

ASPIRATION LEADING TO SURRENDER: A PRACTICAL APPROACH

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In most ordinary terms to aspire means to have an intense desire to achieve something. But Sri Aurobindo says that aspiration is not any form of desire; it is a feeling of the inner soul's need. It is a quiet yearning and will to turn to the Divine to unite with the Divine—to have nothing but the Divine! An aspiration is like a burning flame—it does not disturb the harmony of inner being. An aspiration needs to be true and pure in nature to work and reach the required destination. It requires calmness and peace with no disturbance in the vital—no worry, no tension, no anxiety.

Aspiration is the will to open to the Mother, the Supreme. What happens during the course of opening? One finds jolts, blows or other difficulties during the course of opening. A person needs a quiet confidence to overcome all such jolts. One's nature thus starts becoming plastic gradually and one starts taking difficulties in the light of various opportunities of growth. These are only lessons to remind that no mistake is to be repeated and one becomes more conscious of one's nature and its conduct in the outer life, as outer conduct becomes a projection of the inner atmosphere. All difficulties in life provide us a chance to change our nature gradually leading us for a transformation that necessitates the overall process of purification. Also, there comes a strong feeling - "I cannot go anymore without the Divine help. He is the Doer, Let Him solve my problems." This feeling becomes more and more intense and a subtle solace and assurance from within comes - "I am now under the change of the Mother and when She is there why should I fear or worry?" This is the beginning of Surrender. The more one aspires for a higher life, greater becomes the surrender. More the true aspiration, greater is the possibility of becoming plastic. If one develops an attitude of a *drishta* and looks at all the difficulties, obstacles, problems like the ones in a drama, one is able to develop inner calm, tolerance and peace. One can thus strengthen one's dependence upon the Divine. Here one realises, "I am only an actor and I have to act in accordance with my director who is backstage. I am only here to perform and do my role according to the guidance and cues from my director." How beautiful life becomes when one is only an 'actor' in the hands of the 'director' (The Doer). Aspiration thus has a close connection with surrender. For true aspiration, one should be true from all self-preferences, one's own demands and expectations. One should have such a complete TRUST in the ways and doings of the Divine Mother that one says to oneself, "I am now in the hands of my Mother Supreme, what is there to fear? She makes sure that her child is well secured and protected."

This faith or total dependence is not only self-assuring and self-affirming but it also helps address various gaps of egoistic tendencies, doubts and demands. Such a reliance and dependence on Her doings certainly develops an intimate bond of love for Her—a sincere and true yearning, a strong will to meet Her and unite. It is the real thirst that one derives from Her own love and care. She only puts this will in one's being and She becomes the doer of fulfilling that will and She thus does everything. One becomes an obedient child, a true doer of Her works, precisely Her instrument. (In fact, She chooses and prepares Her own instruments.)

Sri Aurobindo says that the first step in yoga is surrender and that is also the last word, which means that the whole process of yoga demands surrender at every step.

A surrender to be complete and integral must be active and dynamic in nature. An active surrender is to match and tune one's will with the Divine Will—a complete association of the self-will with that of the Divine. One needs to understand very clearly what is not divine—one should immediately reject it. Hence an offering of one's will to the Divine is an essential and easy way to practice surrender. To know the Divine Will one has to go deep down the inner self and find out the true, luminous expression of the Divine and accordingly receive those inner commands to act. Constantly one should be able to practice—"Let Thy will be done and not mine."

A complete surrender is not possible in so short time—it requires a long enduring practice. A complete surrender means to cut each part of ego in one's being—in one's character as a whole, which is offered in totality to the Divine. "...a complete surrender means to cut the knot of the ego in each part of the being and offer it, free and whole, to the Divine. The mind, the vital, the physical consciousness have one after the other to surrender separately, to give up their own way and to accept the way of the divine."¹

Sri Aurobindo says this in the light of daily practice starting with one's daily actions, feelings, thoughts, impulsions, sensations, everything that helps one's sadhana. At every moment and in all things when one starts making one's offering to the divine—all that one has, all that one is and all that one will be—one stations and positions oneself on a safe platform of 'great perfection' where there is no room for self-criticism or justification of right or wrong of good or bad. Thus one's life smoothens to a great extent and the role of ego or egoism gradually diminishes till it totally disappears from one's life. The practice may include a small prayer in the beginning of the day—"O Lord, Guide me and help me today in all my thoughts, actions, feelings in all my works that I do which you will. Let each little effort in today's life be yours and not mine."

Such small steps on a daily basis prove a great help on the path of surrender. While in the thick of action and in work situation, if one can become conscious of one's offering, one would be able to conduct oneself in a better way— day-

by-day one becomes conscious of one's inner movements, and with appropriate application of reason and logic one becomes a true evaluator of one's life. Becoming conscious of one's own thoughts, feelings, sensations, actions and the rest, and writing a reflective journal help in progress. The feelings of joy and satisfaction are immense at the end of the day.

A complete surrender may also be referred to as a detailed surrender. All these outer parts—mind, vital and body also get the touch of the psychic, the divine spark and with divine guidance they begin to become obedient servants of the master. The whole play of life becomes a very joyful experience.

The value of *japa* (repetition of Lord's name or a mantra) and *simran* (remembering) cannot be ignored at the critical stage of practicing surrender as this keeps intact an inner connection or intimate bond with the Divine.

'Remember and offer' is a true attitude to go on the path of surrender. One has to ultimately find one's own way depending upon one's inner nature and need. There are people who feel that in the beginning if surrender can be practiced through works, then it helps in other directions as well. So they make work as their offering to the divine in daily life. It is difficult to describe or prescribe one or many methods for all. It is eventually each person's own approach and understanding of what suits to his or her background, swabhava and need. Integral Yoga cannot be prescriptive. It is more of experimental nature, hence each person has to make the right choice and yield good results with wisdom and commonsense (or experience). If one's vital is a good instrument—refined and slightly pure—then prayers and constant remembrance are very powerful and fruitful.

Also, there is a great place of faith in the practice of surrender—

"Many who would be considered as mere nothings by the wise and strong have attained by Grace; illiterate, without mental power or training, without 'strength' of character or will, they have yet aspired and suddenly or rapidly grown into spiritual realisation, because they had faith or because they were sincere... these facts... are facts of spiritual history and of quite ordinary spiritual experience..."²

The Mother says that to win over all difficulties one should have a 'quiet confidence in the Grace'. Even if something in terms of outer chaos or disharmony takes place during the course, one should not lose the faith and trust in the Divine. 'Whatever happens with me is ultimately going to be desirable and good for me'—this is the only way of keeping one's inner peace and calm intact. This makes one cheerful and happy. The Mother says, "Be confident, you will become what you have to be and achieve what you have to do."³

Sri Aurobindo has given a great amount of stress on the role of faith in surrender, as is clear from his letters to different sadhaks.

“So long as a man has that faith, he is marked for spiritual life and I will say that, even if his nature is full of obstacles and crammed with denials and difficulties, and even if he has many years of struggle, he is marked out for success in the spiritual life... ‘The Divine exists, my following after the Divine cannot fail, I will go on through everything till I find him.’ ”⁴

References

1. Dalal, A.S., *Looking from Within* (Compilation), p. 123, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1995. (Original source: SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 591-92)
2. Ibid, p. 125 (SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 611)
3. Ibid, p. 127 (CWM, Vol. 14, p. 85)
4. Ibid, p. 129 (SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 573)

Surrender

*O Thou of whom I am the instrument,
O secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,
Let all my mortal being now be blent
In Thy still glory of divinity.*

*I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,
I have offered up my will to be Thy will:
Let nothing of myself be left behind
In our union mystic and unutterable.*

*My heart shall throb with the world-beats of Thy love,
My body become Thy engine for earth-use;
In my nerves and veins Thy rapture's streams shall move;
My thoughts shall be hounds of Light for Thy power to loose.*

*Keep only my soul to adore eternally
And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee.*

SRI AUROBINDO, *Collected Poems*, CWSA Volume 2, p. 611