*

SHYAM SUNDER

(Reprinted from an earlier issue)

[www.sriarobindosaction.org](http://www.sriarobindosaction.org)

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