

The Call Beyond

ONLINE

Volume 1, No. 1, 15 August 2015

An online publication of

Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch

Website: www.sriurobindoashram.net

Heaven's call is rare, rarer the heart that heeds;

The doors of light are sealed to common mind,

And earth's needs nail to earth the human mass,

Only in an uplifting hour of stress

Men answer to the touch of greater things:

Or, raised by some strong hand to breathe heaven-air... ..

– SRI AUROBINDO (In Savitri, Book 11, Canto 1, p. 689)

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
Where Do We Stand?	3
Hundred Years Ago	8
Twenty-five Years Ago	10
Inspirations	11
Notice Board	25

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Call Beyond* online. We are starting on an auspicious day, but well begun is not half-done; we have a long way to go. As the first article 'Where Do We Stand' points out, India is struggling hard to come out of the age of convention in which it has been stuck for about a thousand years. *The Call Beyond* is a small contribution towards waking up the sleeping tiger that India is, and leading it to the "heaven of freedom" dreamt by Rabindranath Tagore. We have to move on, but that is not possible without a vital contact with the most enlightened parts of our past. Hence the columns 'Hundred Years Ago' and 'Twenty-five years ago'. What Sri Aurobindo and The Mother said a hundred years ago, while based on the ancient past, has also the blueprint for hundreds of years into the future. Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch is not an island unto itself. The Ashram comes in contact with people from all over the world in many ways. Some of these people get touched by the contact such that they feel moved to put their feelings in words. That is very encouraging, and we share a sample of such communications in 'Inspirations'.

From the next issue we shall have two more columns, 'The Readers Write', under which we shall publish your comments on the contents of *The Call Beyond*, and 'May I Help You?', in which we shall publish any personal issues for which the readers seek our help. We can possibly be of some help in resolving three types of questions: those related to spiritual quest ('aspiring high'); those related to psychological issues ('feeling low'); and those related to physical health ('frailties of the flesh'). It is needless to say that the identity of the person sending the question will be kept confidential. The questions may be sent to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in. We look forward to your questions, which our panel of experts will try its best to reply. We would also welcome suggestions for making the e-version of *The Call Beyond* even more worthy of the name that its founder Shri Surendranath Jauhar (*Chachaji*) gave it. Write to us anyway so that we can put you on our mailing list. We would also request you to encourage your contacts to read *The Call Beyond*.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Shishu

The renascence of India is as inevitable as the rising of tomorrow's sun, and the renascence of a great nation of three hundred millions with so peculiar a temperament, such unique traditions and ideas of life, so powerful an intelligence and so great a mass of potential energies cannot but be one of the most formidable phenomena of the modern world.

SRI AUROBINDO (In: *The Ideal of Human Unity*)

Sri Aurobindo, by writing almost single-handed for the monthly journal, the *Arya*, created in just six years (1914-1920) a body of English literature based on the Indian spiritual tradition but global in its scope, which remains unsurpassed to this day in both quantity and quality. What he wrote in the *Arya* is the source of most of his major works. One of these works, *The Human Cycle*, appeared initially in the *Arya* under the title *The Psychology of Social Development* during the years 1916-18. In these articles, Sri Aurobindo examined the influence of the collective psyche of a society on history, and came to the conclusion that societies typically go through a cyclic process in their social development.

The cycle

The successive periods that constitute the cycle were named by Sri Aurobindo as the symbolic age, the age of convention, the age of reason, and the subjective age. The *symbolic age* is religious in character, and symbols and symbolic rituals dominate life. The society understands what the symbols stand for, and therefore the rituals make sense to people. The social order is firm, but social forms are lax. The religious practices have not yet hardened into rigid conventions. However, with the passage of time, only the religious practices continue, but the significance underlying the symbols is forgotten. The rituals become rigid, their practice becomes mechanical, and few understand what the practices signify. In general, the society becomes highly conventional in its approach, and forms subordinate the underlying spirit. The courage to question or oppose the prevalent norms more or less disappears from the society. This is the age of *convention*. But even during the age of convention, a few individuals, whose critical faculties survive in spite of the social milieu, do question the conventions. They want to know the 'why' behind the conventions, and refuse to follow the herd. They have to pay the price of swimming against the current, but the innate human urge for freedom eventually breaks through all barriers. When the number of rebellious and revolutionary original thinkers crosses a threshold, they start having an impact on the social attitudes. That is how a society moves from the age of convention into the age of *reason*. The age of reason is a glorious period, a period of healthy debate, a period of co-existence of conflicting philosophies. The encouragement that the spirit of enquiry and freedom of thought receive during the age of reason leads to rapid growth of science and technology. However, while the society, in general, places rationality on a pedestal, a few individuals also start seeing the limitations of reason. All the knowledge gained by the application of reason fails to reduce evil and injustice in society, and therefore suffering continues to characterize human life. Realization of the limits of reason is the beginning of the *subjective age*. The subjective age does not throw away or minimize the gains of reason, but adds a non-

rational dimension to life. Whatever is non-rational is not necessarily to be shunned because while reason is a powerful tool, it is neither the source of infallible knowledge nor the ultimate arbiter of what is right or wrong. Therefore, to use Sri Aurobindo's terminology, whatever is non-rational can be either infra-rational or supra-rational. Raw unrefined emotions are infra-rational, and their unbridled play can be disastrous. But conscious contact with the dynamic aspect of our soul gives us access to knowledge which is beyond the reach of reason. The dynamic aspect of our soul does not need the crutch of reason to know what is true or what is right. Therefore, working in the light of our soul, although non-rational, is supra-rational, and more reliable than using reason alone. This realization comes to a society when it has more or less exhausted the potential of reason, and as a result it enters the subjective age of spiritual wisdom.

Where is India today?

India has gone through the cycle, probably more than once, in its long and chequered history. For example, the Vedic age was its symbolic age, and the Upanishadic age its subjective supra-rational age, but coming to relatively recent history, India seems to have entered the age of convention about thousand years ago. Before it had the time to graduate to the age of reason, it was enslaved, partly because of the degeneration that had set in during the age of convention. Slavery promotes the instinct to preserve one's identity, and that can be most easily and safely done by sticking to conventions. Conventions promote conformism, and that thwarts progress but all the same provides stability. The result was that through its long spell of slavery, India got stuck in the age of convention. That is reflected in many of our common spontaneous expressions, which we take as perfectly natural and reasonable, such as "everybody says so, and hence...", "everybody does that, and hence...", "X (an authority figure) says so, and hence...", "X (an authoritative book) says so, and hence...", and worst of all, "We are A/B/C, and therefore we have to do this or that", where A/B/C may be Hindu/Muslim/Christian or Punjabi/Gujarati/Tamilian. It is the suffocating dominance of convention, authority and habit that made Tagore express his anguish in his famous poem in *Gitanjali*, "Where the mind is without fear... Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit ... Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake". Sri Aurobindo, although a lover of the spiritual culture of India, was critical of its recent manifestations. He wrote, "Our civilization has got ossified, our dharma a bigotry of externals, our spirituality a faint glimmer of light or a momentary wave of intoxication" (Nadkarni 2006, p. 84).

Advancing towards reason

Although we are still far from the "heaven of freedom" that Tagore dreamt of, there are hopeful signs of the rebels driven by reason making their presence felt. Several factors have contributed to this shift. First and foremost, the political freedom that we earned in 1947 was a milestone in this direction. Secondly, the partition of the country that accompanied the freedom, with all its disastrous fallouts, perhaps contributed to the erosion of conventions. For those who were uprooted from their home and hearth by partition, the first priority was bread and shelter, not preserving conventions. Difficult circumstances force us to use our head, because the stability inherent in sticking to accustomed ways has been shattered anyway. The other factors that have contributed to the on-going transition from

convention to reason are economic growth, and the increasing role that media play in moulding social attitudes. Economic growth gives one, education; and two, the leisure to think, reflect, experiment and explore. The media have helped in bringing audiovisual material from different parts of the country as well as the world within the reach of even people living in villages and urban slums. The result is that even those whose material means are meagre, whose social life is convention-ridden, and whose access to formal education is limited, are exposed to how people live and think elsewhere. As a result, their younger generation feels the urge to reason, and to break through the prison of conventions. They not only want to study and travel, they also want to marry whomsoever they like.

Some of the visible signs of the transition from the age of convention to that of reason are first, the mushrooming of literary and artistic creativity, as happened during the scholastic age of Europe in the thirteenth century. Secondly, there is proliferation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), initiated and manned by young people, many of whom have given up lucrative careers with the intention of liberating the society from one social evil or another. Thirdly, marriages across caste and creed divisions are on the rise. Finally, the courage to question authority is much in evidence; even godmen are being questioned.

Where is the West today?

Skippping the details, Western Europe entered the age of convention during the Roman Empire, and remained stuck in it through the dark ages, arbitrarily fixed by Charles Singer from 400 AD to 1543 AD, a period of more than a thousand years. A glimmer of hope appeared during the scholastic age in the thirteenth century. The scholars of the 13th century were still subservient to the twin authority of antiquity and religion. But there was revival of learning, which laid the foundations of the European Renaissance. The most progressive author of this period was Roger Bacon (1214-1294), who did not hesitate to criticize authority, and paid the price for his audacity by spending many years in prison. It was rebels like him who led Europe from the age of convention to the age of reason. Charles Singer has chosen 1543 as the year of the onset of the European Renaissance. The justification for such a precise date is that during that year appeared two publications of great importance. One was a book on Astronomy by Copernicus, and the other a book on Anatomy by Vesalius. Both these books, for the first time after more than a thousand years, dared place greater reliance on observation than on authority. Science had at last managed to loosen the grip of the ancient classics. The spirit of enquiry could once again breathe freely without the Church clipping its nose. The freedom of thought ushered in by the Renaissance led to the developments in science, which led to the growth of technology, which in turn culminated in the Industrial Revolution. The result was that by the nineteenth century, the lives of those who benefitted the most from the Industrial Revolution became very comfortable, and it was the fond hope of all well-meaning people that science and technology would finally solve all the problems of human existence. But that did not happen: the degree of evil, injustice and suffering did not decline one bit. The response to this failure was that, Reason, the instrument that had led to the development of science and technology, was pressed into service to solve the problems of human existence by devising new systems of education and new forms of government. While democracy, socialism and communism are all based on logic and good intentions, none of these made any dent on human misery. The finest

product of the application of reason to human affairs was humanism. However, even this rational code of ethics failed to diminish the evil, injustice, cruelty and suffering in the world. The reason behind these failures, according to Sri Aurobindo, was that the level of human consciousness continued to be low. Therefore, even the best system, when put into action by human beings with an ego-driven mental consciousness, does not achieve the intended results. Irrespective of the system, power gets concentrated in the hands of relatively few, leaving the rest at their mercy. Those who have the power, somehow or the other manage to suppress and deprive those who are powerless because at the present level of human consciousness, personal greed motivates human actions. Further, man's well-developed intellect manages to find even a justification for his actions. However, all these failed experiments were necessary, and served a purpose. It was because of these failures that when Europe, and the West in general, had exhausted the potential of reason in solving the basic problems of human existence, these societies started looking at ancient Indian wisdom. That is how Europe entered the subjective supra-rational age in the twentieth century.

How does the past explain the present?

Looking at history in terms of the cyclic process visualized by Sri Aurobindo explains many common observations. It explains the high receptivity of the Western world to ancient Indian wisdom. Yoga and Buddhism are the two most popular export products of India today. It explains the movement of the Western world from conventional religions towards spirituality. The lead article in the 12 March 2012 issue of the *Time* magazine was '10 Ideas That Are Changing Your Life'. One of these 'ideas', according to the author, Amy Sullivan, is 'The Rise of the Nones'. 'The nones' is the name that social scientists give to those who declare that they have no affiliation to any organized religion. The nones are the fastest-growing religious group in the U.S., and are currently estimated to form 16 percent of the American population. The nones have rejected organized religion but believe in God, engage in spiritual conversation and prayer, and participate in humanitarian work. It also explains why Indian spiritual wisdom in general, and Sri Aurobindo in particular, is much better understood and put into action by the Western world than India itself. The West, having graduated from the age of reason to the supra-rational age, is ready to receive, or rather thirsty to pocket ancient Indian spiritual wisdom. Here is a sample: "Aurobindo is the greatest contemporary philosopher and great in the company of the greatest mystics of all time Because Aurobindo is in this world, the world is becoming able to express progressively unity and diversity instead of division, love instead of hatred, truth consciousness instead of falsehood, freedom instead of tyranny, immortality instead of death", wrote Rev. E.E.F. Hill in 1949 (Nadkarni 2006, pp. 86-87). India, on the other hand, is struggling to come out of the shackles of convention, including those of the rituals and dogmas of conventional religion, in its march towards the age of reason. That is why, India does not seem to be ready to accept its own wisdom. "Our intelligentsia has been swearing by Darwin, Freud and Karl Marx but they have simply ignored Sri Aurobindo, one of the few independent thinkers that India produced in the 20th century, who dealt mainly with the same issues that these three thinkers did and in the light of whose writings we are better able to appreciate them because he presents the complete truth which each of these thinkers distorted in his own way", wrote Dr. Mangesh Nadkarni (Nadkarni 2006, pp. 87-88). What we are willing to accept from our own tradition is also influenced by where we stand in the social cycle. "There are two

types of Hinduisms”, wrote Sri Aurobindo, “one which takes its stand on the kitchen and seeks its Paradise by cleaning the body; another which seeks God, not through the cooking pot and the social convention, but in the soul. The latter is also Hinduism and it is a good deal older and more enduring than the other...” (Sri Aurobindo, 2005). It is because of our being stuck in the age of convention that today the Hinduism that is much in evidence is the one which is rooted in rituals rather than in Vedanta.

Where do we go from here?

In terms of recent history, we are where Europe was about seven hundred years ago. Does it mean that we have to wait that long to catch up, to appreciate and apply our own ancient wisdom? While it is true that history repeats itself, it does not repeat itself exactly. And, there are many reasons why we can expect to bridge the gap much faster. *First*, we do not have the type of conflict that Europe had between religion and science. Our indigenous spiritual tradition, Vedanta, is insight-based, and therefore gives the individual the freedom to explore and acquire his own insights. This freedom is so much in our DNA that it always leaves room for deviation from conventions. What we need is to use this freedom with conviction and logic. *Secondly*, developments in technology have made the world much smaller. Not only has that made it easier for the West to access Indian wisdom, it has also made it much easier for us to know the social transformation currently going on in the West, and to get influenced by it. *Finally*, since the West is looking up to India for solving the problems of human existence, we are under a global scanner. The contrast between our ancient ideals and our present practices is too glaring to be missed. Since we are being watched, the contrast will eventually shame us and compel us to give a better expression to our nation soul. If there is one thing that can accelerate the march of India from the age of convention to that of reason, and from there to the supra-rational age, it is good education. A thorough overhauling of our education system is essential for the next generation of Indians to live the wisdom that the world is importing from India.

Closing thoughts

Sri Aurobindo’s vision was futuristic, was deeply rooted in the evolutionary perspective, and encompassed the entire human race. He visualized that the mental consciousness, of which reason is the best tool, had reached its limits. The next leap in evolution would lead to a qualitatively different type of consciousness, which he termed supramental. While the mental consciousness creates the impression of division being the final reality, the supramental consciousness would be rooted in unity. The result would be a world full of love, peace and harmony. Ancient Indian wisdom is poised to play an important role in creating this new world. In that sense, India has already started playing the role of the world guru. But there is a difference between India being the world guru, and the Indians of today being the world guru. Indians would be entitled to the role of the world guru only if they practice the ancient spiritual wisdom that India has given to the world. The world is moving towards a higher consciousness. The motive force for the revolutionary change is ancient Indian wisdom. But the epicenter of the change is in the Western world. In the larger design of the Divine, it will make no difference. In that design there is no East and West; it is just one world and one human race. It is up to the Indians of today to decide how far we want to be a part of the revolution that is changing the very face of the human race.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sri Aurobindo. *The Human Cycle. The Ideal of Human Unity. War and Self Determination*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2nd edition, 1970.

Sri Aurobindo on Hinduism. (Compiled by Satadal). Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2005.

Mangesh Nadkarni. *India's Spiritual Destiny: Its Inevitability and Potentiality*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Society, in association with UBS Publishers, 2006.

.....
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. 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 fulfill India's true destiny.

SRI AUROBINDO, in his message to the nation through Andhra University in 1948

.....

HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The Synthesis of Yoga

The worship of the Master of works consists for the Karmayogin in the clear and glad acknowledgement of Him in ourselves, in all things and in all happenings. The sign of this adoration is equality of the soul. The Lord is in all beings equally; therefore we have to make no essential distinctions between ourselves and others, the wise and the ignorant, the saint and the sinner, the friend and the enemy, man and the animal. We have to hate none, despise none, be repelled by none; in all we have to see the One disguised or manifested; a little revealed or more revealed according to His will and His knowledge of what is best for that which He intends to become in form and to do in works. All in our self, one self that has taken many shapes; hatred, scorn and repulsion are the arrogance of the ignorant soul; and if they are natural, necessary, inevitable at a certain stage, yet to the Karmayogin they are a survival, a foolishness, a stumbling block and are finally, as he progresses, remembered only as an obsolete barbarism of the child-soul when it was not yet adult in the divine culture.

Equality of soul does not mean a fresh ignorance or blindness, a greyness of vision and a blotting out of all hues. Difference is there, variation of expression is there and this variation we shall appreciate, – far more justly than we could when the eye was clouded by a partial love and hate, sympathy and antipathy, attraction and repulsion, admiration and scorn. But behind the variation we shall always see the Complete and Immutable who dwells within and we shall feel, know or at least trust in, if it is hidden from us, the wise purpose and the divine necessity of the particular manifestation, whether it appear to our human standards harmonious and perfect or crude and unfinished.

SRI AUROBINDO (In the *Arya*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 15 August 2015)

.....

Conscious Union of the Principle with Its Becoming*

ONE day, O Lord, Thou didst teach my mind that it could act fully as an instrument of manifestation of Thy divine truth, as an intermediary of Thy eternal will, without being limited in its realizing constructions by the narrow field of possibilities of the external being. Till then this mind, except very rarely, was in the habit of coming out of its mute ecstasy, its silent contemplation before Thy ineffable infinity, only to concentrate its effort on the centre of action represented by the external being; and this was a sort of bondage within too narrow a frame; there was a contradiction between the powers of mental realization and the instrument through which they were striving to make their way out; the most immediate result was the wastage and limitation of mental energies, which not finding any satisfaction in activity, quite naturally returned to merge into Thy eternity.

Suddenly Thou didst put an end to this disorder; Thou didst liberate the mind from its last fetters; Thou didst teach it to be freely active through all forms and no longer exclusively through those it considered till then as its own, that is, as its natural means of expression.

The vital being had already realised this liberation long ago and knew how to enjoy the plenitude of sensations and emotions in all forms capable of manifesting life. But the mental being had not yet learnt how to animate, organize and illuminate consciously all lives without distinction. Thou didst break down all barriers, Thou didst open to it the doors of Thy infinite manifestation.

Within a few days the new conquest was established, affirmed. And what Thou expectest from the centre of consciousness represented at present upon earth by my whole being, grew clear before it: To be the life in all material forms, the thought organizing and using this life in all forms, the love widening, enlightening, intensifying, uniting all the varied elements of this thought, and thus, through a total identification with the manifested world, to be able to intervene with full power in its transformations.

On the other hand, by a perfect surrender to the Supreme Principle, to become aware of the Truth and the eternal Will that manifests it. Through this identification having become the faithful servant and sure intermediary of the divine Will, and uniting this conscious identification with the Principle to the conscious identification with its becoming, to mould and model consciously the love, mind and life of the becoming in accordance with the Law of Truth of the Principle.

This is how the individual being can be the conscious mediator between the absolute Truth and the manifested universe and intervene in the slow, uncertain march of the Yoga of Nature in order to give it the swiftness, intensity and sureness of the divine Yoga.

This is how in certain periods the entire terrestrial life seems to cross miraculously over stages which at other times would require thousands of years to traverse.

At present, O Lord, the state of perfect and conscious surrender to Thy eternal will is, as far as I can tell, constant, invariable behind every act, every movement of the mind, the vital or the body. This imperturbable calm, this deep, peaceful, unchanging bliss, which never leave me—are they not a proof of this?

Passive or receptive identification with life, thought and love in all manifested forms is an accomplished fact, apparently the inevitable consequence of surrender to pure Truth.

But the moments when consciousness becomes effectively the life animating and moulding all material forms, the intelligence organizing life, and the love illuminating the intelligence, in an active and fully conscious way, at once in the totality and the least detail, with a sense of infinite plenitude and precise powers—these moments are still intermittent though growing more and more frequent and lasting.

It is in these moments that the two consciousnesses are simultaneous and fuse into a single, almost indescribable, ineffable consciousness in which are united Immutable Eternity and Eternal Movement. It is in these moments that the present work begins to be accomplished.

THE MOTHER (In *Prayers and Meditations*, prayer dated 24 May 1915)

**Title given by the editor*

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

PRAYERS

1. To Her in whose lotus feet repose the lofty intellect, the mighty strength, the sap of delight that drips from the heart of all and the accomplishment that holds in store the Yoga-welfare, to the Mother, the ambrosia of the eyes of Sri Aurobindo, to the upholder of the support of all existences, to Mira, the luminous, dispeller of the inner darkness to the one who upholds the wide earth – to Her we bow.
2. The supreme Sky is Thy abode, the resplendent Sun Thy body. Mother, the whole cosmos has come into being through a part of Thy greatness as Thy limb. Yonder Heaven is the head, the Mid-world is the middle portion, the Earth is the foot. Even so Thou appearest as with form to each one of the beings.

From *The Call Beyond* Vol. 15, No. 1, 1990, p. 31.

INSPIRATIONS

Feedback from the visit of MBA students of Management Development Institute, Gurgaon in August 2014

Dear Tara di and Vijay Di,

On behalf of Management Development Institute, and 61 students of Human Resource Management 2013-15, I wish to thank you for giving us a wonderful learning experience. Every one of us felt happy, energized and contented after being half a day at Ashram. It is hard work of Tara di and several ashramites who with their dedicated have made the Ashram such a beautiful place. The positive energy relentlessly flows across every individual at every place.

I wish to thank Dr. Bijlani who mesmerized us with his depth of knowledge and I am sure his lecture will remain forever as a guidance in the students career. Dr. Baweja added further to the motivation. It would be unfair, if we do not thank all the ashramites who made our day an immortal part of our life.

It was hard work of Vijay di and her team who made this event so successful. I must thank Hira Sir who of his own volunteered to click and shoot video of the event.

Thanking you once again for making a wonderful place of learning.

With regards

Avanish

Avanish Kumar, Ph.D.
Associate Professor & Area Chairperson
Public Policy and Governance
Management Development Institue
Gugraon, India

Some of the Students wanted to share their feelings. They are as follows:

“Unlike a typical B-school morning, 23rd August brought back school time memories of waking up early and boarding a bus. The destination was Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram, New Delhi. Walking around, it was a pleasant surprise to see how our expectations of a religious place surrounding elderly people spending the evenings of their life were replaced by the reality of a vibrant, heart-warming, and welcoming environment. This ashram was an ashram with difference with the campus abuzz with so many youth around. Spending 15 minutes in the meditation hall, we could already feel our energies getting channelized. An hour of *shramdaan* helped us to relish the breakfast realizing the amount of efforts our hard working farmers put into the soil. With the incentive of getting fresh fruit juice, the second round of *shramdaan* began. This time we were divided in groups and assigned tasks varying from sorting

books and clothes, helping in kitchen, garden to the basic cleaning work. The lunch we had was one of the few most cherished meals in our life. Never has the food been so satiable nor lately among the hustles of a typical academic life, we got the opportunity as a batch to sit together and enjoy the food. In between we got to attend the lectures of Dr Ramesh Bijlani and Dr Baveja. Both the lectures helped us to add a new dimension to the meaning of life. Finally, we came back with tired bodies but re-energised souls. We are thankful to our Prof Avanish Kumar and institute which provided us this brilliant opportunity as part of Corporate Social Responsibility curriculum. The experience was, without shadow of a doubt, one of the most rewarding and fulfilling we have had". - **Suvira Yadav**

"To toil in sun was the most humbling experience which triggered many latent thoughts about our responsibility towards the society and happiness in general." - **Amit Prakash**

"For me the visit brought back memories of my almost two month stay long back at Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry. The experience I had this time and last time was exactly same", i.e excellent. - **Ankit Khanuja**

"I would like to thank them for providing us the chance to be a part of their life, it was indeed a great humbling experience".-**Soubhranshu Chopra**

"It was an enlightening experience, I realized how meaningless our actions are sometimes and there is a need for everyone of us to get in touch with our inner voice and find what makes us truly happy".

- **Sonali Dubey**

"Centre of happiness lies somewhere inside an individual and not in outside world " - **Shishir Shandilya**

"The visit to Ashram was an enriching one and made me realize how lucky I am to live such a comfortable life. My thinking would never be the same again and I feel that I have grown as a person. Thank you for providing this opportunity".-**Prashant Duggal**

"Those who want to learn how to see happiness in small things go and visit the ashram" -**Nitin Hans**

"A really heart-warming experience. Observing the functioning of the ashram really helped in putting a human face to the concepts we study and would keep us grounded in life & in our thinking"

- **Sarang Satish**

Feedback from B.Ed. Students from Amity University after their visit to the Ashram, 22 Jan 2015

Sunia Arora <suniaarora03@gmail.com>

7:31 PM (2 hours ago) on 22 Jan 2015

Respected Mr Ramesh Bijlani sir

I am highly highly obliged to listen to ur words today ...thanks for d wonderful day ...I will definitely come again to have a word wid u ...ur cognitive domain is highly appreciablefor a student like me u r an inspiration ...heartfelt thanks to u for making my day I was listening to u as if I am watching my grandfather in you ...wonderful to listen ur voice ...a sense of emotion n gratitude ...loved all d sessions .. I did not choose teaching as my first choice but today I felt it is a right choiceall thanks to you for the amazing views.

Thanks for d day ...had a huge impact on my life ... Just need ur blessings for my future ... (sorry for d SMS language)

Once again Thank you sir!

Sunia Arora

Amity, Saket, B.Ed. student

AkashKashyap<akashkashyap7@gmail.com>

12:14 AM (8 hours ago) on 23 Jan 2015

To me

Respected sir,

I'm Akashkashyap, Today I came to ashram. It was really inspiring n motivating to hear from you, the enlightenment you gave to us was invaluable. The aura of the ashram premises gave me a never before experience. I'm nothing in front of your knowledge and experience, so these words of mine are not praising for you. I'm not qualified enough to do so. These words are just what my heart felt today during the whole day of my stay at ashram !!! I will come to ashram again, I would like hear u again! This is all I can write because in words I can't describe what I exactly felt.

Thanks a lot sir !!!!!

AkashKashyap

B.Ed. Student, Amity

Feedback from overseas visitors

To: Reception

Sent: Monday, December 23, 2013 5:48 PM

Subject: Re: Fw: Visitor from South Africa Mrs Sona Singh 2nd week of October 2013

To: The Manager and Staff of Sri Aurobindo Ashram

I arrived home safely on the 1st December 2013 after spending major part of my holiday in Delhi. Unfortunately I couldn't get to Badrinath but I went to Rishikesh and to Haridwar.

Spent some time in Delhi and Mauritius but I really enjoyed my stay at Aurobindo Ashram the best.

Every single day from the 13th October until the 23rd October was absolutely fascinating.

I was carried away by the music class, the dance class, yoga class, meditation sessions etc. I love yoga but I learnt a few more asanas by attending the classes there which I appreciate.

Thanks to Mrs Tara Johar, Indu Pillay, Dr Baveja, The students at the Health Centre, the reception and the entire staff for being so helpful and taking such good care of me.

My compliments goes out to the dining hall as well and for the preparation of the fabulous meals.

Thank you for making my stay at Aurobindo Ashram a memorable one.

God Bless and I wish all of you a very happy and prosperous safe, healthy, and a peaceful NEW YEAR 2014.

Kalaspathi (Sona Singh)

Clayton Gardens

(Home for the Aged)

From: "JuttaSanzi" <J.Sanzi@gmx.de>

Date: 12 June 2014 13:58:23 IST

To: Tarajauhar@gmail.com

Subject: Greetings from Germany

Dear Tara,

Since my India-Journey and my stay in Madhuban at April this year I look with other eyes, I speak another language, I hear other noises and I feel very deep. Something has happened. Every evening I do

my meditation and your words (CD) attend me. I hear and feel Mother's words and I understand that not many people really feel his teaching. Most people saw/see in Mother and Sri Aurobindo Gurus and adore their bodies and their work. I never searching a Guru, the Guru find me. I feel, that I open for Mother's words.

Tara, you are a useful person in my life and I'm very grateful that I met you.

Sometimes I had tears in my eyes, because the present of the life is so big.

I wish that many people can see and feel it.

I send you my love and hope I can see you next year when I came back to India.

Kindest Regards

inner peace and health

Jayanti

e-mail dt 10 Jan 2015, forwarded by MrJogi Bhagat on 29 Jan 2015

Good day, Jogi.

A lasting impression from my stay at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is a quote by Mirra Alfassa (The Mother) beautifully painted on a wall at the Mirambika Center: "There is a great beauty in simplicity." Life in the Ashram flows in a rhythm unique to the place and the people who live and learn there. The healthy meals and daily hatha yoga practice promoted a feeling of health and wellness that I have never before experienced. The Ashram's respite from worldly pressures aroused my conscience. For me this experience was a spiritual awakening, not a spiritual "retreat."

The insightful talks by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani have been personally transformative by shaping the following insights. Firstly, understanding that Integral Yoga empowers us to follow a path that helps us to connect with the divine essence. Secondly, discovering that making choices based upon a connection with the divine essence will lead to joy and lasting peace. Thirdly, realizing that spirituality is inclusive and universal and does not fit into one theology. And lastly, believing that evolution is moving mankind toward perfection, a philosophy that supports a very optimistic future for humanity.

Namaste,

Judy

(from Austin TX, USA, in a mail to Mr. Jogi Bhagat, who has been bringing groups of yoga enthusiasts from the US to the Ashram)

Abbie Wellington

2:55 PM (6 hours ago), 27 March 2015

to me

Hello Dr. Bijlani,

Greetings to you! I thought I would just send an e-mail to say thank you for connecting me with the school. I had a very soul-fulfilling experience there and at the Ashram. The diyas (Mirambika teachers) were very welcoming and I learned a lot about myself and about Integral Education. As well, the baby and mom group welcomed me. I found myself in touch with the inner there. Anyway, just processing and continuing to reflect as I finish some reflections. Thanks again for your support!

Abbie Wellington

e-mail dated 2 Feb 2015

Karen Hamdon

9:06 PM (30 minutes ago)

to me

Dearest Dr. Bijlani,

Happy New Year! I pray it will be full of joy and peace for you and your dear wife.

Usually at this time of year I would be writing to say we will be seeing you soon but this year we will not be coming to India, sadly. I miss all of you so very much. I will miss very much your lovely teachings and our time at the Aurobindo Ashram. It is a beautiful space where one can simply be – with the Mother and all the Tapasya energy that has gathered there over the years. We do plan to come again in 2016 so I look forward to that reunion. One day, if the Mother's grace will allow I will be able to stay and do my own Sadhana also.

Many times I think back to our conversation in the dining room. It has been very helpful. Of course, there always seem to be more questions/searching so I will save them for next time.....

With much love,

Karen

PS Can you also tell DidiHansa that I send my warmest regards and love to her as well. ;)

Karen Hamdon

Mar 21, 2015 (3 days ago)

to me

Dearest Dr. Bijlani,

Good morning!

We just confirmed our reservations at your lovely Ashram for next year and I am so looking forward to our visit. I know it is far in advance, we will be in touch closer to the date hoping you will meet with our new group. Just wanted to let you know that we are coming! I was so happy to receive the confirmation from Tapasaya!!

On a personal note, I feel very grateful for your teachings and support. The spiritual path can be a little daunting and it is so very helpful to have such a knowledgeable and kind guide for the journey.

Shanti OM

Much love,

Karen

Feedback from a Camp (Healthy Living and Positive Thinking) at Madhuban, May 2015

The training on 'Healthy Living & Positive Thinking', was very helpful for me as an individual and I am very grateful to the NTA and Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The classes were very good and helped me to move from religion to spirituality. I was struggling with some issues in life and the classes on stress management and self realization helped me to come extent. I will also try to do patient care work without expectation because expectation leads to unhappiness of stress.

SunmayaGiri

Nurse, ESI Model Hospital

Baddi, H.P.

Feedback from a Camp (Mind-Body Medicine and Beyond) at Van Niwas, May 2015

Last one week has been a true spiritual retreat. The content of the program was well thought and planned. The yoga sessions were progressive and simple to follow, unlike many other yoga sessions that I have attended so far. The lectures and seminars were interesting and insightful. The space afforded to raise our questions and discuss was comforting. Walks and treks were, probably, the best bit of the program. The opportunity to be in/with nature was perfect for the self to experience and witness harmony.

I really thank people at the ashram to have organized such a wonderful trip, and to have managed it well till the end.

Look forward to participate in future camps focused on spiritual growth for young adults/couples.

Neetu Rana

*Clinical Psychologist
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi*

Felt integrated!

Great learnings along with opportunities to experience the same in practice.

Lectures on the Self and Consciousness have been of exceptional importance and significance for me.

A special thanks to the entire trekking team from the Ashram for allowing me a platform to test my limits successfully.

I have evolved and grown as a person in last one week!

I express my deepest gratitude to the Ashram and the resource persons for allowing me this opportunity to enrich myself.

Ribhu Goyal

*Mental Health Professional
Dwarka, New Delhi*

An interesting learning experience. The location, the atmosphere at the ashram, the schedule and the sessions were so peaceful, it allows for some time away from chaotic life, and some very essential inspection and contemplation. Dr. Bijlani and Ms. Shruti are power houses of knowledge and information.

They ignite that spark necessary for further exploration of concepts known but not fully understood. They have a way of simplifying ideas and methodology, and for this I thank them. This study camp for me was more of learning a way of life and less studying. It was a perfect blend of everything. Structure, discipline and punctuality are qualities that are not very easily acquired, and they were stressed upon. It was challenging, but I have thoroughly enjoyed myself and I am inspired to better my lifestyle. The cherry on the cake were the little and long treks we were taken on, the most beautiful paths I have walked in a while. Thank you MrSankaran and MrsManasi for making our stay comfortable and memorable. Everyone in me Ashram exudes a calm aura that I aspire to imbibe. My take back from this week in a few words: An integration of the interior and exterior, creating a life filled with joy, peace of mind, good health and fulfillment. This was also a wonderful opportunity for me to get to know my colleagues. I have gotten to know them better. I have had the opportunity of meeting some wonderful people.

Priya Babu

Psychology Intern at VIMHANS

Alaknanda, New Delhi

Feedback from a camp at Madhuban organized by Ramakrishna Mission

From: "Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi" <rkmissiondelhi@gmail.com>

Date: June 10, 2015 at 6:01:57 PM GMT+5:30

To: "'Tara Jauhar'" <tarajauhar@gmail.com>

Cc: "'Auro Camps'" <aurocamps@aurobindoonline.in>

Subject: Urgent message for Tara Ben

Dear Tara Ben,

Sub: Spiritual Retreat at Madhuban

At the outset let me convey our heartfelt thanks for all the wonderful services rendered by you and your team which helped us conduct a beautiful retreat programme at Madhuban. I have given below a short report about the programme.

A team of 31 devotees and a monk from Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi arrived in eight vehicles at Madhuban on the 3rd of June, 2015, sometime in the afternoon. After tea and refreshing themselves

the group assembled for the retreat programme which began with the singing of Arati and meditation in a beautiful room provided by Sri Aurobindo Ashram. After dinner the devotees once again assembled at 8:30 pm for reading of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and question answer. On the 4th, 5th and 6th the following routine was followed.

5:00 to 6:45 am. Meditation and Gita Chanting

9:00 am. Group singing of Bhajans (30 minutes) followed by a talk on Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master (one hour) by Swami Shantatmananda.

10:30 am to 11:00 am. Tea break.

11:00-11:45 am. Meditation.

11:45 am-12:30 pm. A class based on *Karma Yoga* by Swami Vivekananda.

After lunch:

3:00-3:45 pm. Bhajans, followed by reading from the Reminiscences of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi.

After evening tea and enjoying the beautiful atmosphere through long walks, etc, devotees assembled at 6:30 pm. for evening arati and meditation.

After dinner:

8:30 pm. Reading of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and question-answer session.

It was an extraordinary experience for all the devotees who thoroughly enjoyed the serene and soul-filling atmosphere of the Madhuban Ashram. The climate was excellent. The food was simple but it was served neat and it was nutritious too. All in all the devotees returned with their hearts full of joy and satisfied at having participated in a beautiful retreat in a truly spiritual atmosphere.

With warm regards,

Yours in service,

Swami Shantatmananda

Ramakrishna Mission
Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg
New Delhi – 110055

.....

Feedback from a camp at Madhuban organized by Sri Aurobindo Society, NOIDA

From: ArunNaik<arun.naik@vastusindhu.com>

Date: April 18, 2015 at 1:47:35 PM GMT+5:30

To: "Dr. Anju Khanna" <anju60khanna@gmail.com>

Subject: Study Camp at RamgarhTalla

Dear Dr. Khanna,

After leaving Madhuban yesterday morning, we visited Mukteshwar and returned safely to Noida by late evening. I thank you, Anjela, Laxman, and all others at Madhuban for the courtesy and the hospitality which was extended to us when we were there during the Gita Study Camp. Our brief stay was a pleasure, and all of us, I'm sure, have returned with many beautiful memories of the charm of Madhuban and of your hospitality.

I look forward to a closer working relationship between SAA Delhi and SAS Noida, and as you had suggested, let us meet once every six months without an agenda.

With Regards,

Arun Naik

SAS Noida

.....

The MIS trip to Dalhousie

At last the Day arrived when we forgathered and soon our peregrinations had begun. We were delighted to be with our friends, on the way to Dalhousie. After reaching Pathankot, we completed the rest of the journey by bus. It was a relief to breathe in the fresh air of the mountains. The youth hostel where we stayed was wonderful. Upon stepping out of the dormitories, there was a balcony that surrounded the building on each floor.

On the first day, we went to Subhash Chowk and visited St Francis' Church.

The next morning, after a breakfast of paranthas and hot coffee or tea, we trekked to Panchpulla, where we refreshed ourselves with a breathtaking view, sitting on the rocks near the waterfall.

The day after that, we travelled by bus to Lakkadmandi. Upon reaching, we were so excited that we had a snowball fight as soon as we saw the snow. Then we began the trudge through the slippery snow, our feet sinking into it while walking. We had a more enjoyable snowball fight after reaching Kalatop. After trekking back to Lakkadmandi, we had packed biryani for lunch, while sitting on top of a small hill.

Everyday, in the evening, in addition to soup an hour before dinner, we had delicious snacks to keep us going, such as momos with spicy sauce, bread pakoras and pizza.

On the fourth day, we went to Khajjiar, which is truly beautiful with its view of snowcapped mountains, and rightly known as Mini Switzerland. Lake Khajjiar, which is believed to have been formed by a meteoritic impact, lies in the middle of the grassy area where we played, relaxed and did horse-riding along the boundary.

The next morning we were all very sad that the last day had arrived, but a trek past SubhashBaoli, at the end of which we washed our faces in cool running water from a mountain spring, distracted us temporarily. On the way back we went to Gandhi Chowk and bought various things for our family such as spicy 'chukh', which is a traditional recipe for chutney from the valley of Chamba. In the evening, we held performances in groups. We thoroughly enjoyed the singing and dancing. After dinner, songs were played and everyone danced to them. We all laughed and enjoyed ourselves together.

We managed to make new friends and discover ourselves more. We will always remember how we left Dalhousie longing for more. The morning coffee, the fun from dawn to dusk, the unity, the laughter... This trip is one that will stay nestled in our memories forever.

Kavya Sahni, VIII-E, The Mother's International School,
after she returned from the school trip to Dalhousie

Last day at Mirambika

From: Ananya Bhat <ananya.bhat99@gmail.com>

Date: March 31, 2015 at 11:41:07 PM GMT+5:30

To: taradidiwork@gmail.com

Subject: Mirambika Speech

Dear Tara Didi,

Thank you for the interest you showed in my speech!

I have attached it in the mail....

My journey in Mirambika has been absolutely beautiful.

I cannot begin to express how much the school and the MBK family means to me, it would take me a whole book to summarize this extraordinary experience.

Thank you, didi, for enabling an opportunity for a child like me to discover herself!

Lots of Love,

Ananya

The attached speech (slightly edited):

My name is Ananya Bhat. And this is my last day as a student of Mirambika.

Well, at least that's what the paper-work will say. It'll say that Ananya began studying at Mirambika in 2003 and graduated in 2015.

It will certify that Mirambika taught me how to read and write, that it made me mug up some dates and names of the past, that it taught me how the government functions, that it made sure I could balance a chemical equation, etc., etc.

But, the Paper-Work will fail to express, the real things this institution has taught me. It will fail to record, that Mirambika is my home, my family, and the place where i began to understand the purpose of my existence. So that's what I am going to do tonight; articulate the true function of this institution.

We, the Mirambikan children are quite unique, not just because of having no uniforms, competitions and exams, But because we are limitless. We are not bound to any textbook or set syllabus. Our education is beyond marks, it is about learning and expanding.

I remember back when I was in 5th grade, a few of my neighbourhood friends were teasing some of us Mirambikans that we didn't have any 'real study' in our school because we had no exams; they kept boasting about their high grades and test-results; and then one of us walked up to them and said, "Good students are those who want to know, not those who want to show." That was a quote from Sri Aurobindo, and we had been reflecting on it in school. I think it was on that day that our friends finally realized that although our education was different than theirs, it was pretty great and also the fact that we had brilliant style!

That's what Mirambika does. It doesn't prepare you for life. Or teach you how to ace interviews. Mirambika makes you the best version of yourself. Dr. Kalam once wrote that we are all born with wings, but never taught how to use them. Now, that might be true out in the big world outside, but here in Mirambika, sheltered in our nest, we are free and independent. Here at Mirambika, we are taught to embrace our greatness, and FLY.

Speech delivered by **Ananya Bhat** on her last day in Mirambika

.....

From a Parent

From: nandita

Sent: Tuesday, April 07, 2015 9:37 PM

To: contact@aurobindoonline.in

Subject: dissolving outer forms

My daughter Brishti just finished her third day at The Mother's International School after a journey of ten years in Mirambika.

I am fascinated by the way she has made friends and opened herself to the new process of learning. I myself could not come to terms when she decided to leave Mirambika. I started introspecting on what exactly was feeling difficult for me.

What surfaced were my fears and assumptions about what the future held in store. I started wondering what had brought me to Mirambika – a search for a joyous celebratory childhood, in the lap of nature, reiterating Rabindranath Tagore's ideas about education. At an orientation by Partho with Sri Aurobindo's famous first principle of true teaching that stated "nothing can be taught" started a journey I had never embarked in my life -- the journey within, opening up the frontiers and horizons of the shifting, shuffling ordinary mind to a truer reality called the consciousness. Over the years, through processes of self-reflection and awareness initiated in the school and strengthened by the experience of early childhood educational practices in Sri Aurobindo Society, meeting teachers all over India from several states, at national camps on Integral Education held in Pondicherry, I experienced a moving into greater and greater freedom and calm, realising that the perfect school lay in the heart of the teachers and burned like a fire and sang like a flower in the state of consciousness in which they established themselves and the children.

The only place that was going to be abiding forever was inner space. The beautiful forms or environs were sacred but temporal and subject to the play of time; and rightly so. If all life was an evolution of progress, all forms would inevitably crumble and give way to newer forms. My fears about joining a "bigger mainstream school" only showed up my own assumptions and opinions and brought to light my own anxieties about "dealing with the world out there" and a superior-full-of-airs -reluctance to be "in a crowd".

If Mirambika had taught me anything, it would certainly be courage – the courage to face my own limitations and open myself to the intelligence of a Universe that had infinite intelligence and interconnectedness. I have been thinking, watching my daughter leave for school every morning, if Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch is not just a few hundred people coming together for the joyous establishment of a new harmony that breaks all barriers of thoughts, ideas and walls of attachment – college, mainstream school, free progress school, vocational training departments, ashram quarters,

management, parents, children, alumni – all merely forms and collectives – purposes in the mind – institutions in concrete and on paper, but is there something that moves it all, holds it all together?

Here are some quotations as an offering to all of us from Sri Aurobindo and The Mother:

Among the most precious things in life are those you do not see with physical eyes....

A conscious power has drawn the plan of life....

....we may find when all the rest has failed Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change....

Do not be sad – things happen because they have to happen and finally everything leads to the ultimate victory of the Supreme....

Supreme Lord, teach us to be silent so that in silence we may receive Thy force and understand Thy will.

To forget oneself, one's own likings and preferences, is indispensable in order to be a true leader.

A new light shall break upon earth, a light of Truth and Harmony.

Break, break down the last resistances, consume the last impurities, blast the being if need be, but let it be transfigured.

A step, and all is sky and God...

In love and prayer,

Nandita (mother of Brishti, ex-mirambikan, now in MIS),
forever with Ma Mira Ambika

NOTICE BOARD

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

To learn about the recent and forthcoming activities through the Ashram's e-magazine, *Realization*, send an email to emagazine@saaonline.net.in, after filling-in two fields as follows:

Subject: **Subscribe**

Then click on **Send**

For information about Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch,

Please visit the website www.sriurobindoashram.net

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, New Delhi 110 016.

Please send your feedback to: callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in
