

***Surrender***  
***and Its Importance in the Emergence***  
***of True Self***

An end-of-course Monograph by  
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**Course: Power of Attitude**  
**at The Gnostic Centre, New Delhi**  
**1998**

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# *Surrender*

## *and Its Importance in the Emergence of True Self*

“Once there lived a village of creatures along the bottom of a great crystal river.

The current of the river swept silently over them all – young and old, rich and poor, good and evil, the current going its own way, knowing only its own crystal self.

Each creature in its own manner clung tightly to the twigs and rocks of the river bottom, for clinging was their way of life, and resisting the current what each had learned from birth.

But one creature said at last, ‘I am tired of clinging. Though I cannot see it with my eyes, I trust that the current knows where it is going. I shall let go, and let it take me where it will. Clinging, I shall die of boredom.

The other creatures laughed and said, ‘Fool! Let go, and that current you worship will throw you tumbled and smashed across the rocks, and you will die quicker than boredom!’

But the one heeded them not, and taking a breath did let go, and at once was tumbled and smashed by the current across the rocks.

Yet in time, as the creature refused to cling again, the current lifted him free from the bottom, and he was bruised and hurt no more.

And the creatures down stream, to whom he was a stranger, cried, ‘See a miracle! A creature like ourselves, yet he flies! See the Messiah, come to save us all!’

And the one carried in the current said, ‘I am no more Messiah than you. The river delights to lift us free, if only we dare let go. Our true work is this voyage, this adventure.’”

This piece, taken from Richard Bach’s book ‘Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah’, explains beautifully the meaning of surrender and its link with the emergence of the real self – that which makes each one of us a ‘messiah’ provided we let go (of ourselves) from the clinging to the rocks and twigs of desires, habits, laziness and unwillingness to change.

Each individual has his own set of goals and needs: his mission in life. We all at some point in time go through the phase when we ask ourselves ‘who am I? who is the real me?’. There comes a stage in our life when we are attempting to define ourselves not only in terms of our achievements and roles, but something beyond it. While pursuing the goals of life, we also get into an enquiry and aim at something beyond an ordinary life, and seek to grow towards a higher or spiritual state of being, which is our real ‘identity’. This is the query that I got into and this course provided me the right forum to explore this. Each one of us goes on this journey in his own way, devising his own strategy. The attainment of these goals depends on his need, his tenacity to pursue and his willingness

to put himself into working towards the goal, that is to say, his inner attitude. This inner attitude can be contacted by going inwards, looking within and by:

- *Aspiring* to the highest ideal for oneself,
- *Rejecting* the movements of the vital<sup>1</sup> nature's desires, demands, passions, selfishness, arrogance, lust, greed, etc., and
- *Surrender* of oneself and what one is and has to the Divine.<sup>2</sup>

Even though one may aspire for the highest ideal, reject the lower nature's movements, the process of being in touch with the inner being is still not complete unless one detaches from the results and surrenders one's will to the Divine will. This is a difficult process as we are so bound by our own limitations. We tend to take our limitations, our boundaries as our 'self', which in reality is what limits us. We tend to describe ourselves through the physical consciousness, the roles we play in the outer being. It is the surrender of the will to the Divine truth (that which is beyond all desires, opinions, selfishness and pettiness) that brings out the true nature of the 'Self' which essentially answers our query 'who am I'.

This monograph attempts to explore the attitude of 'Surrender' to the Divine will and its role in the emergence of the 'true self'. An attempt has been made to understand the concept at a mental level to begin with and to be able to apply in the day-to-day life situations and to see if it makes a difference in my own definition of my 'self'.

To begin with, definitions of the two words have been given, as taken from the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.<sup>3</sup>

The 'true self' is a self free from the shackles of ego, desires, greed, need for power, control – a state of consciousness and oneness with the Divine. "It is that which is the happiest, the only thing that can give a constant peace, uninterrupted joy and feeling of infinite freedom from all that afflicts, impoverishes us, from all that creates anxiety, the least fear in a person."<sup>4</sup>

One no longer fears anyone/anything because it is the divine who within a person guides everything.

Our true self is hidden under the layers of the outer being.<sup>5</sup> To get in touch with this self, one has to remove these layers, one by one, just as one peels the layers of the onion, one by one, to get to the core of it, which is so different from what it appears from outside.

"Surrender is the decision taken to hand over the responsibility of one's life to the Divine"..... "Surrender means to consecrate everything in oneself to the Divine, to offer all one is and has, not to insist on one's ideas, desires, habits etc. but to allow the divine Truth to replace them by its knowledge, will and action everywhere."<sup>6</sup>

Each person has a very unique way of looking at life, dealing with situations, a very definite perception of things, a unique thought process. If one wants to receive the divine light, that which is within each one of us, that which is the Truth, our 'true self', one has to offer – offer the whole way of being by being open and receptive to the divine consciousness. More and more awareness of thoughts, feelings and movements is required for this as also the ability to detach oneself from these and be able to offer to the divine force.

In practical day-to-day life, this can be achieved through self-observation and self-reflection. This can be done through writing a reflective journal, recalling the day's events and thoughts and

examining each thought and action through the light and shadow exercise which involves looking at every action and thought in a sort of a light from within, of the highest aspiration. If the thought or action is in congruence with the highest ideal, it will pass through the light, but if it is not, it will cast a shadow. The effort then should be to bring this to the highest light and see what needs to be done to make the 'light' enter and remove the shadow. This requires a complete honesty and directness with oneself.

An extremely important attitude required here is the attitude of the witness consciousness within. This means the ability to be able not to get involved in the ordinary nature movements but look at all that happens as an observer and not get personally involved or interested in them. The thought or the event is looked at as if one is outside of it, therefore no attachments to it, nor judgments.

This exercise of light and shadow was undertaken by me during the course of study and I found it to be extremely helpful. Initially I could not connect and was mechanical in doing the exercise but slowly through meditation and aspiring for it, I could be honest with myself and slowly became more conscious and aware of my movements. This started the process of working with the shadows and I found myself working with small little attitudinal shadows at work, at home and in relationships. I began to realise the energy drain that was caused by negative feelings. Being more aware and conscious of myself and being able to work on my shadows (of reacting to situations, getting angry if things were not my way, a sense of lack of control, agitation within and feeling pressurised by relationships and responsibilities). This change was more apparent to me when I could see myself not having an urge to make a point always or feel totally in control of results. This changed my perception of my 'self' from being a highly-strung and agitated person to someone who is capable of keeping calm and not getting inappropriately angry.

There were, however, many occasions when I found myself emotionally charged, a feeling of fear and anger directed towards some people in the family. I often felt 'bogged' down by the feeling – 'Will I be able to work through all this?' – a sense of insecurity would creep in.

It was at these times that a lot of questions arose in me. An internal dialogue began and I could ask myself what is it that I aspire for? What would follow would be a mental exercise of reframing my thoughts, my real reasons behind these doubts – my need for progress. It is then I could connect and stay calm, pray, remember and offer – a step towards surrender. Though it seems a very mental exercise, and far from complete surrender of the whole being, it is a small step in that direction, as once the mind accepts, all the other parts of the being may also follow.

A complete surrender is certainly not possible in a short span of time because it means cutting the knot of ego in each part of the being and offering it, free and whole to the Divine. The mind, the vital, the physical consciousness – each has to give their way and accept the way of the Divine. The reason why it takes a long time is because we are so accustomed to relating to ourselves and the outside world through our ego (our wishes, desires, achievements and weaknesses of the physical and vital) and establishing our selves as an identity that is separate and distinct from others and surrendering involves just the opposite. It requires us to 'let go' as in the piece mentioned at the beginning of the monograph.

However, what can be achieved is making a resolve, being open and consciously offering oneself to the Divine. This is the beginning of the journey which will eventually lead to the path of slowly unfolding the true being within, the *messiah*<sup>7</sup> within each one of us which is hidden and obscured.

Along with openness in attitude, a strong will that aspires and a sincerity and honesty in each endeavour, what is also required is Faith in the Divine Grace – faith that despite everything, it will lead us to our true goal.

In essence the components of true surrender are:

- To be open and aware of one's thoughts and desires and actions.
- To strongly will to surrender truly and completely.
- To do so with all sincerity.
- To have a faith in the Divine Grace.
- To detach oneself from the results in one's action and thoughts.
- To remember the Divine before any act or thought and mentally 'offering'.

If one is a product of an interplay of desires, greed, opinions, a creature of habit, how does one change – 'let go' and not cling? Some methods and exercises that really helped me are:

- Meditation,
- Writing a self-reflective journal,
- Self observation,
- Light and shadow exercise,
- Meeting people who are in a similar endeavour, and
- Reading books and articles to clarify concepts and draw energy from these sources.

My personal experience has been that meditation helps tremendously in being able to focus on the will to surrender. It helps in bringing one's internal noise down and be more focused.

Awareness came through self-observation and self-reflection through the discipline of writing a self-reflective journal every day, describing the thoughts and acts of the day and by observing whether or not they correspond to the highest ideal I have for that act and to keep an eye on the progress made.

Surrender requires us to bring about an attitudinal shift from attachment (to results, thought, feeling) to detachment. One has to make a shift towards doing our best and then detaching personally from its results, leaving it fully to the Divine. If after this one does not succeed in whatever one has attempted, one still feels alright about it, does not get disheartened or upset and takes it as the Divine's will and therefore for the best. This attitude requires a rigorous internal discipline of constantly *remembering*<sup>8</sup> and *offering*<sup>9</sup> and till such time as this becomes a natural way of being.

What also helped me in the process of offering was the company of some people who had the attitude of detachment to results. Seeing for myself how their work, their actions were an expression of the inner harmony was very reassuring.

## ***Conclusion***

Essentially each one of us is a harmonious being but being caught in the shackles of the vital nature, we create and live in disharmony, within and without.

The times that I felt 'in flow', in harmony gave me a glimpse of the real 'self'. It made me realise that all movements and actions of life depend totally on one's attitude to these things. It is the realisation that things in themselves are neither truly good or bad: they are so only in relation to us.<sup>10</sup> There are two ways of looking at the same thing: one is through surrender and looking at it as 'Divine Grace'. This would make us feel in harmony and this would help us become more conscious, stronger and closer to our 'true self' as the creature who floated in the stream (as mentioned in the piece in the beginning). If on the other hand, the very same circumstance is taken as a blow from fate, this would weigh us down and take away from us our inner strength and harmony.

"The attitude of surrender enlarges a person. It increases the capacity and gives a different quality to a person that which one could not attain before."<sup>11</sup> ..... I would like to use an analogy of a drop of water, given by the Mother to explain the importance of surrender in the emergence of true self. If a drop of water when it falls into the sea keeps a separate identity, it remains a drop and nothing more, a little drop limited in potential and fearful of the immensity around. By surrendering it unites with the sea and participates in the nature and power and vastness of the whole sea, which is its true potential, its real 'self'.

To conclude, I would like to quote from 'Illusions'<sup>12</sup>:

"The river delights to lift us free [which is our real self] if only we dare let go [surrender]. Our true work is this voyage, this adventure....."

- Arvinder J Singh

## ***References***

- 1 Refer Glossary
- 2 The Supreme Truth or Being from whom all comes and in whom all lives
- 3 Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are among the very prominent spiritual leaders of India
- 4 Source: *Collected Works of The Mother*, v.4, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
- 5 Refer Glossary
- 6 Source: *Surrender and Grace*, compiled by Vijay, from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry
- 7 Refer passage in the beginning
- 8 Remembering the divine
- 9 Offering to the divine
- 10 Source: *Surrender and Grace*, compiled by Vijay, from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry
- 11 Source: *Looking from Within*, AS Dalal, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
- 12 Written by Richard Bach

## ***Glossary***

The definitions given below are as given by Sri Aurobindo:

**The outer being** - Is made up of three parts, each with its own distinct type of consciousness and traits. These three parts are described below using Sri Aurobindo's terminology.

**The Physical (being)** - It is the consciousness in the body which regulates the complex working of the different bodily organs and physiological systems.

**The Vital (being)** - Is made up of life energies, sensations (pleasure, pain, etc.), instincts and impulses (anger, fear, lust, etc.), desires, feelings and emotions.

**The Mental (being)** - This is the part of our make-up which has to do with thoughts and ideas, facts and knowledge. Reason and intellect are the most highly developed expressions of the mental consciousness.

**Divine** - The Supreme Truth or Being from whom all comes and in whom all lives.

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