



# *Dealing with Fear*

## *A Step towards Emotional Health*

This essay is an attempt to examine the role of Fear - its origin, function and consequences in our lives. It is based on my reading of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

**F**ear for me, has always been real - an emotion I am very familiar with. In fact, before I read what The Mother and Sri Aurobindo had to say about it, I seriously believed it to be one of the many human weaknesses that one just had to live with, and succumb to, from time to time.

One aspect of fear was quite clear to me though - it was the fact that my fears always arose out of an impurity within me. For example, I had sleepless nights because I feared encountering criticism the next day due to my inability to meet a deadline because of an indulged desire to gossip and waste time. In relationships, I decided the rules according to my preference, and when things went out of control, I feared the consequences. As a child, I feared punishment for misbehaviour; in school, I feared being left out and so I worked hard to please my friends. In college, I did an English Honours and feared whether it would be sufficient for a good job. When I fell in love, I feared whether this love would lead to the altar and when I had children, I feared for their health, their education, their jobs. Now, as I grow older, I fear old age, dependency, death.... the list is endless.

However, I have observed that the "me" which fears remains the same; the nature of the fear varies. This is because as we grow, our desires, our priorities, our aims, our circumstances keep changing, and as long as we remain the same psychological person, the nature of fear varies.

When we fear, we place ourselves in a vulnerable position. It obviously means our weakness opens us to some power which can cause us suffering; and it is this suffering that we fear. Fear can destroy us mentally, emotionally and perhaps physically too. Secondly, when we fear an outcome, it always comes to pass.

How does one react to fear? The body has a consciousness of its own and this is one of trust. The body is always at the mercy of the mind

and the vital (the seat of desires, impulses, emotions). It follows them blindly. When fear enters the mind through the medium of thought, it translates in the vital as an emotion, and the body picking up the signal, reacts. So we experience rapid heartbeat, a sweating forehead, cold hands, trembling legs. If the fear is suppressed continuously, the body develops ailments like blood-pressure, heart problems, ulcers, psychosomatic illnesses.

When I opened the chapter on Fear in my life, the first requirement was to become conscious of its existence. In order to be conscious, I had to learn to separate from that part of me which feared (mental or vital) and look at it dispassionately as an observer. To achieve the stance of the observer, I first had to learn to quieten the mind. So the moment one sees an attack of fear coming, one must be very quiet and speak internally to the vital to calm down, calling "Peace" to settle in the mind. This practice, done regularly helps to develop the habit of distancing oneself from the self that fears. Having distanced oneself one can observe what is it in oneself that fears, why it fears. This actually is an inward exercise of facing the fear. As soon as one begins to face the fear, one sees the cause of it (desire, mistrust, doubt, lack of faith, negligence, carelessness etc.). Invariably it is an associate of a false or dark tendency within. At that step, to aspire for the opposite tendency of courage, faith, trust, vigilance, awareness etc. dissolves fear immediately.

Fear is based on imagining the worst. It is a mental form of negative thought and since thought control is another form of establishing peace in the mind, The Mother says, an effective way of getting rid of a fearful thought is to write it down on a piece of paper and very consciously with full attention tear the paper to bits - all the while believing sincerely that it is the thought which has been torn to shreds.



Doubt also creates fear. Whenever I doubt an outcome or I doubt my own potential, I create a cause for fear. In such a case, even if I work very hard, I defeat the purpose of achieving success through doubt. So one must cultivate faith and conviction, not for the purpose of reinforcing the ego, but faith in a higher power and the deep aspiration for it to act as a guide in one's life. Fear belongs to Ignorance and Falsehood - aspects of the ego. Fear of the unknown stems from Ignorance. As soon as we shed the light of true knowledge on it (faith, trust, courage), it disappears.

✍ Jayashree Singh

#### WORKSHEET ON FEAR

*The reader is invited to ponder, reflect and answer the following questions in order to understand what fear is in his/her own life.....*

1. Think of any two fears that constantly recur in your life.
2. Where is the origin of these fears? In your thoughts? imagination? repeated experiences? circumstances? physical disabilities? Any other?
3. Have you tried to overcome your fear? How?
4. Can you use any one method successfully, every time you fear? What is the method?
5. Have you helped anyone to overcome their fear? How?

*Fear and anxiety are perverse forms of will. What thou fearest and ponderest over, striking that note repeatedly in thy mind, thou helpst to bring about...<sup>1</sup>*



*Fear is a phenomenon of unconsciousness. It is a kind of anguish that comes from ignorance. One does not know the nature of a certain thing, does not know its effect or what will happen, does not know the consequences of one's acts, one does not know so many things; and this ignorance brings fear.<sup>2</sup>*



*There is no fear in the higher Nature. Fear is a creation of the vital plane, an instinct of the ignorance, a sense of danger with a violent vital reaction that replaces and usually prevents or distorts the intelligence of things. It might almost be considered as an invention of the hostile forces.<sup>3</sup>*



*...fear creates imaginary terrors – even if there is real danger, fear does not help; it clouds the intelligence, takes away presence of mind and prevents one seeing the right thing to do.<sup>4</sup>*



*...There are many ways of curing oneself of fear.*

*...when one has a free movement of the reasoning mind, one can use it to reason with, to speak to oneself as one would to a child... manage to convince the part that fears that it must stop being afraid.*

*If you have faith and are consecrated to the Divine, there is a very simple way, it is to say: "Let Your will be done...." ... Of all the means this is the most effective...<sup>5</sup>*



*To walk through life armoured against all fear, peril and disaster, only two things are needed, two that go always together – the Grace of the Divine Mother and on your side an inner state made up of faith, sincerity and surrender. Let your faith be pure, candid and perfect. ... Let your sincerity and surrender be genuine and entire.<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo *Thoughts and Aphorisms* p.63

<sup>2</sup> The Mother *Collected Works of The Mother* v.6 p.50

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo *Letters on Yoga* p.1417

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.1416

<sup>5</sup> The Mother *Collected Works of The Mother* v.5 pp.118-19

<sup>6</sup> Sri Aurobindo *The Mother* ch.3