

Sincerity

A Key to Progress

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SINCERITY

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ABSTRACT: This essay reflects my personal understanding and experience of the attitude of sincerity for personal growth. It also deals with the difficulties one faces in being sincere and the possibilities of overcoming them based on The Mother and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga.¹ Here the focus is primarily on the individual aspect of sincerity, as it is my firm belief that whatever problem one faces at collective level are essentially the problems of individual nature and if it can be resolved at individual level then it can easily be resolved at collective level.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The nature of man and whole earth is to progress. Million years of earth history tells us how we have progressed from single cellular to multi cellular animals or how life on earth has evolved from matter and gradually progressed from fish to amphibians to reptiles to birds to mammals. And at each evolutionary step something higher with greater capacities or potentialities have evolved. We also find that always there is an emergence of higher and better species.² Even the growth of homo sapiens in the most outward sense reflects the progressive tendency of our planet. But with the emergence of man or rather a rational being something remarkable happened in Nature. It was for the first time a species came into existence who were able to observe themselves and could go beyond their instinctive nature, though not completely. We are not only able to observe something which is outside us and is present in our environment but we also have the capacity to observe our own inner movements, thoughts, feelings etc. Thus dividing ourselves into two parts, one who is observing and one who is being observed. This potentiality in us constitutes a reflective intelligence distinguished from the reactive intelligence of the animals³. This evolution has given a new dimension to progress. This quality in us has made us a conscious participant in the process of evolution. Present emphasis on 'personal growth' and all psychological techniques whether be it of Transactional analysis, Gestalt therapy, Sensitivity training or Assertiveness training reflects only this conscious process. Prior to this appearance progress was a sub conscious process through Nature but now there can be a conscious evolution. Indian yogic systems contribute a lot in this conscious evolution. All systems aim at self-mastery for the development of one's highest potentialities. Sri Aurobindo defines Yoga as – "a methodized effort towards self-perfection by the expression of potentialities latent in the being...."¹. The word progress in this monograph refers to the mode of progress that is a conscious effort towards self-perfection. Thus it becomes important to know what is in us that hinders our progress or what could be the possible ways of overcoming them?

I have also been looking for some answers to difficulties I face in my day to day work and during one of such crisis times I was hit by the word 'sincerity' as an answer, so I took the endeavour of understanding it from a deeper level. This made me question and understand why one faces problems and how one contributes to one's own problems.

Every circumstance brings certain opportunities with them and difficulties. But the fact is we are mostly caught in the surface and intensity of the problem. We don't see and think of what is invisible in them - a genuine movement of progress. Is it not that only during difficult times we **sincerely** look for an answer to the problems we face and do get them?

2. UNDERSTANDING SINCERITY:

The word sincerity comes from a Latin word 'sincerus'. The dictionary gives words like non-hypocritical or deceitful, open, genuine, pure, unadulterated, unmixed. If we reflect on these words, it opens a wide range of meanings to us. In our everyday life when we call someone sincere either in work or towards family we will find that we always see something in that person that is not selfish and that he gives greater value to the job than his self interest.

Sincerity in Hindi is called 'satya-nishtha'. 'Satya' means truth and as I could not get an English synonym for the word 'nishtha', I have taken the word 'loyalty' as its closest meaning. Thus in Hindi it would mean 'being loyal to the truth'. To understand it at a personal level we need to reflect on ourselves and on our life.

If we try to become aware of ourselves we will find that our nature is a complex mixture. And in this task we discover that we are vaguely aware of our most outer nature. Basically, our bodies need, habit, instinct, sensation and sometimes to certain extent aware of some psychological elements like feelings, impulses, preferences, thoughts ideas etc. However, from the viewpoint of Integral Yoga Psychology we are made up of five principle aspects - the physical, or our body that mostly we are aware of, the vital, which corresponds closely to our emotional nature or affective domain, the mental, that is mind and its different activities and functions, the psychic, the psychological centre of the Divine presence in us and the spiritual. But from our day to day's experience we can say that we are mostly governed by our mind, " for man is a mental being and mentalises everything"². Sri Aurobindo remarks. "Each plane of our being - mental' vital, physical - has its own consciousness, separate though interconnected and interacting, but to our outer mind and sense, in our waking experience, they are all confused together."³ We do witness this confusion at each moment of our life, whether it is an occasion to make a choice or an opportunity to take a decision. We also experience this confusion even in our simple act of talking or sometimes while presenting our ideas. All different parts in us constantly try to pull us in different directions. Each one wants the freedom to present itself and have the

power to govern the nature. If we ponder a little on this we will clearly see how each part acts or reacts in their own habitual way and makes the plot for inner conflict and eventually leads us to confusion. We will see that at different occasions we express the part which is strong in us at that particular time if not resisted by the others Thus if one tries to be sincere to oneself one requires a capacity to discriminate voices of all different parts in oneself and be able to follow the Highest rejecting the rest. From all these voices, the highest would be the one that wants to put a conscious effort towards self-perfection. For me this would mean practically:

- not to let any part find its own way of convincing the other,
- or give a favorable explanation to what it wants to do,
- or justify something what one has already done against one's highest voice,
- or not to shut oneself when something unpleasant happens and
- not to let everything pass by unconsciously without observing or understanding the role of different parts of our being.

Now let us reflect on it taking a work situation.

If in my work I have been asked to do something which I am not interested [though it is altogether a different matter why I am not interested!] then the mind would give all possible explanations about the work load and list of tasks that need to be done. And the vital would collaborate with the mind and feel pity for itself and physical would try its best to neglect it as long as possible and keep the work aside. What would sincerity mean in this situation and why is it needed?

It is needed just because my dull acceptance of different voices is making my life miserable. Its neither helping me nor my life. So I need the way out. Thus one needs to question in this situation and can ask - 'if I have been given something which I have been looking for in this same situation, will I accept it or not?' This question might mirror us the real cause for not taking up the work and might create interest for it. This question will help us not to be convinced or carried away by any voice. This will also make us understand that neither of these voices is helping us in our progress. Thus we need a voice that will open ways for our progress.

3. DIFFICULTIES IN BEING SINCERE:

Thus we can say sincerity demands ruthless honesty firstly for self-observation and secondly for discrimination as a pre-requisite. But only understanding and discriminating different voices in us is not enough. If we reflect on our psychological state we will find that most often we have a tendency to obey the unwillingness of that part which is non cooperative to our highest voice. As we see our highest voice is not so assertive and loud, it is easy to be carried away by noisier voices. The following are some such voices or tendencies, which distracts us from being sincere.

3.1 PUTTING UP A VEIL: LACK OF CLARITY AND UNCONSCIOUSNESS:

Lack of clarity or unconsciousness comes from the “tamsic mode”⁴ of the nature. It is again a resistance in the human nature, which doesn’t want to change. It is not logical if one says that ‘I am insincere but unclear and unconscious of its origin’. Then how does one know that one is insincere? This reflects resistance towards self-observation. This is like playing a trick with what one doesn’t want to do and then covering it with a veil of unconsciousness. It is quite a common phenomenon of deceiving. We wish to do a lot but don’t do so. In my personal example - I really want to study a lot but don’t do so. Then I have many reasons to give why it couldn’t happen or why I could not do so. The moment one says that ‘I am conscious of it and I know why I couldn’t do so’ one is immediately confronted with a question ‘what have you done about it’, thus leaving no scope to escape! Thus it is insincerity of some part in us that wants to remain unclear or unconscious, as it does not want to put the effort of questioning. This is a common tendency that distracts us from following our ‘highest voice’.

3.2 SELF-DECEPTION:

Mind through its reasoning capacity is almost in a habit of self-deception. It gives its justification for every little thought and every little act. It won’t be an exaggeration if we say that what we know of ourselves is sometimes only one side of our nature. Reason is a faculty of perception and judgment. But from our ordinary experiences we can say that because of its habit of quick reaction it mostly deceives us rather than helps us to perceive our state, movement or situation. We very often do something and say something and think something else. We like to keep ourselves in a comfortable position by blaming others or circumstance for our own mistakes and give excuses and explanation for every little movement. These are acts of self-deception, which make us stagnant and hinder us in progress.

3.3 PREFERENCES AND DESIRE:

It is a part of human and universal nature. This comes up as one of the biggest obstacles that need to be challenged. We are living in a utilitarian era and governed by consumerism ideology. Thus every minute we have the opportunity to be a slave of one or the other desire. When one is governed by desire one loses the capacity to discriminate and gives oneself to desire. There are many people who believe that the best way to get rid of desire is to satisfy them. But our every day’s experience will tell us better that if we satisfy one desire there will be hundred in a line waiting for their turn and we will hardly be left for other affairs. The problem is that we meet life through desires and mistake them as our necessities. We are convinced that it is impossible to live without it. But we hardly question the instability it brings to our life. How at one moment it makes us excited and at other moment depressed. When we are governed by desires we identify ourselves with it and *prefer* to act accordingly.

Preference is also a desire. When we are attached to some result we have preferences and we want to act according to it. Modern world gives lot of emphasis on 'freedom of choice'. But human nature as such, not disciplined not able to separate itself from preferences confuses it with choice. Choice means a decision and an action,⁵ without giving importance to the result, but preference has its own wish and acts to fulfill it. It creates contradiction with our highest voice. Preferences make us blind and take us away from our aim. It gives birth to struggle, as different voices in us have different desires and preferences.

4. EFFORTS AND WILL AS TOOLS TO OVERCOME INSINCERITY:

There are innumerable instances when one man's will has changed the destiny of collective life. We will find that the people whether in the field of science, arts, sports, business or any other walk of life, who have discovered new heights in their lives are the people of strong will. There are many instances where people of strong will have conquered their incurable illnesses or diseases. This will demands tremendous effort from oneself. Effort at each moment of our life and at every circumstance, effort to distinguish what drags us down or what lifts us up, what helps us in progress or what pushes us down. When we put our effort to understand ourselves we mostly find that half of our difficulties are eliminated by the effort itself!

Whatever difficulties one faces in being sincere can also be overcome to a great extent through personal effort and a will. If one takes the path of progress or personal growth one should be able to understand different movements in oneself and its origin. This means an effort to make a strict rule for oneself not to act according to personal preferences or give up for some personal comfort and then demands a will to pursue this strict rule.

It is only when one has a strong will one is able to say to oneself "I want this because I aspire to progress and I know this will help me in my progress and I will follow this in spite of all its consequences". If we really question our difficulties we will find that actually difficulties are conflicts between our will and our submission to something that is weak in us. Now if we consciously choose to support our will we can easily unite our movements and different voices and can take a step towards progress. Many people say human nature is like a wild horse difficult to control. But as it is said - A wild horse can be tamed but one never puts a bridle on a tiger.⁶ Fortunately human nature is not like a tiger. Thus it can be mastered by effort and a will.

5. CONCLUSION:

Each problem springs from our own action and attitude giving us an opportunity to progress by demanding from us better perfection better balance better structure. Our only job is to be sincere in understanding this and taking a step ahead.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's perception of the whole range of psychological and yogic steps leading to the realisation of human potential is termed as Integral Yoga. [Source - V Madhusudan Reddy, Integral Yoga Psychology.]

² According to Sri Aurobindo "it is fundamentally an evolution of consciousness that has been taking place in the nature" [Refer- The Life Divine{SABCL, Vol. 20}, p.2]

³ Source, A S Dalal, Looking From Within.

⁴ "...modes are termed in Indian books qualities, gunas and are given the names sattva, rajas, tamas.." Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, [SABCL, Vol. 20], p. 220

⁵ [Source - On Desire, Words of The Mother - a compilation]

⁶ Source - The Mother, Tales of all time.

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2. Sri Aurobindo, [1986], Letters on Yoga [Cent. ed. Vol. 22], p. 320, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
3. Ibid, p. 347

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