All India Magazine — June 2013

Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

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Our Cover Page:

Humility

Adorable in its simplicity.

(Spiritual significance and explanation given by the Mother)

Botanical name: Sporobolus capillaris

Dropseed, Countryside grass

Erect airy panicles of branching spikelets bearing minute flowers that open pale greenish white and change to maroon as they mature.

True Humility

e humble means for the mind, the vital and the body
r to forget that without the Divine they know nothing,
othing and can do nothing; without the Divine they are
ng but ignorance, chaos and impotence. The Divine
is Truth, Life, Power, Love, Felicity.
herefore the mind, the vital, and the body must learn
eel, once and for all, that they are wholly incapable of
rstanding and judging the Divine, not only in his
ce but also in his action and manifestation.
his is the only true humility and with it come quiet and
e.
his is also the surest shield against all hostile attack.
ed, in the human being it is always the door of pride at
n the Adversary knocks, for it is this door which opens
him enter.

*

humility consists in knowing that the Supreme
ciousness, the Supreme Will alone exists and that the
t.

*

are becoming very wise and approaching the realisa-
hat we are nothing, we know nothing and we can do
ng; only the Supreme Divine knows, does and *is*.

*

ot think yourself big or small, very important or very
portant; for we are nothing in ourselves. We must only
o become what the Divine wills of us.

*

A true and sincere humility is our safeguard — it
surest way to the indispensable dissolution of the ego.

*

Whatever is your personal value or even your indiv
realisation, the first quality required in yoga is *humilit*

*

We must learn that whatever our efforts, whatever
struggles, whatever even our victories, compared wit
path still to be traversed what we have already trav
is nothing.

*

The more we advance on the Path, the more mode
become and the more we see that we have done nothi
comparison to what remains to be done.

*

All depression and gloom is created by the hostile f
who are never so pleased as when throwing on y
melancholy mood. Humility is indeed one thing an
pression quite another, the former a divine movemen
the latter a very crude expression of the dark forces.

*

It is not by running away from the world that you
change it. It is by working there, modestly, humbly but
a fire in the heart, something that burns like an offerin

The M

(CWM 1st ed., Vol. 14, pp. 159-61; Vol. 3, p. 139; Vol. 5, p. 45)

Right and the Wrong Way of Being Humble

e is one thing that has always been said, but always nderstood, it is the necessity of humility. It is taken in rong way, wrongly understood and wrongly used. Be ble, if you can be so in the right way; above all, do not be the wrong way, for that leads you nowhere. But there is ning: if you can pull out from yourself this weed called y, then indeed you will have done something. But if knew how difficult it is! You cannot do a thing well, ot have a fine idea, cannot have a right movement, can- ake a little progress **without getting puffed up inside without being aware of it), with a self-satisfaction** f vanity. And you are obliged then to hammer it hard eak it. And still broken bits remain and these begin to inate. One must work the whole of one's life and never t to work in order to uproot this weed that springs up and again and again so insidiously that you believe it ne and you feel very modest and say: "It is not I who done it, I feel it is the Divine, I am nothing if He is not ", **and then the next minute, you are so satisfied with self** simply for having thought that!

Q: What is the right and the wrong way of being humble?

very simple, when people are told "be humble", they immediately of "being humble before other men" and humility is wrong. True humility is humility before Divine, that is, a precise, exact, *living* sense that one is ng, one can do nothing, understand nothing without Divine, that even if one is exceptionally intelligent and ble, this is nothing in comparison with the divine Con-

sciousness, and this sense one must always keep, be then one always has the true attitude of receptivity humble receptivity that does not put personal preten in opposition to the Divine.

If you meet a true scientist who has worked hard, he w you: "We know nothing. What we know today is no beside what we shall know tomorrow. This year's disc ies will be left behind next year." A real scientist knows well that there are many more things he doesn't know those he knows. *And this is true of all branches of human ity.* I have never met a scientist worthy of the name wh proud. I have never met a man of some worth who ha me: "I know everything." Those I have seen have al confessed: "In short, I know nothing." After having sp of all that he has done, all that he has achieved, he tell very quietly: "After all, I know nothing."

Q: There are people who say at times that they nothing, just to appear modest, but they don't be what they say!

There are insincere and hypocritical people everywh the world. So much the worse for them. These shut the completely to all progress. That is all.

The M

(CWM 5: 45-46; 30-31)

... you can not think yourselves superior
unless you are unconscious.

The Mot

(CWM 7: 393)

Selfless Admiration — An Aspect of True Humility

le are so unwilling to recognise anything that express-
e Divine that they are ever on the alert to find fault,
ver apparent defects and so reduce what is high to
own level. They are simply furious at being surpassed
when they do succeed in finding superficial "shortcom-
they are greatly pleased. But they forget that if they
ont even the Divine, when its presence is on the earth,
their crude physical mind they are bound to meet only
is crude. They cannot hope to see what they are them-
s incapable of seeing or unwilling to see. They are sure
sjudge the Divine if they consider the surface-aspect of
tions, for they will never understand that what seems
ar to human activity is yet altogether dissimilar and
eds from a source which is non-human.

he Divine, manifesting itself for the work on earth, ap-
to act as men do but really does not. It is not possible
aluate it by such standards of the obvious and the ap-
t. But men are utterly in love with their own inferiority
annot bear to submit to or admit a higher reality. **This
e to find fault, this malicious passion to criticise and
t** what something in oneself tells one is a higher reality
very stamp of humanity — it marks out the merely
n. Wherever, on the other hand, there is a spontane-
dmiration for the true, the beautiful, the noble, there
nething divine expressed. You should know for certain
t is the psychic being, the soul in you with which your
cal consciousness comes in contact when your heart
out to worship and admire what you feel to be of a
e origin.

The moment you are in front of what you feel to be
you should be moved to tears of joy. It is the mean cre
who stops to reflect: "Yes, it is something great but it w
be worth admiring if it fell to my lot, if I were the happy
sessor of this quality, the instrument of this superior
festation." Why should you bother about your ego whe
main concern is that the Divine should reveal itself wh
er it wants and in whatever manner it chooses? You sh
feel fulfilled when it is thus expressed, you should be a
burst the narrow bonds of your miserable personality
soar up in unselfish joy. This joy is the true sign that
soul has awakened and has sensed the truth. It is only
that you can open to the influence of the descending
and be shaped by it. I remember occasions when I us
be moved to tears on seeing even children, even babi
something that was most divinely beautiful and si
**Feel that joy and you will be able to profit by the Div
presence in your midst.**

*

Humility is that state of consciousness in which, wha
the realisation, you know the infinite is still in front o
The rare quality of selfless admiration about which I
spoken to you is but another aspect of true humility;
is sheer arrogance that refuses to admire and is compl
about its own petty achievements, forgetting the in
which is always ahead of it. However, you need to be
ble not only when you have nothing substantial or div
you but even when you are on the path of transformat

(CWM 3: 158-59; 175)

The M

ility — The Condition for All Realisations

ility, a perfect humility, is the condition for all realisa- The mind is so cocksure. It thinks it knows everything, rstands everything. And if ever it acts through ideal- o serve a cause that appears noble to it, it becomes even arrogant more intransigent, and it is almost impossi- make it see that there might be something still higher nd its noble conceptions and its great altruistic or other s. Humility is the only remedy. I am not speaking of lity as conceived by certain religions, with this God e littles his creatures and only likes to see them down eir knees. When I was a child, this kind of humility ted me, and I refused to believe in a God that wants little his creatures. I don't mean that kind of humility, ather the recognition that one does not know, that nows nothing, and that there may be something be- what presently appears to us as the truest, the most or disinterested. True humility consists in constantly ing oneself to the Lord, in placing all before Him. n I receive a blow (and there are quite a few of them y sadhana), my immediate, spontaneous reaction, like ing, is to throw myself before Him and to say, 'Thou, ' Without this humility, I would never have been able lise anything. And I say 'I' only to make myself under- , but in fact 'I' means the Lord through this body, his ument. When you begin living THIS kind of humility, ans you are drawing nearer to the realisation. It is the tion, the starting point.

(December 21, 1957)

*

re is one fundamental necessity, it is humility. To be ble. Not humble as it is normally understood, such

as merely saying, "I am so small, I'm nothing at all" something else...

Because the pitfalls are innumerable, and the fu you progress in yoga, the more subtle they become, an more the ego masks itself behind marvelous and saintl pearances. So when somebody says, "I no longer wa rely on anything but Him. I want to close my eyes and in Him alone," this comfortable "Him," which is ex what you want him to be, is the ego – or a formidable A or a Titan (depending on each one's capacity). They' over the earth, the earth is their domain. So the first thi do is to pocket your ego – not preserve it, but get rid o soon as possible!

You can be sure that the God you've created is a of the ego whenever something within you insists, "T what I feel, this is what I think, this is what I see; it's my my very own – it's my way of being, my way of unders ing, my relationship with the Divine, etc."

And then they say, "I want to close my eyes an nothing but Him; I want nothing more of the outer wo And they forget there's Love! That is the great Secret which is behind the Existent and the Non-Existent, the sonal and the Impersonal – Love. Not a love between things, two beings... A love containing everything.

In the early part of the century, I wrote Prayers and itations, and I too spoke of "Him"; but I wrote that wi my aspiration, all my sincerity (at least with all the sinc of the conscious parts of my being) and I locked it up drawer so that no one would see it. It was Sri Aurob who later asked me to publish it, for it could be useful knew then, fifty years ago, what I know now, I would been crushed! ...

After all, it's good to know gradually, good to have

ons – not for the sake of illusions but as a necessary along the way.

verything comes at the right moment.

nd what is wonderful is that at each moment the Grace, y, the Light, the Love never cease pouring down in the midst of all this – despite the ego, despite the shame, te the unworthiness. To be humble...

The Mother

16, 1960)

other's Conversations with Satprem: *Mother India*, August 2012

God

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,
Yet sitst above,
Master of all who work and rule and know,
Servant of Love!

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be
Nor even the clod,
Therefore we know by that humility
That thou art God.

Sri Aurobindo

SABCL 5: 63 & CWSA 2: 218)

An Indispensable Condition of Spiritual L

Humility before the Divine is ... *a sine qua non* [an indis able condition] of the spiritual life, and spiritual pride, gance, or vanity and self-assurance press always downw But confidence in the Divine and a faith in one's spi destiny (i.e. since my heart and soul seek for the Div cannot fail one day to reach Him) are much needed in of the difficulties of the Path. A contempt for others is c place, especially since the Divine is in all.

*

Perhaps one could say that it [spiritual humility] is aware of the relativity of what has been done comp with what is still to be done — and also to be conscio one's being nothing without the Divine Grace.

*

... humility is the first necessity, for one who has ego pride cannot realise the Highest.

*

A spiritual humility within is very necessary, but I d think an outward one is very advisable (absence of pri arrogance or vanity is indispensable of course in one's dealings with others) — it often creates pride, become mal or becomes ineffective after a time.

Sri Aurob

(SABCL 23: 553; 24: 1387-88; 23: 504; 24: 1387)

Four Short Stories

ng of Persia named Kai Kaus had waged many wars won many battles. He was so rich with the spoils of his ies that he built two palaces in the Elburz mountains; he gold and silver in the chambers were so plentiful he brightness of the polished metal rivalled the light y.

ai Kaus was filled with presumptuous pride; he ght that he was the greatest king on earth.

olis, the evil spirit, observing the high opinion the king f himself, resolved to trick him. He sent a demon dis- d as a servant to the palace, with a bunch of flowers to nt to the king.

he servant kissed the ground before Kai Kaus and

Sire, no king in the world is like unto you. And yet ealm remains for you to conquer, the upper world, the lom of the sun, the moon, the planets and the secret rs of the heavens. Follow the birds, O King, and as- to the sky."

But how can I ascend without wings?" asked the king.

Your wise men will tell you, Sire."

o King Kai Kaus asked the astrologers how he might the upper regions, and they invented a novel plan. suggested ordinary methods but the king would not of them.

hey took four young eagles from a nest, fed and trained until they were big and strong.

hey made a square wooden frame; at each corner they a pole and on each pole a piece of goat's meat. One of our eagles was tied to each corner.

he king's throne was attached to the frame and a jar of

wine was placed at the side of the throne. The kin down.

The four eagles tried to catch hold of the meat a order to do so flew upwards, at the same time liftin the frame, which rose into the air to the amazement crowd. The eagles went up and up, nearer and nearer moon, until, wearied by their flight, they stopped be their wings. Then the frame, the throne, the king, the jar and all fell with a crash into the wilderness of China king lay all alone, bruised, hungry and wretched, until sengers came and took him back to the palace.

The king himself now saw how stupid and vain h been. He decided not to attempt any more flights be his power. He settled down to the work of his kingdom ruled it so justly that all men praised him.

This is how he came down from the high places of ity to the honesty of the good, firm earth.

[2]

You have heard of great Solomon who was the King rael many years ago. There are many stories in the Bibl in other books which tell of his glory and his majesty. I tell you one story about him.

He was very rich. He had a magnificent throne, his p were of gold, and in his palace silver was as comm stones in the city of Jerusalem. Merchants were const bringing him gold, silver, ivory, peacocks, monkeys, be ful clothes, armour, spices, horses, mules and many riches. King Solomon built a splendid temple in hono the God of his fathers and his nation. But before the te was built, while the timber for it was still growing i form of cedar-trees on the mountains, Solomon had a d in which his God appeared to him and said:

Ask of me what you wish me to give you."

olomon answered:

My father David was a just and truthful man and now
e succeeded to his throne. The work that lies before me
at. I feel like a little child. I do not know how to go out
me in. I do not even know how to rule this people of
n I am king. Therefore my desire is to have knowledge,
at I may know good from evil."

nd God replied:

Because you have not asked for long life or riches but
desired knowledge and a heart which can distinguish
e from injustice, I will give you this wise mind so that
shall surpass you in understanding; and long life and
s will be yours also."

ou will notice the modest words spoken by the king, "I
ut a little child."

o we think less of Solomon because he spoke humbly
mself?

n the contrary, it is a real joy to see greatness that is
est.

[3]

these stories ... I shall tell you one about a famous man
ence, the Englishman Isaac Newton.

Newton was born in 1642 and died in 1727. In the course
s long life he studied Nature; the universal force of
tion called gravitation, the effect of the sun and the
on the tides; the light of the sun and how its white
broken up into the seven colours of the rainbow; and
other things besides. Everyone marvelled at the wis-
of this man who was so skilled in reading the works
wonders of Nature. One day a lady spoke to Newton of
arning and knowledge and he replied:

"Alas! I am only like a little child picking up pebbl
the shore of the great ocean of truth."

You will understand that the ocean of truth mean
laws of Nature which even the most learned men h
know at all. A little child collects pebbles on the sea-s
but how much vaster is the sea than the child thinks!
how much vaster still is the universe compared to our
thoughts!

And do we think less of Newton because he comp
himself to a little child? Certainly not. We honour hi
his modesty.

[4]

Many years ago a great singer, who had won a world-
reputation for her wonderful voice and outstanding t
happened to be at a party. There, a little girl with a bea
voice was asked to sing. The piece she was ready to sing
a duet, a piece of music for two voices. The child was to
the main part, but no one wanted to sing the accom
ment. All the grown-ups thought that it was beneath
to sing the second voice to a child. There was a paus
one offered to accompany the child.

Then the famous singer said:

"I will sing the second voice if you wish."

And she did so. The duet was sung to the audienc
little girl's voice rose high and clear, with the voice o
most famous singer of her time following sweetly, ma
a lovely harmony.

Noble was the heart of the modest lady who was w
to give her service to a child.

The M

(CWM 2: 249-54)

prayer, a master act, a king idea
an link man's strength to a transcendent Force.

Sri Aurobindo

avitri, p. 20)

Section II

Why Pray ?

To enter into relations with God is Yoga, the hig
rapture & the noblest utility. There are relations
in the compass of the humanity we have develo
These are called prayer, worship, adoration, sacr
thought, faith, science, philosophy. There are
relations beyond our developed capacity, but w
the compass of the humanity we have yet to dev
Those are the relations that are attained by the
ous practices we usually call Yoga.

Sri Aurob

(SABCL 17: 2 & CWSA 12: 5)

... people with a very strict logic tell you, "Why p
Why aspire? Why ask? The Lord does what He w
and He will do what He wants." It is quite obv
there is no need to say it, but this impulse: "O
manifest!" gives a more intense vibration to His m
festation.

Otherwise, He would never have made the wor
it is. There is a special power, a special delight, a
cial vibration in the intensity of the world's aspira
to become once more what it is.

And that is why — partly, fragmentarily — the
an evolution.

An eternally perfect universe, eternally manife
the eternal perfection, would lack the joy of progr

(CWM 10: 165-66)

The M

Prayer and the Response

Sweet Mother, if ... one wants to know something or one eds guidance, or something else, how can one have it from e Divine, according to one's need?

king the Divine for it. If you do not ask Him, how can ave it?

you turn to the Divine and have full trust and ask you will get what you need—not necessarily what you ine you need; but the true thing you need, you will get. ou must ask Him for it.

ou must make the experiment sincerely; you must ndeavour to get it by all sorts of external means and expect the Divine to give it to you, without even hav- sked Him. Indeed, when you want somebody to give omething, you ask him for it, don't you? And why do xpect the Divine to give it to you without your having l Him for it?

the ordinary consciousness the movement is just pposite. You assume something, saying, "I need this, d this relationship, I need this affection, I need this ledge, etc. Well, the Divine ought to give it to me, oth- e He is not the Divine." That is to say, you reverse the em completely.

irst of all, you say, "I need." Do you know whether you need it or whether it is only an impression you have lesire or quite an ignorant movement? First point: you nothing about it.

econd point: it is precisely your own will you want to se upon the Divine, telling Him, "I need this." And you don't even ask Him for it: "Give it to me." You say, ed it. Therefore, since I need it, it must come to me,

quite naturally, spontaneously; it's the Divine's job to me all that I need."

But if it so happens that truly you don't know wha need and it is merely an illusion and not a truth and into the bargain, **you ask it from life around you and turn to the Divine, don't create any relationship bet yourself and Him**, don't think of Him or turn to Him at least some sincerity in your attitude, then, as you nothing from Him, there is no reason for Him to give anything.

But if you ask Him, as He is the Divine He knows a better than you what you need; He will give you wha need.

Or else, if you insist and want to impose your own He may give you what you want in order to enlighten and make you conscious of your mistake, that it was not the thing you needed. And then you begin to protes don't mean you personally, I am speaking of all huma ings — and you say, "Why has the Divine given me s thing which harms me?" — completely forgetting that i you who asked for it!

In both cases you protest all the same. If He gives what you ask and then that brings you more harm good, you protest. And again, if He doesn't give it, you protest: "What! I told Him I needed it and He doesn' it to me."

In both cases you protest, and the poor Divi accused.

Only, if instead of all that, you simply have an aspir within you, an urge, an intense ardent need to find which you conceive more or less clearly to be the Tru your being, the Source of all things, the supreme C the Answer to all we desire, the Solution to all proble

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is this intense need in you and you aspire to realise it, won't any longer say to the Divine, "Give me this, give hat", or, "I need this, I must have that." You will tell "Do what is necessary for me and lead me to the Truth being. Give me what Thou in Thy supreme Wisdom as the thing I need."

nd then you are sure of not being mistaken, and He ot give you something which harms you.

here is a still higher step, but it's a little more difficult gin with that.

ut the first one is already a much truer approach than f telling the Divine, "I need this. Give it to me." For in- very few people really know what they need — very And the proof of it is that they are always in pursuit of lfilment of their desires, all their effort is bent upon and each time one of their desires is fulfilled, they are pointed. And they pass on to another.

nd after much seeking, making many mistakes, suffer- good deal and being very disappointed, then, some- , one begins to grow wise and wonders if there isn't a out of all this, that is to say, a way to come out of one's ignorance.

nd it is then, at that moment that one can do this *er opens her arms*): "Here I am, take me and lead me the true path."

hen all begins to go well.

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en if one has no knowledge at all but has trust in the e Grace, if one has the faith that there is something in orld like the divine Grace, and that this something can er a prayer, an aspiration, an invocation, then, after- ng one's mental formation, if one offers it to the Grace

and puts one's trust in it, asks it to intervene and ha faith that it will intervene, then indeed one has a char success.

Try, and you will surely see the result.

Q: But, Mother, when one prays sincerely for the inte tion of the Grace, doesn't one expect a particular resu

Excuse me, that depends on the tenor of the prayer. I simply invokes the Grace or the Divine, and puts ones His hands, one does not expect a particular result. To e a particular result one must formulate one's prayer, ask for something. If you have only a great aspiratio the divine Grace and evoke it, implore it, without ask for anything precise, it is the Grace which will choose it will do for you, not you.

Q: That is better, isn't it?

Ah! that's quite another question.

Why, it is higher in its quality, perhaps. But still, i wants something precise, it is better to formulate it. I has a special reason for invoking the Grace, it is bet formulate it precisely and clearly.

Of course, if one is in a state of complete surrende gives oneself entirely, if one simply offers oneself t Grace and lets it do what it likes, that is very good. B ter that one must not question what it does! One mus say to it, "Oh! I did that with the idea of having this if one really has the idea of obtaining something, it i ter to formulate it in all sincerity, simply, just as one s Afterwards, it is for the Grace to choose if it will do it o but in any case, one will have formulated clearly wha

ed. And there is no harm in that.

Where it becomes bad is when the request is not granted one revolts. Then naturally it becomes bad. It is at that ent one must understand that the desire one has, or spiration, may not have been very enlightened and that aps one has asked for something which was not exactly was good for one. Then at that moment one must be and say simply, "Well, let Thy Will be done." But so as one has an inner perception and an inner prefer- there is no harm in formulating it. It is a very natural ment.

or example, if one has been foolish or has made a mis- and one truly, sincerely wishes never to do it again, I don't see any harm in asking for it. And in fact, if sks for it with sincerity, a true inner sincerity, there is a chance that it will be granted.

ou must not think that the Divine likes to contradict He is not at all keen on doing it! He can see better than what is really good for you; but it is only when it is utely indispensable that He opposes your aspiration. rwise He is always ready to give what you ask.

8: 122-25; 254-55)

The Mother

Prayer and Determinism

says that a sufficiently sincere aspiration, a sufficiently se prayer is not capable of changing the path of the ding?

This means that all is possible.

Now, one must have a sufficient aspiration and a p that's sufficiently intense. But that has been given to hu nature. It is one of the marvellous gifts of grace given t man nature; only, one does not know how to make use

This comes to saying that in spite of the most abs determinisms in the horizontal line, if one knows ho cross all these horizontal lines and reach the highest of consciousness, one is able to make things change, t apparently absolutely determined. So you may call it b name you like, but it is a kind of combination of an abs determinism with an absolute freedom. You may pull self out of it in any way you like, but it is like that. ...

When you say "determinism" and when you say dom", you say only words and all that is only a very in plete, very approximate and very weak description of is in reality within you, around you and everywhere to be able to begin to understand what the universe is must come out of your mental formulas, otherwise you never understand anything.

To tell the truth, if you live only a moment, just a moment, of this absolutely sincere aspiration or this ciently intense prayer, you will know more things tha meditating for hours. ...

> *Q: You have said here that we are "tied to the ch Karma", but then sometimes when the Divine Grac that contradicts...*

Completely, the Divine Grace completely contra Karma; you know, It makes it melt away like butter put in the sun. ... if you have an aspiration that's si enough or a prayer that's intense enough, you can

n in you Something that will change everything, ev-
ing — truly it changes everything. An example may
ven that is extremely limited, very small, but which
s you understand things very well: a stone falls quite
anically; say, a tile falls; if it gets loose, it will fall, won't
ut if there comes, for example, a vital or mental deter-
m from someone who passes by and does not want it
l and puts his hand out, it will fall on his hand, but it
ot fall on the ground. So he has changed the destiny
s stone or tile. It is another determinism that has come
d instead of the stone falling on the head of someone,
s upon the hand and it will not kill anybody. This is an
vention from another plane, from a conscious will that
s into the more or less unconscious mechanism. ...

he key, as I told you just now, is the sufficiently sincere
ation or the sufficiently intense prayer. I said "or", but
ot think it is "or". There are people who like one better
thers, the other. But in both there is a magical power,
must know how to make use of it.

here is something very beautiful in both, I shall speak
u about it one day,* I shall tell you what there is in
ation and what in prayer and why both of them are
iful.... Some dislike prayer; if they entered deep into
heart, they would find it was pride — worse than that,
y. And then there are those who have no aspiration,
try and they cannot aspire; it is because they do not
the flame of the will, it is because they do not have the
e of humility.

oth are needed. There must be a very great humility
very great will to change one's Karma.

The Mother

8: 122-25; 254-55)

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Mother's talk on this subject is printed as the next article. —ed.

All India Magazine, June 2013

ifference Between Prayer and Aspiration

Q: What is the difference between prayer and aspiration?

e are several kinds of prayers.

here is the purely mechanical, material prayer, with s which have been learnt and are mechanically re-d. That does not signify anything much. And that has ly only one single result, that of quietening the per-who prays, for if a prayer is repeated several times, the s end up by making you calm.

here is a prayer which is a spontaneous formula for essing something precise which one wants to ask for: rays for this thing or that, one prays for one thing or ner; one can pray for somebody, for a circumstance, for elf.

here is a point where aspiration and prayer meet, for are prayers which are the spontaneous formulation of d experience: these spring up all ready from within the , like something that's the expression of a profound rience, and which offers thanksgiving for that experi-or asks its continuation or asks for its explanation also; hat indeed is quite close to aspiration. But aspiration is ecessarily formulated in words; or if it is formulated in s, it is almost a movement of invocation. You aspire for tain state; for instance, you have found something in self that is not in keeping with your ideal, a movement rkness and ignorance, perhaps even of ill-will, some-that's not in harmony with what you want to realise; hat is not going to be formulated in words; that will be springing flame and like an offering made of a living rience, asking to grow larger, be magnified and ever and more clear and precise. All that may be put into

words *later*, if one tries to remember and note down experience. But aspiration always springs up like a that rises high and carries in itself the thing one desires or what one desires to do or desires to have. I use the "desire", but truly it is here that the word "aspire" sh be used, for that does not have either the quality or the of a desire.

It is truly like a great purifying flame of will, and i ries in its core the thing that asks to be realised.

For instance, if you have done something you r having done, if that has unhappy consequences which turb things, and several people are implicated, you d know the reactions of the others, but you yourself wish what has been done may take a turn for the best, and t there is a mistake, it may be understood, and that no ter what the mistake, this may be for you an opport for a greater progress, a greater discipline, a new asce wards the Divine, a door open on a future that you wa be more clear and true and intense; so all this is gath here *(pointing to the heart)* like a force, and then it surg and rises in a great movement of ascent, and at times out the shadow of a formulation, without words, wi expression, but like a springing flame.

That indeed is true aspiration. That may happen a dred, a thousand times daily if one is in that state in w one constantly wants to progress and be more true and fully in harmony with what the Divine Will wants of u

Prayer is a much more external thing, generally ab precise fact, and always formulated for it is the formula makes the prayer. One may have an aspiration and scribe it as a prayer, but aspiration goes beyond pray every way. It is much closer and much more as it were forgetful, living only in the thing one wants to be or do

ffering of all that one wants to do to the Divine. You pray in order to ask for something, you may also pray ank the Divine for what He has given you, and that r is much greater: it may be called an act of thanksgiv- You may pray in gratitude for the aspect of kindness ivine has shown to you, for what He has done for you, hat you see in Him, and the praise you want to offer And all this may take the form of a prayer. It is decid- the highest prayer, for it is not exclusively preoccupied oneself, it is not an egoistic prayer.

ertainly, one may have an aspiration in all the do- s, but the very centre of aspiration is in the psychic be- whilst one may pray in all the domains, and the prayer gs to the domain in which one prays. One may make y material, physical prayers, vital prayers, mental ers, psychic prayers, spiritual prayers, and each one s special character, its special value.

here is a kind of prayer at once spontaneous and un- n which is like a great call, usually not for one's own ersonally, but like something that may be called an in- ssion with the Divine. It is extremely powerful. I have ountless instances of things which have been realised st instantaneously due to prayers of this kind. It im- a great faith, a great ardour, a great sincerity, and a simplicity of heart also, something that does not calcu- does not plan, does not bargain, does not give with the of receiving in exchange. For, the majority of men give one hand and hold out the other to get something in nge; the largest number of prayers are of that sort. But are others of the kind I have described, acts of thanks- g, a kind of canticle, and these are very good.

here you are. I don't know if I have made myself clear, his is how it is.

To be clearer, we may say that prayer is always fo lated in words; but the words may have different valu cording to the state in which they are formulated. Pra a formulated thing and one may aspire. But it is diffic pray without praying to someone. For instance, those have a conception of the universe from which they more or less driven out the idea of the Divine (ther many people of this kind; this idea troubles them — the that there is someone who knows all, can do everythin who is so formidably greater than they that there can comparison; that's a bit troublesome for their *amour-p* so they try to make a world without the Divine), these ple evidently cannot pray, for to whom would they Unless they pray to themselves, which is not the cu But one can aspire for something without having any in the Divine. There are people who do not believe i existence of a God, but who believe in progress. They the idea that the world is in constant progress and tha progress will go on indefinitely without stopping, tow an ever greater good. Well, these people can have a great aspiration for progress, and they don't even nee idea of a divine existence for that. Aspiration neces implies a faith but not necessarily faith in a divine b whilst prayer cannot exist if it is not addressed to a d being. And pray to what? One does not pray to some that has no personality! One prays to someone wh hear us. If there is nobody to hear us, how could one Hence, if one prays, this means that, even when one d acknowledge it, one has faith in somebody infinitely h than us, infinitely more powerful, who can change ou tiny and change us also, if one prays so as to be heard. is the essential difference.

So the more intellectual people admit aspiration

hat prayer is something inferior. The mystics tell you aspiration is all very well but if you want to be really l and want the Divine to listen to you, you must pray, pray with the simplicity of a child, a perfect candour, s, a perfect trust: "I need this or that (whether it be a l need or a physical or material need), well, I ask You give it to me." Or else: "You have given me what I l of You, You have made me realise concretely those riences which were unknown to me and are now mar- can attain at will; yes, I am infinitely grateful to You offer a prayer of thanksgiving to sing Your praise and k You for Your intervention." It is like that. To aspire it necessary to direct the aspiration to someone, towards one. One has an aspiration for a certain state of being, nowledge, for a realisation, a state of consciousness; spires for something, but it is not necessarily a prayer; er is something additional.

rayer is a personal thing, addressed to a personal be- hat is, to something—a force or a being—who can hear nd answer you. Otherwise you can't ask for anything. ou understand?

The Mother

5: 141-45)

The aspiration need not be in the form of thought — it can be a feeling within that remains even when the mind is attending to the work.

Sri Aurobindo

(ABCL 23: 565)

Condition for the Success of a Prayer

The most important condition is an almost childlike the candid trust of a child who is sure that it will come, doesn't even ask himself about it; when he needs some he is sure that it is going to come. Well, it is this, this ki trust — this indeed is the most important condition.

To aspire is indispensable. But some people aspire such a conflict inside them between faith and absen faith, trust and distrust, between the optimism whi sure of victory and a pessimism which asks itself whe catastrophe will come. Now if this is in the being, you aspire but you don't get anything. And you say, "I as but didn't get anything." It is because you demolish aspiration all the time by your lack of confidence. But i truly have trust... Children when left to themselves an deformed by older people have such a great trust th will be well! For example, when they have a small acci they never think that this is going to be something ser they are spontaneously convinced that it will soon be and this helps so powerfully in putting an end to it.

Well, when one aspires for the Force, when one ask Divine for help, if one asks with the unshakable cert that it will come, that it is impossible that it won't, th is sure to come. It is this kind... yes, this is truly an opening, this trustfulness. And some people are const in this state. When there is something to be received, are always there to receive it. There are others, when is something to have, a force descends, they are alway sent, they are always closed at that moment; while who have this childlike trust are always there at the time.

And it is strange, isn't it, outwardly there is no c

They may have exactly the same goodwill, the same
ation, the same wish to do good, but those who have
smiling confidence within them, do not question, do
sk themselves whether they will have it or not have it,
ner the Divine will answer or not — the question does
rise, it is something understood... "What I need will be
to me; if I pray I shall have an answer; if I am in a dif-
y and ask for help, the help will come — and not only
t come but it will manage everything." If the trust is
spontaneous, candid, unquestioning, it works better
anything else, and the results are marvellous. It is with
ontradictions and doubts of the mind that one spoils
thing, with this kind of notion which comes when one
difficulties: "Oh, it is impossible! I shall never man-
. And if it is going to be aggravated, if this condition I
, which I don't want, is going to grow still worse, if I
nue to slide down farther and farther, if, if, if, if..." like
and one builds a wall between oneself and the force
vants to receive. The psychic being has this trust, has
nderfully, without a shadow, without an argument,
out a contradiction. And when it is like that, there is
prayer which does not get an answer, no aspiration
is not realised.

The Mother

6: 403-04)

ne same thing for the urge of prayer: suddenly a
me is lit, you feel an enthusastic *élan*, a great fer-
ur, and express it in words which, to be true, must
spontaneous. This must come from the heart,
rectly, with ardour, without passing through the
ad. That is a prayer.

VM 8: 227)

The Mother

Collective Prayer and the Ideal Collectiv

... there are different kinds of collective prayer, just as
are different kinds of collectivities. There is the anony
mass, the crowd, formed by chance circumstances, wi
any inner coordination, impelled by the force of cir
stance, as for instance when a king or a person who at
public attention is in a critical situation, either ill or th
tim of an accident, and the people gather to obtain
and also to express their feelings; and through chanc
cumstances people have collected there, that is, there
inner link except that of the same emotion or interest.
have been cases of crowds spontaneously beginning to
to ask for the recovery of someone in whom they were
cially interested. Of course, these very crowds can g
for a completely different purpose, out of hatred, and
cries are also a sort of prayer, a prayer to the adverse
destructive forces.

Those movements are spontaneous, not organised
expected.

There is also the collectivity formed by individuals
have gathered together around an ideal or a teaching
action they want to carry out, and who have an organ
link between them, the link of the same purpose, the
will and the same faith. These can gather in a metho
manner to practise common prayer and meditation, a
their aim is high, their organisation good, their ideal po
ful, through their prayers or meditations these group
have a considerable effect on world events or on their
inner development and collective progress. These gr
are necessarily far superior to others, but they don't
the blind strength of the mobs, the collective action o
crowd. They replace this vehemence, this intensity b

gth of a deliberate and conscious organisation.

t all times there have been on earth groups organised s way. Some of them have had a historical life, a his- l action in the world, but as a rule they have not suc- d better with the crowd, the mass, than exceptional in- uals. They have always been suspected and subjected acks, persecutions, and often they have also been dis- d in a very brutal, obscure and ignorant way.... There those semi-religious, semi-chivalric groups, gathered nd a belief or rather a creed, with a definite aim, which had a very interesting history in the world. And cer- , they have done much for collective progress through individual effort.

here is an ideal organisation which, if fully realised, create a kind of very powerful unity, composed of ele- s all having the same aim and the same will and with gh inner development to be able to give a very coher- ody to this inner oneness of purpose, motive, aspira- nd action.

t all times centres of initiation have tried this, more or uccessfully, and this is always mentioned in all occult ions as an extremely powerful means of action.

the collective unit could attain the same cohesion as ndividual unit, it would multiply the strength and ac- f the individual.

sually, if several individuals are brought together, the ctive quality of the group is much lower than the indi- l value of each person taken separately, but with a suf- tly conscious and coordinated organisation, it would ssible, on the contrary, to *multiply* the power of indi- l action.

The Mother

9: 369-70)

Prayer Helps to Prepare a Relation With the Di

The life of man is a life of wants and needs and therefo desires, not only in his physical and vital, but in his m and spiritual being. When he becomes conscious of a g er Power governing the world, he approaches it thr prayer for the fulfilment of his needs, for help in his r journey, for protection and aid in his struggle. Wha crudities there may be in the ordinary religious approa God by prayer, and there are many, especially that att which imagines the Divine as if capable of being pr ated, bribed, flattered into acquiescence or indulgen praise, entreaty and gifts and has often little regard t spirit in which he is approached, still this way of turni the Divine is an essential movement of our religious l and reposes on a universal truth.

The efficacy of prayer is often doubted and prayer supposed to be a thing irrational and necessarily sup ous and ineffective. It is true that the universal will exe always its aim and cannot be deflected by egoistic p tiation and entreaty, it is true of the Transcendent wh presses himself in the universal order that being omnis his larger knowledge must foresee the thing to be don it does not need direction or stimulation by human tho and that the individual's desires are not and cannot any world-order the true determining factor. But neit that order or the execution of the universal will altog effected by mechanical Law, but by powers and forc which for human life at least human will, aspiration faith are not among the least important. **Prayer is o particular form given to that will, aspiration and fait** forms are very often crude and not only childlike, wh in itself no defect, but childish; but still it has a real p

ignificance. Its power and sense is to put the will, as-
on and faith of man into touch with the divine Will
at of a conscious Being with whom we can enter into
ious and living relations. For our will and aspiration
ct either by our own strength and endeavour, which
o doubt be made a thing great and effective whether
wer or higher purposes,—and there are plenty of dis-
es which put it forward as the one force to be used,—
an act in dependence upon and with subordination to
ivine or the universal Will. And this latter way again
either look upon that Will as responsive indeed to our
ation, but almost mechanically, by a sort of law of en-
or at any rate quite impersonally, or else it may look
it as responding consciously to the divine aspiration
aith of the human soul and consciously bringing to it
elp, the guidance, the protection and fruition demand-
ogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham.
rayer helps to prepare this relation for us at first on the
r plane even while it is there consistent with much that
ere egoism and self-delusion; but afterwards we can
towards the spiritual truth which is behind it. It is not
the giving of the thing asked for that matters, but the
on itself, the contact of man's life with God, the con-
s interchange. In spiritual matters and in the seeking
ritual gains, **this conscious relation is a great power;**
much greater power than our own entirely self-reliant
gle and effort and it brings a fuller spiritual growth
xperience. Necessarily in the end prayer either ceases
e greater thing for which it prepared us, — in fact the
we call prayer is not itself essential so long as the faith,
ill, the aspiration are there, — or remains only for the
f the relation. Also its objects, the *artha* or interest it
to realise, become higher and higher until we reach

the highest motiveless devotion, which is that of divine
pure and simple without any other demand or longing

The relations which arise out of this attitude toward
Divine, are that of the divine Father and the Mother wi
child and that of the divine Friend. To the Divine as
things the human soul comes for help, for protectio
guidance, for fruition, — or if knowledge be the aim,
Guide, Teacher, Giver of light, for the Divine is the S
knowledge, — or it comes in pain and suffering for
and solace and deliverance, it may be deliverance
from the suffering itself or from the world-existence w
is the habitat of the suffering or from all its inner and
causes.[1] In these things we find there is a certain grada
For the relation of fatherhood is always less close, int
passionate, intimate, and therefore it is less resorted
the Yoga which seeks for the closest union. That of the d
Friend is a thing sweeter and more intimate, admits
equality and intimacy even in inequality and the begi
of mutual self-giving; at its closest when all idea of
giving and taking disappears, when this relation bec
motiveless except for the one sole all-sufficing moti
love, it turns into the free and happy relation of the
mate in the Lila of existence. But closer and more int
still is the relation of the Mother and the child, and
therefore plays a very large part wherever the religiou
pulse is most richly fervent and springs most warmly
the heart of man. **The soul goes to the Mother-Soul**
its desires and troubles and the divine Mother wishe
it should be so, so that she may pour out her heart of
It turns to her too because of the self-existent nature o

1. These are three of the four classes of devotee whi
recognised by the Gita, ārta, arthārthī, jijnāsu, the distresse
seeker of personal objects and the seeker of God-knowledge.

and because that points us to the home towards which
rn from our wanderings in the world and to the bosom
hich we find our rest.

ut the highest and the greatest relation is that which
from none of the ordinary religious motives, but is
r of the very essence of Yoga, springs from the very
e of love itself; it is the passion of the Lover and the Be-
. **Wherever there is the desire of the soul for its utter
n with God, this form of the divine yearning makes
ay** even into religions which seem to do without it and
t no place in their ordinary system. Here the one thing
l for is love, the one thing feared is the loss of love, the
orrow is the sorrow of separation of love; for all other
s either do not exist for the lover or come in only as in-
ts or as results and not as objects or conditions of love.
ve is indeed in its nature self-existent because it springs
a secret oneness in being and a sense of that oneness or
e of oneness in the heart between souls that are yet able
nceive of themselves as different from each other and
ed. Therefore all these other relations too can arrive at
self-existent motiveless joy of being for the sake of love
. But still they start from and to the end they to some
t find a satisfaction of their play in other motives. But
he beginning is love and the end is love and the whole
s love. There is indeed the desire of possession, but
this is overcome in the fullness of the self-existent love
he final demand of the Bhakta is simply that his bhakti
never cease nor diminish. He does not ask for heaven
liberation from birth or for any other object, but only
is love may be eternal and absolute.

Sri Aurobindo

L 21: 542-44 & CWSA 24: 566-69)

How to Pray

... the prayer must well up from the heart on a crest of
tion or aspiration...

*

The Divine looks into the heart and removes the veil
moment which he knows to be the right moment to
You have laid stress on the Bhakti theory that one has
to call his name and he must reply, he must at once be
Perhaps, but for whom is this true? For a certain ki
Bhakta surely who feels the power of the Name, wh
the passion of the Name and puts it into his cry. If one
that, then there may be the immediate reply — if not
has to become like that, then there will be the reply.

*

Put yourself with all your heart and all your strength
God's hands. Make no conditions, ask for nothing, not
for *siddhi* in the yoga, for nothing at all except that i
and through you his will may be directly performe
those who demand from him, God gives what they de
but to those who give themselves and demand nothi
gives everything that they might otherwise have ask
needed and in addition he gives himself and the spon
ous boons of his love.

(SABCL 23: 533; 23: 788; 16: 414) **Sri Aurob**

All prayer rightly offered brings us closer to t
Divine and establishes a right relation with Hi
Sri Aurobin

(SABCL 22: 145)

Savitri Study Sessions in August

y Sessions on Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* will be held at ociety House (formerly known as beach office), Puduch- from 16th to 22nd August 2013. They will be conducted . Alok Pandey. There will be two sessions daily, from 5.15 0 p.m. and 6.15 to 7.00 p.m. All are welcome.

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