

Vital Education

a monograph

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of integral yoga points at the vital nature of the human being as an important area and tool, for self-improvement and perfection at work.

I have tried to integrate my personal understanding of the vital and its application in my school job.

I am grateful to Ameeta Mehra, for her continuous guidance, encouragement and patience – without which this work would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

“As a splendid palace deserted by its inmate’s looks like a ruin,
so does a man without character, all his material belongings not
withstanding”

- *Mohandas K. Gandhi*

While a large part of the world’s population are suffering from hunger of the body, an equally large number are suffering from an inner hunger, - resulting in great emptiness within the human spirit. Outwardly, our personalities are being whipped into acquiring more, being faster, while inwardly we suffer a sense of loss, a lack of direction and fulfillment. Though we are seeking solutions there seem to be certain indications, that we require remedies at a level far deeper than the levels we are now thinking and acting from.

As we view the situation it is perhaps vain to think that the world of today and tomorrow can be safe without a radical change in human consciousness and character. One of the most effective means of effecting this change is through an integral and value – oriented education. Unfortunately, when we think of the importance of education, we are restricted to merely multiplying the number of education institutions, instead of making bold efforts at transforming our objectives, contents and methods.

A voluntary effort is needed therefore; through conferences, seminars and workshops the theme of education for character development must be studied in depth. In our present system of education, we are too preoccupied with mental development (partial that too) and an insufficient form of physical development.

For most of my professional career as a teacher, I subscribed to the usual norms of education, though all the time, I was not convinced myself of the way I functioned in the class with my students. Something vital was missing – and this inner dissatisfaction grew, till I was forced to examine the issue.

My search has led me to examine this area, through the foundation course at the Gnostic Centre.

The area I choose to work, in is the ‘Vital’ part of an individuals life; vital in the sense, that it is the key to molding an integrated personality, and also because, it is an invaluable aspect of a human being’s, personality - mental, vital and physical. Therefore, the knowledge of the vital, its functioning, and further, its education has become the subject of my project.

THE NEED FOR VITAL EDUCATION

Sri Aurobindo says,

“Most things happen in the vital before they happen in the physical” because “most people live in the vital. That means that they live in their desires, sensations, emotional and judge everything from that point of view. It is the vital that moves them, the mind being at its service, not its master.”

“Living in the vital is a psychological condition”.

“The vital is a good instrument but a bad master, if you allow its bad habits, it becomes your master and peace and happiness are no longer possible”.

“The education of the vital is perhaps the most important and the most indispensable” and “The education of the child’s vital should begin as early as possible, indeed, as soon as he is able to use his senses. In that way many bad habits will be avoided and harmful influences eliminated”.

The vital “holds within itself power, energy, enthusiasm” and if it controls the nature, “its demands have no limit”. Since the tendency of the vital is passion, enthusiasm and complete devotion”. It can be dangerous if it is not given right guidance early in life, and if it develops a passion for wrong habits and indulgence.

For e.g. a young child develops a fascination for toys and wants a new toy at regular intervals. The indulgent parents give in to his “innocent desire” which turns into a nasty habit. In his teen years this innocent desire no longer seeks a toy for its satisfaction, but new and exciting forms of adventure and excitement. At that point it is very difficult to change the nature – leading to much misery, since what excites the vital is extreme forms of thrill and sensation so young children in adolescent years, falls a prey to various habits which prove detrimental to mental, emotional and physical growth.

Secondly, school education caters to physical and academic growth mainly. The education of the vital is rarely taken up because as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother says, “First, human thinking is in a great confusion over what concerns this particular subject”. The vital energy and enthusiasm are channeled towards self-affirmation and self-satisfaction.

“Secondly, the enterprise is very difficult and to be successful in it one must have endurance, endless persistence and an inflexible will.” Since vital education is a difficult enterprise, it calls for dedicated teachers who are well practiced in it themselves. Unless a teacher undergoes his/her own practice of educating and uplifting the vital, how can vital education become a part of the curriculum?

Making the matter more arduous, is the aspect of wrong beliefs. “One is that the goal of life is to be happy; the other that you are born with a certain character and it is impossible to change it The conviction that makes one believe that one has the right to be happy, leads towards the will to live life at any cost. This attitude brings about every conflict and misery, deception and discouragement ending often in catastrophe”.

Vital education is further hampered by :

- i. Not enough study done in this area.
- ii. School curriculum based on mental and physical culture only
- iii. Requires a lot of time and the academic year does not therefore give enough time or space.
- iv. Wrong attitude of society that emotions and beliefs cannot be taught.

Conclusion

The aim therefore, of this project is to study the ‘vital’ and see some of the different ways in which it can be an effective tool of change and development.

The work consists of two parts. In the first part, I attempt to examine the nature and functioning of the vital within myself. I have also incorporated exercise for the reader, who may like to attempt the same journey of self – discovery.

The second part of this project, aims at understanding the significance of vital education in the school curriculum, its need, aim, objectives, obstacles and result of vital training at the school level. I have concluded each topic with an exercise of assimilation – so that the whole becomes practical and applicable, both to the teacher and the taught.

In this humble endeavor, I have relied upon, and based myself wholly on the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

PLANNING SHEET

- Aim** : To know and understand some aspect of the vital.
To observe its functioning and examine its role in development of character and training of physical senses. To realise its significance in school education.
- Activities** : Self reflective journal / one's own self.
Questionnaire
Games – Imagination, Creativity
Quieting / Silence of the mind exercise.
- Resources** : Books by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother
Newsletter – Gnostic Centre
Self Reflective Journal
- Evaluation** : Self reflective journal
- Time Table** : Daily exercise
Weekly review.

THE VITAL

Definition and Function

Abstract : The essay begins with The Mother & Sri Aurobindo's definition of the vital, and some of its functions.

The next part of the essay, invites the reader to do an exercise on recognizing very generally the vital functions within himself – and concludes with my own observations, on self-observation.

Introduction

In the essay 'The Science of Living' The Mother has said "An aimless life is always a miserable life" and the aim of education is to provide the highest goal to individuals, respecting their inherent potential and aptitude. But the aim of one's life cannot be realized unless one has realised perfection in oneself.

To work for this perfection, the first step according to the Mother "is to become conscious of yourself, of the different parts of your being and their respective activities it is an assiduous study which demands much perseverance and sincerity."

The different parts of our being – the mental, the vital and the physical have to be worked upon systematically, in order to manifest an integrated personality.

The Mother says - "The vital being in us is the seat of impulses and desires, of enthusiasm and violence, of dynamic energy and desperate depressions, of passions and revolts. It can set everything in motion, build and realize; but it can also destroy and mar everything. Thus it may be the most difficult part to discipline in the human being the vital is a good worker, but most often it seeks its own satisfaction. If that is refused, totally or even partially, the vital gets vexed, sulks and goes on strike. Its energy disappears more or less completely"

According to Sri Aurobindo "The Vital, or 'prana', is life force or energy".

"It supports and occupies all forms and without it no physical form could have come into being or could remain in being Prana is in itself pure energy cannot therefore be detected by any physical analysis....."

"The Vital proper is the life-force acting in its own nature, impulses emotions, feelings, desires, ambitions etc. Having as their largest centre what we may call the outer heart of emotion, while

there is an inner heart where are the higher or psychic feelings and sensibilities The vital part of us is necessary to our completeness”.

The reader is now invited to read the following questionnaire, reflect on it and answer the questions. The aim is to locate the vital functions within oneself –

Exercise on recognizing the vital functions

- i. Make a list of your desires and your needs

- ii. How do you react to an unsatisfied desire ?

- iii. In daily life, are your decisions based mainly on desires and feelings, or on rationale? Why?

- iv. Are you wary of change – at work, at home, in your attitude? What makes you hold on to set patterns of living?

- v. Do you have any bad habits? What effort are you making to change them? Why do you want to change them?

- vi. What attitude do you keep towards daily routine work?

Observation of the Vital within myself

When I first read about the vital in Sri Aurobindo and The Mother writings, I was keen to observe it in myself. But at the in very start, I faced confusion, because as Sri Aurobindo says, that though there is a clear distinction between the mental, vital and physical aspects of ourselves, to the outer mind and sense, they are all confused together.

That meant, I needed another faculty of the mind – the power of keen observation and concentration. I needed to sit quietly, rest my thoughts and then reflect very sincerely. So I followed the method given by the Mother. She says, one must know the proportion of ‘gunas’ in one’s nature. And one must know the exact proportion in oneself and how to use one guna to fight the other... one should attain a certain equilibrium. To attain this equilibrium, The Mother says, “..... you must find something within you in whose light you can be yourself your own judge, something which represents for you the best part of yourself pass across it as in a cinema all that you have done, all that you have felt, your impulses, your thoughts etc. then try to coordinate them, that is, find out why this has followed that certain things pass by well, without throwing a shadow, other, on the contrary throw a little shadow.....: and it is this “shadow” that must be held upto the light of our highest ideal and its nature and origin examined. Most often, the shadow is cast due to unconsciousness, but very often too, it is because of egoism, vanity, self-love etc.

This test in observation must be done sincerely in order to be effective, in order to change the inner disorder.

For as the Mother says “There is nothing bad. Only things are not in their place’.

Upon doing this exercise, I recognized three clear movements.

- a) I had been under an illusion, that all desires, sensations, feelings, thoughts etc. were born from my mind. Actually, these were reactions to an external agent in my environment (imagined or otherwise).
- b) My identification with my desire or feeling, for example, was so total and complete, that I thought was what defined me. Therefore, if I did not get what I wanted, or my feelings were thwarted, I was horribly upset and bewildered.
- c) This identification with illusions, started a chain reaction, leading to unhappiness, out of uncontrolled behaviour. I also noticed that most of my day fell within the purview of ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’. That is, there were certain people, work, places that I liked. At such times I would be enthusiastic, keen, curious and participate willingly. But other things that I ‘disliked’ – people, work, places – I just tolerated as inevitable or tired to avoid. If it came to daily chores, I did it mechanically, with no enthusiasm.

My school job and household chores, came in the circle of routine inevitability. So, the larger part of my life was dull, monotonous and even disappointing.

The exercise of self observation was very beneficial as I could now locate those vital trouble spots daily – see the result of succumbing to them and yet by treating them as “alien” I could consciously, will myself to change towards my ideal.

Given here is a format of the self – reflective journal I keep for my work. The reader is invited to participate by filling in the journal.

The Self-Reflective Journal

A SAMPLE FORMAT

| Action | Nature of the Action Light Shadow | Source In my being | My ideal | Through what means to develop the ideal | Remarks on my progress |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| An example: Am given a task with a colleague I dislike. | Will find fault, get annoyed easily, argue, try to avoid the work. | Mental – Judgmental attitude. Vital – Not according to my preference therefore no co-operation. | Harmony at work to be able to do my best. Respect another. | Tolerance, Patience, open mindedness. | Am working on it consciously. The will to change must be kept alive. |

DISTURBANCES IN THE VITAL

Abstract : This part of the work deals with disturbances in the vital. Which one becomes aware of, on self reflective. I have taken a few, common disturbances and have quoted from the sayings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

I have given my own observations in facing these difficulties and disturbances within myself. These disturbances are :

- i. Fear
- ii. Anger

Fear

Introduction : Sri Aurobindo and The Mother says “ Fear is a phenomenon of unconsciousness. It is a kind of anguish that comes from Ignorance It may also be a mixture of apprehension, a kind of instinct. When one instinctively feels that something is dangerous and hasn't the means to remedy it, when one does not know what to do to protect himself from it, then he is afraid.”

Observation : I have observed that I am fearful of many things – fear of illness, of not being successful in an endeavor, of failing my friends, fear of disappointment etc. And all these fears do arise from lack of knowledge about the “unknown”. At such times, I feel anxious, depressed, nervous, jealous, angry. We all seek remedies to fear – instant remedies. And when I do not get an instant answer to how to overcome my fear, it gets worse. I become incapable of paying attention to immediate concerns. My mind is confused and tense; I lose sleep, appetite, am irritable and unpleasant. Inertia sets in and The vital is rendered inactive.

In the body, fear translates as ill health. So many children fall ill just before an examination out of fear – fear of failure.

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother say “one of the great remedies for conquering fear is to face boldly what one fears the fear disappears.”

The Mother says that there are many kinds of fear. And that fear is used politically and even religiously to often obtain a hold on people – “There are religions which found their power over the believers simply through the fear of death and of what will happen thereafter and of all catastrophes which await you after death if you do not obey blindly the laws they dictate to you.”

Some people fear water, others fire, others some animal etc. These are phobias. Mother says, they “come from an antipathy, that is, a lack of affinity with something It comes from a disharmony between the vital vibrations. And then it is translated in this body – unconsciousness by fear”.

At such times, to face the fear boldly, means to use the mind to explain to oneself that there is some “disharmony” which needs reasoning and if one believed in the power of faith, to exercise it through aspiring for the higher consciousness.

Very young children are often fearful of parents, school authorities and even of older children who may be bullying them. At such times, instead of telling them “don’t be a coward” it is better to reason out the fear with them and show them that fear can harm them incalculably.

The Mother, talking to students says “You must observe yourself a little and say that when you are afraid it is as though the fear was attracting the thing you are afraid of. If you are afraid of illness, it is as though you are attracting the illness And if you say you are unable to prevent it by your reasons, well, that shows you have no control over yourselves and must make a little effort to control yourselves.

Exercise on ‘Fear’

- i. List 3 things that you are afraid of
- ii. Write out the reasons for your fear
- iii. How do you react physically to fear?
- iv. Have you overcome any one fear?
- v. What was the process of overcoming it?

Anger

Introduction : Sri Aurobindo and The Mother says “If you give expression to anger, you prolong or confirm the habit of the recurrence of anger; you do not diminish or get rid of the habit..... All these movements come from outside..... Your method of taking them as your own is again a wrong method; for by doing that you increase their power to recur and take hold of you. If you take them as your own, that gives them a kind of right to be there. If you feel them as not your own, then they have no right, and the will can develop more power to send them away The difficulty is that you get alarmed and up set and that makes it easier for the thing to get hold of your mind which it should not do”

Observation : I have observed that generally one gets angry when something happens contrary to one’s expectations, or when, in spite of repeated efforts the result is not forthcoming. In both cases, the root cause is desire of the ego.

Anger is a spontaneous expression of thwarted desire and the identification with anger stops functioning. There is no time to say, “No, this is not me. Its outside me – I must push it away and not allow it to express through me.” On the contrary, the mind in total collaboration with the vital feeling of being hurt or upset, gives full justification for manifesting anger.

The first thing that Sri Aurobindo discerns in his exploration of the vital is a fraction of the mind whose only function is to justify our impulses, sentiments and desires. He calls this the vital mind.

This vital mind aids identification with the vibration of anger. And Sri Aurobindo says that all vibrations are contagious and it depends on us to accept the contagion or not. As long as we identify, falsely with wrong vibrations, anger for instance, our nature cannot change; this explains, why, in spite of repeated resolutions one cannot rid himself of anger.

Secondly, will power is an important aid in banishing anger. The Mother defines the will as “the capacity to concentrate on everything one does, do it as best one can and not stop doing it unless one receives a very precise intimation that it is finished.

But when the will power is not developed enough, it can be swept away easily by an onrush of anger. So what is important is to develop the will to change the nature false vibrations (anger for e.g..) that must be expelled from the nature.

The Mother once said a story about a boy she knew..... in the North of France. This boy was frank by nature but impetuous and liable to lose his temper. One days, The Mother said to him, “Which do you think is more difficult for a strong boy like you, to give blow for blow and to let fly your fist in the face of a friend who insults you or at that moment to keep your fist in your pocket?”

“To keep to in my pocket, “he replied.

“And which do you think is more worthy of a brave boy like you, to do the easier or the more difficult thing?”

“The more difficult thing” he said Some time later, the boy reported to The Mother “One of my work mates who is known for his bad temper, struck me in a moment of anger. Since he knows that normally I am not one to forgive and that I have a strong arm, he was preparing to defend himself when I remembered what you had told me. It was harder for me than I thought but I put my fist in my pocket. And as soon as I did that, I felt no more anger in me, I only felt sorry for my friend. So I held out my hand to him. That surprised him so much that he stood looking at me for a moment, open mouthed, without speaking. Then he seized my hand, shook it vigorously and said with emotion, “Now you can do what you like with me, I am your friend forever:.

I have read this story many times. I feel it requires tremendous self control and will power not to identify with anger.

The Mother says that the will can be strengthened and developed by exercise, like the muscles. My own exercise is continuing

ROLE OF THE MIND

The Physical and Vital Mind

Abstract : In trying to study some of the functions of the vital, I saw that unless the mind co-operated in helping to sift my thoughts, there was confusion – so, in order to achieve clarity, mental development must also proceed simultaneously.

In this essay, I attempt to look at only two aspects of the mind – the physical mind and the vital mind, and to understand how they can collaborate with the vital for self observation.

Introduction

The Physical Mind – Definition.

“The physical mind is that part of the mind which is concerned with the physical things only – it depends on the sense-mind, sees only objects, external actions, draws its ideas from the data given by external things, infers from them only and knows no other Truth until its is enlightened from above.”

“At the outset man lives in his physical mind which perceives the actual, the physical, the objective and accepts it as fact and this fact as self evident truth beyond question; whatever is not actual, not physical, not objective it regards as unreal or unrealised, only to be accepted as entirely real when it has succeeded in becoming actual, becoming a physical fact, becoming objectives.”

“Our physical mind is not the whole of us nor, even though it dominates almost the whole of our surface consciousness, the best or greatest part of us”.

“For the physical mind takes its stand on matter and the material world, on the body and the bodily life on sense – experience and on a normal practical mentality and its experience.”

The Vital Mind – Definition

There is a part of the nature which I have called the vital mind; the function of this mind is not to think and reason, to perceive, consider and find out or value things, for that is the function of the thinking mind proper, buddhi, - but to plan or dream or imagine what can be done. It makes formations for the future which the will can try to carry out if opportunity and circumstances become favourable or even it can work to make them favourable ...

It has obviously its utility in human nature and human action, but acts in a random and excessive way without discipline, economy of its powers or concentration on the things that have really to be done.

The vital mind is that part of the vital being which builds, plans, imagines, arranges things and thoughts according to the life pushes, desires, will to power or possession, will to action, emotions, vital ego reactions of the nature. It must be distinguished from the reasoning will which plans and arrange things according to the dictates of the thinking mind proper, the discriminating reason or according to the mental intuition or a direct insight and judgement. The vital mind uses thought for the service not of reason but of life push and life power and when it calls in reasoning it uses that for justifying the dictates of these powers, imposes their dictates on the reason instead of governing by a discriminating will the action of the life forces.

Vital Mind proper is a sort of mediator between vital emotion, desire, impulsion, etc. and the mental proper. It expresses the desires, feelings, emotions, passions, and ambitions, possessive and active tendencies of the vital and throws them into mental forms.

The mind of man is the man, much more intimately than the body or the life of man and as it develops, it makes both the body and life its instruments. It is an intellectual, dynamic, ethical, emotional intelligence which seeks its own satisfaction and self realisation.

The mind itself has various realms physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual.

Thinking, besides attention, observation, judgement, memory – is an important function of the mind. The true role of the mind is the formation and organization of action. This action is based on thought. The power of thought can be seen and believed in when we get proof that whatever mind conceives it can achieve.

Unfortunately most of the time, one is engrossed in negative thoughts – “I know, I cannot do this” or “How can I achieve my goals, since I am so weak?” etc. Most of us are not even aware of the source of our thoughts where they come from, where they disappear to. But it is a fact that thought is the energy of the human mind. So why not learn to observe and control thought?

The nature of our thoughts belong to two areas :

- i. Thought area out of an emotion or sensation
- ii. Abstract thoughts based on ideas, e.g.. ‘What is the purpose of life? ‘what do I wish to do in life? etc. However, man cannot stop thinking, but to make thinking meaningful, we need to control it.

Thought Control

The first step in thought control is observation. This is a difficult process because one has to separate the thinker from the thought. To do this, one must learn to silence the mind of all its “inconsequential chatter”.

Only when the mind is still, can one observe thought. It is to be entirely still within and to look at the thought as if its an outsider (which it is) and let the thought pass. After some time the mind divides in two – a part which is the mental witness, and a part which is the object of observation. It is extremely important to set aside some part of the day for this exercise.

The back of the mind is separate from the front. It can observe the thought – its origin, the manner in which it flows in and if you give it sanction, it lodges in the mind. So the mind houses thoughts of all kinds – self contradictory, disturbing, enlightening, revealing, creative etc.

An important exercise in stilling the mind is through breathing. Our thoughts are linked to our breathing patterns and you will notice that we breathe differently when we are excited, nervous, angry, fatigued etc.

The next step to follow is to analyse the thought and find out why it has chosen to enter your mind. Obviously, there is an affinity (an opening) in the nature that lets a certain thought enter. For e.g. a person who is deprived of basic needs will have thoughts of stealing, if he is placed in an environment where things are laid carelessly around, money for instance.

There are people who have very rigid thought patterns. They never get to all another point of view and enter into quarrels endlessly. So the next step of thought control is to synthesize two contradictory ideas. In trying to do so, the mind expands its horizon in embracing a new, different idea.

Having developed the ability to observe and discern, the last step to thought control is to reject “unsavoury thoughts” and accept the right ones very sincerely. A major obstacle, here is that even though many of us are aware of right thoughts, we rarely exercise our will to reject the wrong ones – due to weak nature, temptation, circumstances, whatever. No wonder, we cannot gain self mastery, as we allow ourselves to bend whichever may the wind flows.

Exercise on Thought Control

The reader is invited to attempt the following exercise and reflect on his or her ability in controlling thought :

- i. What is the “nature” of my thoughts?
- ii. Where do these thoughts come from ?
- iii. How does thought affect me in terms of mood, emotion, action?
- iv. Have I tried to reconcile to another point of view?

- v. Does it disturb me to reconcile or accept another view point? Why?
- vi. What role does thinking play in my life?
- vii. Do I think before I speak / act?
- viii. Can I recall one elevating thought?

The next aspect of the mind, I am taking up is the function of Imagination – a function of the vital mind.

Imagination – definition

Sri Aurobindo says “ Imagination is a most important and indispensable instrument. It may be divided into three functions, the forming of mental images, the power of creating thoughts, images and imitations or new combinations of existing thoughts and images, the appreciation of the soul in things, beauty, charm, greatness, hidden suggestiveness, the emotion and spiritual life that pervades the world. This is in every way as important as the training of the faculties which observe and compare outward things.

The Mother defines imagination as “a power of formation a very powerful means of action it expressed in diverse ways. There are two kinds of imagination. One is the imagining power of geniuses, expressed through new truths, new systems, new teachings. Such expression often prepares the world for a new age. Also highly talented people express imagination in discoveries, arts, literature, music etc.

The other kind of imagination is at the ordinary level. The Mother says that “everyone has in him, in a greater or lesser measures, the power to give form to his mental activity and use this form either in his ordinary activity or to create and realise something. We are all the time, always, creating images, creating forms

In fact, I remember that as a young child I found it easier to imagine and play the role of an adult or another character that impressed me. Children also use their imagination to transport themselves to an unreal world full of fairies and godmothers and the adventures they have there, provide recreation and leisure to countless children and adults alike. In fact, most times, adults like to keep alive this “fantasy-world” of childhood – an escape hatch from the pressures of living?

On the other hand, vivid imagination of horrors and unreal fears can play havoc to the minds of children. Often, if uncontrolled, this habit of always imagining the worst, carries over to teenage years and then even to adulthood.

As a mother, I remember, I generally had the worst fears whenever my children got delayed coming home from school or play.

It is a sad fact, the role of imagination has not been studied and applied, much even in education. It is generally left to develop or die out by itself.

How imagination works:

The Mother says “ If one knows how to use it one one can create for oneself his own inner and outer life” when we imagine, we unknowingly send into the atmosphere a certain form. This form contains within itself” a small element of will which tries to realise itself” and the Mother says that the atmosphere is full of these formations sent by people. Since people imagine under all circumstance – in happiness, in despair, in disappointment, in hope etc. the atmosphere is full of good and bad formations. Secondly, these formations are realised in the course of times; within which often, the imagination of the person swings between “dark” and “light” formations. So that one day, one makes a magnificent formation and the next day a dark, black formation.

Both these formations enter into a conflict because of their inherent contradictions, and the one with the stronger will element is realised.

So, we must control our thoughts, for as the Mother says “imagination is like a knife which may be used for good or evil purposes” ultimately, the will to realization of our goals lies in our hands. It depends on us, whether we know this and how we use this knowledge.

Young children are basically very imaginative by nature. Therefore, if this faculty is allowed to grow and they are trained in the right direction at young age they are capable of achieving their dreams when they grow up.

I am concluding this part of the project with two games designed to develop imagination in young people.

First Game to develop Imagination, Creativity & Drama Training

- I. : Guillotine
- Materials : Pencil and paper
- Aims : Lead upto improvisation.
- Procedure : Partners decide on and write down six lines of conversation. Use this as script.
Now change the situation and repeat the same lines.
- a. As if crossing the Sahara Desert.
 - b. As if taking a man to the guillotine.
 - c. As if you were two newlyweds at breakfast.
 - d. Any situation of your own choosing.

II.

Second game : Who am I?

Materials : None

Aims : Improvisation; imagination

Procedure :

- a. Each person choose to become a famous character either from history, entertainment, literature, government, etc.
- b. Leader asks each person to sit separately and concentrate on.
 - The kind of personality the character has.
 - Their mannerisms.
 - The way they talk.
 - What they say.
- c. When everyone is ready they can stand up as the character they have chosen and move around to introduce themselves to each other.
- d. They can also hold conversations with on another making sure they retain all the characteristics of the famous person.

Reference : The Hierarchy of Minds – Sri Aurobindo and The Mother – pages 37, 38, 48 & 49.
Powers Within – As Dalal – pages 26 & 27.
The Awakening Ray – How to Think – Ameeta Mehra.
Gamesters Handbook – pages C83 & C

FLOWERING OF THE PHYSICAL SENSES

Abstract: The following is that aspect of vital education that deals with training the physical senses.

Definition of the Vital:

“The vital proper is the life-force acting in its own nature, impulses, emotions, feelings, desires etc. Whenever there is life, there is this vitality a necessary Force or Energy that must act, no matter what the result; the vital can be a good instrument, but a bad master. Its force must be controlled by the mind and mental will, otherwise there is disaster, the vital power is independent of reasoning and moral argument and while it would not be wise to kill or suppress it, because then it revolts frightfully, the vital must be trained and transformed to its true aspect.”

“The role of the vital in education cannot be emphasised enough. Unfortunately, education deals largely with the physical, mental and to an extent, the emotional development of children. Maybe that accounts for the chaos it is in at present because according Sri Aurobindo and the Mother “vital education is most important and most indispensable because it is in the vital that life power, energy, enthusiasm, effective dynamism *ex st.* The vital in fact is a vast kingdom in which forces act and react upon each other for good or evil. The organisation and training of this complex of forces is of utmost important for 2 reasons i.e. building of character and the training of the aesthetic being by educating the senses.”

“Ancient mystic knowledge says that man can develop not 5 but .7 or even 12 senses. To the general education of the senses is added the cultivation of discrimination and aesthetic sense, the capacity to choose the harmonious the beautiful, the pure so necessary for psychological and physical health. This helps us to replace all that is unrefined, vulgar or crude in our sensory perceptions to a nobility, generosity and refinement that is ultimately reflected in our behaviour and attitudes.”

There are 6 senses that minister to knowledge - sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste and mind. Barring the last, the former 5 look outward and gather the material of thought true physical nerves, eye, ear, nose, skin and palate. Two things needed of the senses are accuracy and sensitiveness.

Obstacles to Accuracy and sensitiveness

The obstacles to accuracy and sensitiveness can arise when there is a fault with nerve currents. A channel may be obstructed through a physical defect or injury in which case only a physician can help. The result however is an insufficient use sensitiveness of the senses. The other remedy,

when there is no defect or injury, is the Yogic process of nadi-shuddhi or nerve purification. All distortions arise due to actions in the nervous system which can be traced to emotional disturbance acting in the nerve channels. By nerve purification the system is quieted and a deliberate calmness is brought on the internal processes, preparing for purification of the mind. If the nerve channels are quite and clear, the only disturbance of information is through the sixth sense i.e. man as or mind. The disturb can be from above or below. As a sense organ the mind receives direct impressions from outside and from within. These impressions by themselves are correct, but in their report to the intellect they may either not reach the intellect, or reach it in so distorted as to make a false impression. The distortion on the impression received from eye, ear, nose, skin or palate may not be powerful. But in its effect on the direct impression of the mind it is extremely powerful and the chief source of error.

The full development of this sensitiveness of the mind is the Yogic discipline of Suksmadristi or subtle reception of images. This development of the 6th sense has been largely ignored in education.

The Second obstacle is that of the emotions themselves which warp the impression coming in. Love, hatred or any other emotion or desire can warp the impression. This can be removed by disciplining the emotion and purifying moral habits.

The Third obstacle is the interference of previous association ingrained in the citta or passive memory. We have a habitual way of looking at things and the conservative inertia in our nature makes us look at new experiences through the shape and semblance of those to which we are accustomed. Only more developed minds can receive a new impression without bias. This obstacle can also be rid by citta-suddhi or purification of mental and moral habits.

Citta Suddhi consist in bringing about passivity of the restless flood of thought-sensations rising with momentum from passive memory. This passivity liberates the intellect from old association and false impressions. It gives power to select only what is wanted and automatically brings about the habit of getting right impressions. Without citta suddhi the mind is a confusion of false judgement, false imagination, false memory false observation, false deduction.

The Fourth cause of the inefficiency of the senses is insufficient use. We do not observe sufficiently or with sufficient attention and closeness to sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. This tamasic inertia is due to inattention of the buddhi. The student must be accustomed to catch completely and correctly sensory impressions and distinguish and mark their nature and propensities as they actually are.

It is a fact that faculty of observation is very imperfectly developed in people. For e.g. twelve men recording something they saw two hours ago will vary from each other and from the actual occurrence. This can be set right by developing the power of observation and attention. Attention is the first condition of right memory and accuracy. To obtain attention, the object of attention

4. Does aroma influence your mood? List any 2 smells that you find pleasant.

5. What kind of music do you like? List your favourite themes.

6. Are you fond of spicy food? List your favourite dishes and say why you enjoy them.

You will notice that the mind and heart work in unison with sensory perceptions. And that which ‘appeals’ to the senses always arouses ‘pleasant’ feelings.

Let us now read a poem by Sri Aurobindo and watch how the vital affects our higher mental and emotional faculties through poetry.

The poem is, “A thing Seen”.

“She in her garden, near the high gray wall,
Sleeping; a silver-bodied birch-tree tall
That held its garments o’er her wide and green
Building a parapet of shade between,
Forbidding the amorous sun to look on her.
No fold of gracious raiment was astir.
The wind walked softly; silent moved a cloud
Listening; of all the tree no leaf was loud.
but guarded a divine expectant hush
Thrilled by the silence of a hidden thrush.”

1. Read the poem aloud. Listen -to -the sound of the words. Are they soft / harsh?

2. Now read the poem in your mind. What is the mood created by the poet?

3. Who do you think is the “She?”

4. Make a list of the different senses involved in the poem.
5. What do the colours - silver, gray, green mean to you?
6. Do you have an inner garden? Imagine and describe.
7. How can the sun be 'amorous'?

How does a cloud 'listen'?

How is a leaf " silent ' ?

8. What do you think is the "divine expectant hush"?
9. Can you identify the thrush?
10. Have you ever felt a 'thrilledsilence" :-' Recall.

Poetry just like music is an important medium for refining the senses. The reader or listener is forced to explore his inner, sensitive self through the ear, eye, touch, smell etc. To a large extent, he associates by memory a feeling and re-lives a particular sensation. Repeating "pleasant" sensations arouses in the mind of the child a liking for good reading and forms the habit of reading well and reading right.

The vital response to a piece of good poetry or music are always those of the higher vital. A sense of calm, relaxation, "feeling good" appreciation of what has been experienced and further, a possible application through one's attitudes. But for progress in developing healthy attitudes man has to exercise mental control over the vital and this needs a lot of self-discipline.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE VITAL

Abstract : I have tried to classify the vital according to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's Definition

“There are four parts of the vital being first, the mental vital which gives a mental expression by thought, speech or otherwise to the emotions desires, passions, sensations,..... the emotional vital which is the seat of various feeling, such as love, joy, sorrow, hatred and the rest; the central vital which is the seat of the stronger vital longings and reactions Last, the lower vital which is occupied with smaller desires and feelings, such as make the greater part of daily life e.g. food, desires and feelings.

Their respective seats are

- i. The region from throat to heart
- ii. The heart (it is a double centre belonging to emotion in front and the psychic behind)
- iii. From heart to navel
- iv. Below the navel

Their location is as follows :

I have taken up the study of the lower vital and the central vital in detail :-

I have deliberately left out the higher vital and the mental vital because I feel I need to study it in greater detail

The lower Vital

Location : The lower vital is located below the naval region in the human body. The Mother says, among the different sources of subsistence that the vital has, “the one most easily accessible to it comes from below, from the physical energies through the sensation,..... from the earth, from food, from all the sensations (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling). That is why, the kind of food we eat, the kind of place we eat it in, the kind of attitude we have while eating, is very important. There is a popular saying, “We are, what we eat” and this belief is so true when we see how certain people who are aggressive generally relish spicy and non vegetarian food.

Sri Aurobindo says that this part of nature “tends to be very obscure and is full of perversions lust, greed of all kinds, vanity, jealousy are its ordinary guests.....

The lower vital is further marked by a certain vanity and arrogance, disobedience and indiscipline, dissimulation and falsity of speech and a dangerous habit of constant self justification.

Observation : Having observed through my light Shadow exercise (journal) that most of the time, I seemed to function from the lower vital, brought a sense of embarrassment and shame. Was there no hope then? How could a weak willed person hope to improve upon her nature?

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo emphasise that as soon as one is conscious of the nature, the second step is to apply the will with a deep sincerity, towards change. There must be an “entire rejection “ of these movements very consciously.

The task of rejection is certainly not an easy one. For as soon as one became conscious of, say “anger”- it manifested doubly in the nature; and since the “will’ had not been strengthened, I fell victim to it time and again. So a simultaneous working on “will-power” is absolutely necessary for me.

Central Vital or Vital Proper - Role of Desire

The location of the central vital is from the heart to the navel.

The Central Vital is the seat of the vital energies and the driving force that gives the thoughts, ideas and desires, the force to express themselves and bring them to fruition. It is the seat of the stronger vital longings and reactions, e.g. ambition, pride, fear, love of fame, attractions and repulsion’s.

Observation:

I understood the central vital within myself, as the seat of desires. The Mother says, 1 When you have a desire, you are governed by the thing you desire, it takes possession of your mind and your life, and you become a slave” -in which case, I was a total slave. For, my day began and ended with desire.

I woke up desiring a “wonderful day” -meaning, that all work, all contacts, all effort would be meaningful and that there would be no mishaps or misery in the day. Every moment, I desired the next to be a happier one-right through till bedtime, when I desired a good night’s rest. So then, if desire was the thumb-rule, what were “needs?” Or wasn’t there a difference?

Difference between Desire and Need:

The Mother says, “The first way in which the vital meets life is through desire- and yet, there are necessities. But how to know... For that you must observe yourself very, very attentively, and if there is anything in you which produce something like a small intense vibration then you may be sure that there lies a desire.... To know if it is a need or a desire, you must look at yourself very closely and ask, “What will happen if I cannot get the thing?” Then if the immediate answer is, “Oh, it will be very bad,” you may be sure it is a matter of desire... .It is a question of

training- educating oneself. - - .one must acquire discernment and distinguish a desire from what it is not. - -.”

So I made a chart - which surprised me. The list for desires was lengthy and mainly meaningless; in fact, I realised that had they been fulfilled I would be in a trouble spot! And the items under the “needs” were so few that I saw how foolishly I used to complicate my life through ignorance. I must confess though, that I did not persevere sincerely enough to rule out desires completely. I still have them, though I am more discerning in yearning for their fulfillment.

The Mother says that the most effective way of conquering or overcoming desire, is not to run away or to suppress them, but “to cultivate, intellectualize, refine them, this is the surest means of curing.”

The darker side of desire is that “desire comes from Ignorance... it is something in the being which fancies it needs something else in order to be satisfied. And the proof that it is ignorance is that when one has satisfied it, one no longer is that when one has satisfied it, one no longer cares for it... right at its origin it is an obscure need for growth.. .the need to take is desire... we could say that the origin of desire is love. It is love in its most obscurest and most unconscious form. ..when one satisfies a desire it always leaves a kind of bitter taste somewhere.”

I thought over the “bitter - taste” and realised that one was never really happy or satisfied with fulfilling a desire. One just moved onto another desire. And this was the “bitter taste born of Ignorance”, because it smacked of transience and self-satisfaction. For e.g. the desire to buy an expensive garment, lent itself only to vanity- one never expressed true beauty through smart clothes. And yet, desires had become so inextricably woven into Life’s texture...

Difference between Will and Desire:

The Mother, was once asked, “what is the difference between willing and desiring?” Mother answered, “They are not at all the same thing. When you see that something ought to be done... your reason decides.. .then your will starts working and makes you do the things required... “For e.g.. I realise the need to avoid fatty foods, (the reason supplies the arguments for and against) and the will then makes me say “no” to all fatty foods e.g. chocolates.

“Desire is an impulse. It takes hold of you... You can put your will at the service of your desire, but desire is not will... Most people always put the little bit of will that at their disposal at the service of their desires.. - “ I observed that the desire to be happy, made me live life at any cost; truly, I used my will to satisfy my desires. If I desired a thing, I spent all my willpower in planning and organising my thoughts in the direction of gratification. But when I looked around me, I saw that that was the way that most of us lived our lives anyway... we had reduced our lives to the expression and satisfaction, of little desires mainly.

But when I became aware that, the ‘will is a force with a power of organisation and it can be put at the of any purpose whatever’ compared to random desire, transient and impulsive with no method in its madness, I worked at changing the nature of my desire. (Since I could *not* eradicate the habit of desiring, altogether). Earlier in my love for reading, I invested time, money and energy in all kinds of books. Now, I have channeled this desire towards reading those books which will help me grow more aware and responsive towards my work.

There is a delight in planning my work and carrying it out with detailed perfection because the ‘will’ has a definite objective- long-lasting and inwardly satisfying. And I have also discovered that when the “will” is thus used, it tends to create an enthusiasm in the vital, a sense of well-being, not found in the momentary pleasure and after-bitter taste of satisfied desire. So it is through a constant vigilance that I have been able to change the nature of some desires.

Sources of subsistence for Vital proper

While the Lower Vital subsists on lower ‘energies’ like food, sensations etc. Mother says, “The second is on its own plane , when it is sufficiently vast and receptive, by contact with the universal vital forces”...

Universal forces, according to Sri Aurobindo, mean all forces good or bad, favourable or hostile, of light and darkness that move in the cosmos. These cosmic forces act on everyone according to the person’s nature (therefore, it is so important to be vigilant about one’s nature) - and his will and consciousness. We know these forces by their result. For example, if (me is short tempered and has made no effort to control anger, then these vital forces increase the anger, hence no progress is made.

The Mother says that one must become conscious of these universal forces and then enter into contact with them. For example, “in the countryside, in the midst of nature, - you must commune with it, feel close to it sometimes certain movements, gestures, activities help to make contact..... some people make contact in sleep or relaxation another way to receive the universal forces is when you see something very beautiful

I have observed that when I listen to elevating music, read good poetry, watch a beautiful sunset or sunrise, observe children playing etc. there is an inner sense of freshness and calm which means drawing in of these forces at the second level.

Exercise on observing the Vital Proper

- i. Make a list of your desires – immediate ones.
- ii. How do you feel on fulfilling an ardent desire ?
- iii. How would you differentiate between a need and a desire?
- iv. How do your use will power to satisfy a desire?

The following chart is an attempt to know one's level of sustenance:-

| | People | Attitudes | Environment |
|---------------------------|--------|-----------|-------------|
| Things which influence me | | | |
| Things that 'repel' me. | | | |
| I "draw" energy from. | | | |

CHARACTER FORMATION

Abstract : the second and very important aspect of vital education is the formation of character. In this section, I have taken up the need, the methods, some obstacles and how to develop a few vital qualities.

The need for character formation:

Character is formed from the time the child becomes conscious of himself as a separate individual with a mind of its own. There is no end to the growth of one's character as one's whole life and every event in it, is a revealing of his nature.

It is a mistake to think that by the time one is an adolescent his character has been shaped more or less. Rather, this is the time when one is subject to so many conflicts both within and without, due to changes in the physical and emotional make up. A strong will power is needed at this time, besides the mental ability to discern between the right and wrong.

Higher education, with its pursuit of mental clarity, striving for excellence and an idealistic view of one's life, is therefore an ideal medium to bring about necessary changes and motivation to inner growth.

The role of the teacher cannot be stressed enough, as young people look up to the teacher as an ideal to be emulated. Besides the teacher the company of good books, meaningful recreation, parental influence and a healthy environment are some of the other shaping factors. Parents must never forget that their children are observing the adult world all the time and learning attitudes, behavioral patterns, mannerisms etc. from them. It pays to be alert and vigilant of one's own shortcomings and not play hypocrite or indulge, in double standards for the sake of setting an example to the children - they see through.

There are two prevalent misbeliefs – one, that the goal of life is to be happy and the Mother explains this misbelief as “a childish deformation of a very profound truth: it is that all existence is based upon the delight of being and without the delight of being there would be no life. But this delight of being, which is a quality of the Divine and therefore unconditioned, must not be confused with the pursuit of pleasure in life, for that largely depends on circumstances”. Now, the belief that one must be happy makes a person lie his life at any cost. This attitude brings about a lot of suffering and misery and internal conflict – often I have seen in my own life that I sometimes do not know where my “happiness” lies. I mistake it for the fulfillment of my desire and since desires change frequently, my pursuit and the methods to achieve my desires change

as frequently and often unethically too. Driven by the ego, one seeks its satisfaction and calls that happiness.

The second wrong notion is that one is born with a certain character and nothing can change it. Actually, what one refers to as “character” is perhaps fate or Karma. One is a puppet in its hands and its character is only the unfolding of destiny.

Sri Aurobindo & The Mother however say, that change in character “needs an almost complete mastery over the subconscious and a very rigorous disciplining of whatever comes up from the inconscient, which in ordinary natures is an expression of the consequences of atavism of the environment in which one is born”. But all is not lost, even though change of character is a Herculean task because by the time we become aware of our negative tendencies, they are firmly embedded in nature and require tremendous will power and perseverance to change. “The transformation of character has been realised in fact by means of a clear sighted discipline and a perseverance so obstinate that nothing, not even the most persistent failures can discourage it.”

Life gives everyone an ideal to follow and at the same time, circumstances and environment provide difficulties in the fulfilling of that ideal. A persons character is formed by the “caprices of nature and the determinism of material and vital life” – so a logical and clear sighted discipline must be imposed on nature by a conscious will, and this conscious will is rational education.

Sri Aurobindo & the Mother feel that education of the vital must begin therefore in early childhood, as soon as he is able to use his senses, because then bad habits will be avoided and harmful influences eliminated.

The method of character transformation:

The starting point is a “detailed and discerning observation” of the character. This is a very confusing task, but we must be aware that every person has two opposing tendencies of character in large measures – which are like the light and shadow of the same thing. So, if a person is stingy or miserly, he also has the capacity for generosity and charitable deeds. Again, if sometimes one is afraid and cowardly, there are other times one when is brave and fearless. Therefore, one must not get discouraged with the darker aspects but try always to overcome them by constant vigilance and effort.

It helps the child to learn how to observe himself, “to note his reactions and impulses and their causes, to become a clear-sighted witness of his desires, his movements of violence and passion, his instincts of possession” – vanity, depression, despair, discouragement etc. The process will be helpful if one can develop the will to surmount and conquer. The will can be developed like the muscles and the best way is to test it over small victories at first. For e.g. if I am given to sleeping late, I can determine and wake up early with the will being further motivated by an

activity of interest, like a game of tennis before beginning my day. “You must not shrink from demanding of your will the maximum effortfor it is by effort that capacity grows and in the end you will have nothing more to do than to choose with a clear vision the goal to which you will apply it.”

There is yet another method that needs to be cultivated and this is the “feeling of uneasiness, of a moral in balance which he feels when he has done certain things, not because he has been told not to do them, not because he fears punishment, but spontaneously.” For e.g. when a child hurts his friend he will be uneasy within because he has gone against an inner truth – a feeling of perfection, greatness etc.

It is on this “inner uneasy” feeling (that must never be explained away or justified) that later effort for progress must be founded.

To give a moral law to a child is not an ideal thing – for he often sees that all around him, very few follow this law themselves. But as the child grows up, the relativity of moral and social laws can be taught, so that he may find in himself a higher moral and social law.

Another exercise is to control the mind from judging things and people. On the contrary one must learn to view things from many different view points and find a reasonable conclusion one of good will.

At times, when there are too many disturbing, contradictory or confusing thoughts, the child must be taught the exercise of being able to quieten and still the mind, so that the inner voice of Truth may be heard. This will prevent much confusion, lack of ideas, inertia and even disruptive behaviour.

The role of physical education in developing character cannot be undermined not only regarding fitness of the body, but in larger sense the contribution it makes for intellectual, moral and spiritual upliftment of character – like sporting spirit, comradeship, tolerance and consideration for all a respect for rules, self control habit of team work, custom of discipline etc.

At higher levels of education, a critical study of values, ethical ideals and a wide spectrum of ideas could be used for exploration and experimentation.

Art and Beauty as also the balance of human life and nature, could become valuable topics for development of character.

Obstacles to Character development:

Apart from the wrong beliefs discussed earlier, other obstacles to character development are, lack of knowledge on the matter. Mostly, people are left to “develop” on their own, with little

help from school or parents. Certain abilities like music, painting etc. may be helpfully pursued but the larger part of character formation is generally untouched.

Secondly, for young people, elders in the family and teachers at school are examples to follow. And many a time, children get disillusioned by the double standards. They witness, or blindly imitate their elders – developing bad habits, like smoking, partying late, deceitful behaviour etc. They also get pressurised by peer group habits and give in to undesirable attitudes and tendencies.

The environment, - social, economic, political, religious beliefs further affect impressionable minds often with bad results.

Besides outside influences, the child’s inner world is barely looked into. His dreams, ideals, his worries, fear, anxiety, despair, problems, are “dealt with” if they manifest to disturb the family or school life. But there is lack of direction and guidance in the matter. School counsellors or child psychologists cannot help the child to grow; they try to “mend the wrongs” in superficial and temporary ways.

Developing Vital Qualities:

I have developed an exercise in some vital qualities that children / adults can work upon as a reminder and an appendix to the self-reflective journal.

| Qualities to be developed | Where do I see these? | Why do I find it appealing? | How can I develop these? | My Role Models |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Courage | Telling the truth | Makes me feel good inside | By not running away from difficulty, fears. | Mahatma Gandhi |
| Honesty | | | | |
| Cleanliness | | | | |
| Enthusiasm | | | | |
| Good Humor | | | | |

Such worksheets can be done for self appraisal or collectively in a class, as a daily reminder. Topics can vary and also the nature of the exercise can change and develop with the help of the children themselves.

Exercise

The reader is now invited to go through the following worksheet and reflect on it.

- i. My character is formed by
- ii. My weaknesses are
- iii. These “dark areas” of myself can be counter acted by the following “light” ones
- iv. Happiness for me, is
- v. I love reading / music / dancing / painting etc. because
- vi. My role model is because
- vii. I can develop my “strengths” by
- viii. Can I make others happy? How?
- ix. Self-observation helps me to
- x. I will not indulge in because
- xi. Have I ever felt uneasy about anything ?
- xii. How did I overcome the feeling?

CONCLUSION

This work on vital education has been a great learning experience for me for two reasons.

At the personal level, I have been able to accept the fact, that a lot needs to be done in my own process of education. Along with the learning, a whole range of qualities like sincerity, perseverance, strong will power, cheerfulness etc. have to be developed.

At the work level, since I am a school teacher, I have started to become aware of a great responsibility towards my students and my work.

Even though, there is no formal curriculum for vital education, it can always be introduced and worked upon indirectly, through group discussions, debates, talk series and through my own subject. The Mother has said, that a teacher must teach through example. That is my motto now – to strive to better myself daily.

The above work is not a complete study of the vital. I have deliberately left out the topic of the Higher and True vital, I need to understand both these aspects myself, before I can take up working on them. They deal with the deeper and more profound aspects of the vital – the deep inner transformation leading to psychic realisation.

My area of work will be the vital proper of which I have a small understanding now.

For this, I am thankful to my course guide – Ameeta Mehra and to the fact that she encouraged and guided me all along, specially when the going was tough.

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