



WIDENING THE CONSCIOUSNESS



INTRODUCTION

Are you conscious? How do you know? What does being conscious mean? Is it our thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams or is it the hidden voice of our being? Or is it our inner identity of who am I and why I am here? What are the constituent parts of being conscious? Many questions form in my mind whenever I come across the word 'Consciousness'. And always there has been some curiosity to know more about it and to widen my understanding of it. It is my quest to know and become a conscious being that prompted me to find the answers and understand the true meaning of consciousness.

According to Sri Aurobindo, "There are always two different consciousnesses in the human being, one outward in which he ordinarily lives, the other inward and concealed of which he knows nothing."¹

What is meant by outward and inward consciousness? To understand it I began the journey by observing the external movements of our being and its relation with the surroundings, to know the kind of consciousness we carry in our day-to-day life. I figured out that generally, in ordinary life our consciousness is always externalized and we look at things and happenings from the outer surface, having less knowledge of the problems. We give more priority to the outer needs, the vital's endless desires and ambitions, and we become more conscious towards achieving those. At

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the end we can see and feel only the results on the surface level and nothing more. However, while fulfilling all the outer desires, we often ignore the inner needs and inner voice of our being, which has its own role to play and wants to grow in a true consciousness. This lack of awareness and ignorance towards oneself creates a hurdle for one's own growth. It does not lead us further and one becomes used to living an unconscious life. Gradually, we observe that some part of our being has been covered with a dark cloud, which is not letting us grow. There comes the need to step back from one's own routine of life and identify oneself in order to get a better understanding of a certain problem or situation that one is facing. When one begins to observe this consciously, one immediately becomes more aware of the gaps in one's being. At times we face a crisis, problem or a difficult situation and we don't know how to address it due to our lack of experience, understanding or knowledge. Therefore, most of the time we make our decisions based on a narrow and material plane. We are constantly living with anxiety, fear, depression and seek answers without knowing who will be the right guide.

In Sri Aurobindo's words, "The ordinary man lives in his own personal consciousness knowing things through his mind and senses as they are touched by a world which is outside him, outside his consciousness. When the consciousness subtilises, it begins to come into contact with things in a much more direct way, not only with their forms and outer impacts but with what is inside them, but still the range may be small. But the consciousness can also widen and begin to be first in direct contact with a universe of range of things in the world, then to contain them as it were,—as it is said to see the world in oneself,—and to be in a way identified with it. To see all things in the self and the self in all things—to be aware of one being everywhere, aware directly of the different planes, their forces, their beings—that is universalisation."²

Why I chose this theme

I started the Foundation Course for Facilitators with a dream that at the end of this one year, I would be able to knock out the obstacles that come in my way. Therefore, with every session, each assignment and the self-reflective journal, I have taken it as an opportunity to learn and grow. All of these exercises have helped me to come in touch with myself and to identify the needs that have been ignored. But, every time I would always feel a kind of gap within. Often I came across the same bothering sensations, feelings and thoughts. For that reason, I wanted to deepen myself, so that I could be in touch with the gap in my being, and that was only possible through widening my inner consciousness. The theme "Widening the Consciousness" came from these reflections. I have a feeling that this topic will help me and others to identify their weaknesses by growing in their inner consciousness.

I gathered myself and tried to focus on the area where I saw a gap in my growth. I noticed due to my lack of awareness towards myself, often my negative emotions frequently came forward and pulled me down. The reasons and the sources for these emotions are:

- **Anger:** Generally anger occurs in me when my expectations are not met even after I have made it clear to the other person or when suddenly something arrives that I am not prepared for. Though this happens for a few minutes and after that my anger subsides, due to this immediate reaction a kind of disharmony is created in my surroundings.
- **Fear, Depression and Nervousness:** These kinds of feelings mostly come when I want to achieve something or I have set-up a high expectation for myself. This is the area I have been struggling in for many years – I can say, from my childhood. The main reason I can recall is that my parents had high expectations from me and to fulfill



their dreams, my innocent nature and undeveloped mind lead me towards feeling these emotions. During the initial days I was completely ignorant and did not give much importance to them or to find out some solutions to control such sensations thinking that, “everyone goes through this kind of emotional phase.” But now, I am aware of all these negative emotions and their impacts which are deep rooted within me. I can also see them becoming an obstacle in my growth, but do not know how to go about controlling them. Often I try to accept my limitation and move accordingly to achieve my goals, but my ego and the attachment with the result do not allow me to go ahead.

After going through all the vital and mental difficulties and identifying their root cause, I felt that it was good to have self-understanding but this self-understanding must lead towards self-mastery. As the Mother explains in her phrase, *To know oneself and control oneself*. In her further explanations the Mother says: “This means to be conscious of one’s inner truth, conscious of the different parts of one’s being and their respective functions. You must know why you do this, why you do that; you must know your thoughts, know your feelings, all your activities, all your movements, of what you are capable, etc. And to know oneself is not enough: this knowledge must bring a conscious control. To know oneself perfectly is to control oneself perfectly.”³

WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?

“...In us consciousness is Mind, and our mind is ignorant and imperfect, an intermediate power that has grown and is still growing towards something beyond itself.”⁴

In ordinary language when we think about the word ‘Consciousness’ the answer that comes to us is to be aware of things or of oneself and others. This awareness can be for anything. It is dependent on the mental, the emotional and the physical. Generally, we experience the awareness during our working hours. However even though we are awake, we are not always conscious. For example, we often notice things, surroundings or people very vaguely. We cannot remember little details like the colour of a friend’s dress, the kind of facial expression she has, etc. and often we say ‘oh I did not notice it.’ So to be “conscious” also means to be alert and have a very sharp memory.

According to Norman Lewis, *Word Power Made Easy*, ‘Con’ means ‘with, together’ and ‘scio’ derived from Latin, ‘is knowledge or awareness of one’s emotions or sensations,’ or ‘of what’s happening around.’⁵

As the Mother says, “Consciousness is the faculty of becoming aware of anything whatsoever through identification with it.”⁶ For example, when we get angry we say, “I am angry” and we identify ourselves with the emotion of anger. But this identification through the vibration of anger is just ordinary identification, which will lead us to the ignorance (unconsciousness) and not to the knowledge of knowing the root cause or the true nature of the anger. So our consciousness loses itself in anger, is unable to exercise and control it, therefore we suffer the consequences. In other words we can say that, though I am conscious of being angry, I am unconscious of anger’s true nature and allow myself to ‘suffer’ the results.

According to Sri Aurobindo, Consciousness is made up of two elements and both these elements are equally important for being in the true consciousness.



1. Awareness of self and things and forces
2. Conscious-power

In his further explanations, Sri Aurobindo says, “Awareness is the first thing necessary, you have to be aware of things in the right consciousness, in the right way, seeing them in their truth; but awareness by itself is not enough. There must be a Will and a Force that make the consciousness effective. Somebody may have the full consciousness of what has to be changed, what has to go and what has to come in its place, but may be helpless to make the change. Another may have the will-force, but for want of a right awareness may be unable to apply it in the right way at the right place. The advantage of being in the true consciousness is that you have the right awareness and its will being in harmony with the Mother’s will, you can call in the Mother’s Force to make the change.”⁷

According to Sri Aurobindo what is consciousness and what is not -

- 1) “Consciousness is a reality inherent in existence. It is there even when it is not active on the surface, but silent and immobile; it is there even when it is invisible on the surface, not reacting on outward things or sensible to them, but withdrawn and either active or inactive within; it is there even when it seems to us to be quite absent and the being to our view unconscious and inanimate.”⁸
- 2) “Consciousness is usually identified with mind, but mental consciousness is only the human range which no more exhausts all the possible ranges of consciousness than human sight exhausts all the gradations of colour or human hearing all the gradations of sound – for there is much above or below that is to man invisible and inaudible. So there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human range, with which the normal human has no contact and they seem to it unconscious, - supramental or overmental and submental ranges.”⁹
- 3) “Consciousness is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has also a dynamic and creative energy. It can determine its own reactions or abstain from reactions; it can not only answer to forces, but create or put out from itself forces. Consciousness is Chit but also Chit Shakti.”¹⁰

In our everyday life we experience the ‘Chit Shakti’ through our creative ideas in work. Not only through ideation but also through the hard effort and will-power we put into a work or an idea, we manifest ‘Chit Shakti.’

How does Consciousness act in me?

Points for reflection...

1. Reflect on your day and write down where your consciousness lies most of the time.
2. Why does it lie there?
3. How are you going to release your consciousness from being fixed at a particular point?
4. What helps you in this process?

NEED TO BECOME CONSCIOUS OF ONESELF

According to Sri Aurobindo, “Consciousness is a reality inherent in existence.”¹¹ When I read this quotation many questions formed in my mind: if the consciousness already exists in ourselves then why do we need to become conscious? why can’t we act, behave and work without making



mistakes? why most of the time we act unconsciously? why do we need to widen the consciousness? And to understand it, I referred to the writings of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo and came up with the following understanding of becoming conscious of oneself.

As we know, according to one's own nature each individual has his own way of thinking, feeling and understanding. If the person is very narrow and limited within his world, his consciousness and the understanding capacity also will be small. And a small consciousness can lead to understand only a few things compared to a larger consciousness. As the Mother says, "All depends upon the height of the nature of your consciousness."¹²

Often we come across people whose consciousness is very rigid and limited to their ego and that is why they understand only those things which are in direct contact with their senses such as – what they can see, can hear, can feel and touch and also they follow their mind and listen only to what it tells them. These types of people also have a small consciousness.

In Mother's words, "if you have a very small consciousness, you will understand only a few things. When your consciousness is very vast, universal, only then will you understand the world. If the consciousness is limited to your little ego, all the rest will escape you... The more unconscious one is, the more one is sure of oneself. The most foolish are always the most vain. Your stupidity is in proportion to your vanity. ... There is not a moment in the world which does not bring something new, for the world is perpetually growing."¹³

So it means a conscious individual would make a large difference to his own life, in terms of thinking, feelings, acting and consequently to society at large. To be a conscious being is both an individual and a larger aim.

When we observe ourselves generally we see our little ego refuses to let go of its old habits and beliefs and shows resistance towards accepting new ways or perceptions. There comes a need to understand the meaning of true consciousness and the importance of becoming a true conscious being.

According to the Mother, "...once you are conscious, it means that you know the right from the wrong, the true from the false, the divine from the undivine, you are to act strictly up to your knowledge; that is to say, resolutely reject one and accept the other. The duality will present itself at every step and at every step you will have to make your choice. You will have to be patient and persistent and vigilant..."¹⁴

If we take the life as it is ... we see that most of our life we lead unconsciously. We are not aware of why we are born, and what we are doing. Most of the time, we spend in reacting to situations, not knowing, why we behave in a particular way. We are ignorant about things, about ourselves. When one leads this kind of life – unconsciously, ignorantly, away from one's own truth it is then that one opens one's door to all kinds of unwanted forces allowing them to rule over oneself. These forces are by nature undivine, and therefore by letting them in one actually opens one's door to suffering and miseries. So if one wants to avoid this kind of life then it is important to lead a conscious life – knowing oneself in all the parts of one's being. It is only when one is conscious that one learns and acquires the knowledge of what is right and what is not; one also learns to discriminate between divine and undivine movements.

How Conscious Am I?

Points for reflection...

- 1) Reflect on your day and write down your observation on the following questions:
 - How much of the day I spent mechanically doing things?



- How much of the day I spent day dreaming and sitting idle?
- How much of the day I spent consciously to achieve my target?

THE HURDLES IN WIDENING ONE'S CONSCIOUSNESS

In our ordinary life we easily get influenced by all kinds of unwanted and disturbing movements of the vital and the mental, such as – anger, fear, depression, nervousness, attachment, useless talk or gossip, mental rigidity, etc. And if we look at them carefully we see the key source of all these movements is our personal ego, which holds us tightly, as The Mother says, “as a well-made rope knot.”¹⁵ As a result rather than helping us to progress truly, it produces chaos in one’s life. Often it leads us to suffer through the consequences with the help of all these lower sensations. Generally we see such kind of sensations pull us down and we fall into the pit of unconsciousness. To regain the positive energy we require a lot of perseverance, will, sincerity and aspiration to refine our nature.

When I look at myself I find that I am a very choosy, mildly short-tempered person with a strong will power and urge for progress. Quite often I see myself being very sensitive towards others’ feelings and trusting them quickly – that is the reason I easily get hurt when anyone misuses my feelings. Generally, I create a boundary around myself and feel at ease living within that boundary. Therefore, whenever I see any change in my daily routine I panic and get irritated. Often I get depressed and nervous when I have to face any challenge (whether it is emotional, mental or physical). Due to my own high expectations often I experience the fear of failure that leads me towards these feelings of anger, nervousness and depression. My ego and attachment to the result always come forth and give rise to these emotions. These are the main hurdles for my progress. So I thought that it will be a golden opportunity to work on these hurdles. While working on this subject (Widening the Consciousness) I felt a need to reflect on each one separately and identify the root cause of it. I wanted to utilise this opportunity to overcome my weakness and bring a shift in my personality.

- 1) Anger
- 2) Fear
- 3) Depression

ANGER

Anger as a negative emotion is visible in human beings. If it is not under control, it can destroy all our happiness and joy of life. Generally we think that anger is a hidden force of our being and whenever something or other happens it erupts like a volcano, but it is not true. Anger is not within ourselves, it is a universal force to which we open ourselves. It generally comes from outside, as Sri Aurobindo says, “...from the universal lower Nature...”¹⁶

From my readings from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, I understood the following:

- 1) Anger is one of the disturbances of the Lower Vital part of the human being.
- 2) It is a hindrance or an obstacle in one’s growth.
- 3) The root cause of getting angry is – attachment, resentment, desire, expectation, insecurity, impatience, etc.
- 4) According to the Mother, “Anger is a violent reaction of the Vital to some shock that is unpleasant to it; and when it involves words or thoughts, the mind responds to the interference of the Vital and also reacts violently. Any expression of anger is the sign of a lack of self control.”¹⁷



- 5) One can cure anger by:
- * Sincere will and aspiration
 - * Developing Faith in oneself and the Divine
 - * Building positivity
 - * Self reflection and Self purification
 - * Stepping back
 - * Meditation

My own reflection

What is Anger? How does it originate? What leads to anger? How can one avoid or overcome Anger? There were even more questions to reflect upon. I started my journey to get the answers of all these questions. While doing my search on anger I came across a passage by Sri Aurobindo saying,

“I think you have always had an idea that to give expression to an impulse or a movement is the best way or even the only way to get rid of it. But that is a mistaken idea. 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.”¹⁸

I felt that it was showing me a mirror to reflect upon myself, because I too had the notion, that one can fulfill one’s desire by the power of being angry. Initially for me it was very natural to think like that, because growing in a Rajput family I would often observe my elders or people around me using this aid to get their work done or fulfill their wishes. And sooner or later the need arrived to identify the cause of being angry. I observed that generally anger occurs in me when my expectations are not met even after I have made it clear to the other person or when suddenly something arrives that I am not prepared for. I remember when I was young I would express my anger by being verbal like – shouting, screaming, using nasty or harsh speech, blaming others, etc. Though the anger would remain for a few seconds, I would express my feelings by being verbal. Then the time came when I had to stay with my younger sister in a hostel. To keep a good image among my friends, whenever I got upset with my sister and others, I started suppressing my feelings rather than expressing them. As a result I started observing myself developing a sense of being helpless, feeling bitterness about the person with whom I was upset. Day-after-day I observed this change in my nature. I started becoming more harsh and rude towards others as well as my sister. I acknowledge that at each moment my anger would remain just for a few minutes and after that I came to a normal position. But those few minutes of anger and immediate reactions created a kind of disharmony in my surroundings and relationships.

As I was busy looking for ways to overcome my anger, I came across the story of the Mother asking a boy, “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?”¹⁹ I found it was really difficult to keep one’s fist in the pocket, yet to bring harmony within and in my relationships was more important for me. Now I have come a long way in not getting angry and developing self-control. The steps that I have been practising are the following:

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SELF-CONTROL

A TRUE STORY

In a town in the north of France I once knew a boy who was frank by nature but impetuous and always liable to lose his temper. I said to him one day: 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 it 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 after a moment’s hesitation.

“Well then, try to do it the next time you get an opportunity.”



Some time later, the young boy came to tell me, not without legitimate pride, that he had been able to do “the more difficult thing”. He said:

“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.”

- *The Mother*
Tales of All Times

***Application for oneself***

1. I remind myself that the anger is not coming from within but from outside.
2. I refuse to give any form to my anger in speech or action and move away from the situation till I feel more composed.
3. I try to step within and feel the peace within and also call the peace.
4. I detach from the person or situation to feel calmer.
5. I act and speak only when I am in a peaceful mood.
6. Whenever I am in an angry state, I offer my negative feelings to the Mother.

Understanding one's own Anger ²⁰*Points for reflection...*

1. What is anger and where does it come from?
2. Why do you get angry – What are the kinds of things which make you angry?
3. To what extent do you identify with anger? At what stage do you become aware of it? How deep rooted is anger in you?
4. What is your first reaction when you are in an angry mood?
5. Try to identify the root cause of being angry.
6. Go deep within and try to identify, which part of your being is most affected by getting angry.
7. What are its effects?
8. How do you overcome anger?
9. Now take a recent situation. Re-play it. Analyse it based on your readings. How could you have acted differently?

FEAR

There are a number of fears.

Some fears of losing fame, some for game

Some fear rejections, for someone is breaking a relation

Fear of being let down, fear of losing the crown

Fear of death and fear of losing faith

Fear of shaping future

And so on, the list is endless. We fear for every little thing when we see ourselves not being able to confront the situations. It brings a kind of anxiety in our being which pulls us down and leads us towards unconsciousness. Therefore, it is very important to know, what it is. Where has it come from? How does it affect us in different parts of our being?

What is Fear?

From my readings from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, I understood the following:

- 1) According to the Mother, fear is "...a phenomenon of unconsciousness. It is a kind of anguish that comes from ignorance. One does not know the nature of certain things, does not know its effect or what will happen, does not know the consequences of one's acts, one does not know so many things; and this ignorance brings fear."²¹
- 2) Fear is the greatest obstacle for one's progress.
- 3) Fear often opens the door of unhappiness and weakens the strength.
- 4) Fear has the tendency to attract the object of fear.
- 5) Fear can be experienced in different parts of our beings such as – mental, vital and physical.



- 6) Fear can be cured by:
- * Increasing Faith in the Divine
 - * Establishing peace in the mind
 - * Beings courageous towards fear and facing it boldly

Difference between mental, vital and physical fear

Fear can be experienced in different parts of our being such as – mental, vital and physical. The difference can be identified only as the Mother says, “If you are conscious of the movement of your mind, the movement of your vital and the movement of your physical, you know it.”²²

Mental fear: It is generated by our thoughts. We notice ourselves when we get caught up by any thoughts and our mind begins to tremble just thinking about those particular things. Gradually it leads us towards a feeling of anxiety. For example, you have to go for an interview tomorrow and you have to be there at a specific time. You start thinking that, “Oh, there is only one bus which follows that route, what time in the morning should I wake up to catch this bus, what will happen if I reach late, will they allow me to face the interview, what should I do to be on time?” and so on.

Vital Fear: The vital fear is that which one can feel through one’s sensations. One can experience it through different sensations like – you may feel hot, cold, and sweaty or you may feel your heart beating fast or suddenly you have fever.

Physical Fear: In an absence of the mental and the vital fear one can come in touch with the physical fear. Generally these two are more apparent and they hide the physical fear from us. But when they are not present at that moment one can be aware of one’s physical fear. The physical fear can be experienced, as the Mother says, “it is a curious little vibration that gets into your cells and they begin shivering that way. But the cells are not like a heart beating very fast. ...they tremble with just a slight quivering.”²³ Though it is very difficult to control, it can be controlled.

My own reflection

It will be wrong for me to say that I am a fearless person. Through my self-reflection and observation of different situations I realised that I often associate myself with fear. I have been always concerned about the perfection of my work. I wanted that whenever I do something it should be as perfect as I want. There comes in my fear of making a mistake, which makes me feel very constrained in action. Often I acknowledge that one cannot achieve anything being in a fearful state. And the fear which I associate with is mostly based on the mental. I have written down a few words of reflection about the objects, the sensations and the thoughts which make me associate with fear and the remedy which brings me back to feeling fearless.

Am I Frightened?

I’m not frightened with the darkness of the night

The lightening and the thunder

I’m not frightened of jumping from a height or from the sky

I’m not frightened whether I’ll live longer or shorter

I’m not frightened whether I’ll be happy or sad in my life



But, at times I do feel frightened...
When I'm not doing justice to my work
When I have to face sudden situations, problems and incidents
When I feel myself completely blank and disorganized

I do feel frightened...
When I become narrow and rigid in thoughts and expression
And when I see my shaky faith in the Divine

The Key to progress in this Path is to...
Widen my understanding and myself
Breaking my narrow and rigid behaviour
And develop an un-shaken faith in the Divine

Application for oneself

1. Aspiring and offering to the Mother to help me whenever I am in the state of fear.
2. Quieting the mind and calling peace.

Understanding one's fears

Points for reflection...

- 1) "Take fifteen minutes to come into touch with the fears that you face and then try to define and understand what fear is..... through the following questionnaire.
 - What is fear? Meditate and express in your own words your understanding.
 - What is your greatest fear which stops you to progress?
 - How do you deal with it?
- 2) We all have different kinds of fears, and perhaps we adopt different ways to overcome them. This worksheet will help you identify yours.
 - Make a list of your fears at the Physical level. How do you deal with these?
 - List out your fears at the Vital level. How do you deal with these?
 - List out your Mental fears. How do you deal with these?"²⁴

DEPRESSION

"Depression" is a word that has turned out to be more famous and familiar in most teenagers and adults. It has become so common that often one can hear that "so and so is becoming depressed" or "I am depressed", and so on. But, does one really try to understand the source of being depressed? And which part of the being is involved in it? How does one feel? What kind of thoughts generally appear? How to cure it?

What is Depression?

From my readings from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, I understood the following:

- 1) According to the Mother, "Depression occurs generally in the vital, and one is overpowered by depression only when one keeps the consciousness in the vital, when one remains there. The only thing to do is to get out of the vital and enter a deeper consciousness."²⁵
- 2) Depression is a sign of weakness.
- 3) Depression is always unreasonable and it leads us nowhere.
- 4) There are two known causes for depression:



- * Considerable nervous fatigue in the body
- * The want of vital satisfaction

- 1) **Considerable nervous fatigue in the body:** Depression arising from physical fatigue can be easily curable. One needs to take proper rest by lying down on the bed and this will help one to feel well again.
- 2) **The want of vital satisfaction:** According to the Mother, “The want of vital satisfaction is pretty easily produced and usually one must face it with one’s reason, must ferret out the cause of the depression, what has brought about the lack of satisfaction in the vital; and then one looks at it straight in the face and asks oneself whether that indeed has anything to do with one’s inner aspiration or whether it is simply quite an ordinary movement. Generally one discovers that it has nothing to do with the inner aspiration and one can quite easily overcome it and resume one’s normal movement. If that does not suffice, then one must go deeper and deeper until one touches the psychic reality.”²⁶

My own reflection

I recalled my past experiences when I went through depression. I tried to go deeper and identify the cause of my being depressed and its impact on my physical, emotional and mental being. I found out that there were two reasons for becoming depressed within myself. Firstly, I had been very ambitious towards my work and was always keeping a high expectation for myself. And secondly, like others, at times I was lacking attention or praise. Often I have been overpowered by the first reason. When I see myself not achieving the outcomes according to my own expectation it gradually takes me towards a sense of being a failure. This sense of being a failure leads me towards fear, nervousness and depression. Being in a state of depression I often experience the following sensations and thoughts within me:

A deep sorrow, a searing distrust,
An intense pain, which often burst
Sense of hatred, pulls me down
Looks for reason but is not found
Sulking within, and lost happiness
Smart depression shows my weakness

Application for oneself

1. I detach myself from the disturbing thoughts.
2. I read something beautiful and interesting to turn my attention away from myself.
3. I go for an outing or observe something beautiful which can lift my feelings.
4. I always try to identify the reason for my depression.

Understanding one’s depression

Points for reflection...

- 1) Take your own time and list out those incidents which often lead you to depression. Try to identify the reasons why.
- 2) Take up each one separately and go deep within and see which part of your being was the one affected. Where did the depression come from? Was it the mental part or vital or mental vital and physical vital? Write down the feelings you came across.



- 3) How long did you take to come out of your depression and what did you do to help yourself to come out of it?

To be able to widen the consciousness, thus it is important to consciously work upon all one's shortcomings, weaknesses and limitations – for only when one purifies oneself in all one's parts then only it becomes possible to experience the oneness and the feeling of wideness within.

WIDENING THE CONSCIOUSNESS

Often we observe ourselves that whenever there are problems or difficult situations we begin to shrink and sulk. And generally, such situations pull us down, not letting us feel free. At times we become very narrow and rigid and do not allow ourselves to open to the conclusion. There comes the need to widen oneself to overcome the problems or situations. Here I have mentioned a few practical ways to widen one's consciousness by the Mother. One can make use of all or a combination of some in order to widen oneself in different situations.

- 1) Conflict resolution
- 2) Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis
- 3) Identification with something wide
- 4) Overcoming Getting hurt

Conflict resolution

By widening one's consciousness the problems we face in our daily lives can be overcome. It is a means to overcome a number of difficulties. In fact, the Mother says, "Whenever there is a disagreement on any matter, such as a decision to take, or an act to accomplish, one must not stick to one's own conception or point of view. On the contrary, one must try to understand the other's point of view, put oneself in his place and, instead of quarrelling or even fighting, find out a solution which can reasonably satisfy both parties; there is always one for men of goodwill."²⁷

Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis

"...there is an exercise which gives great suppleness and elevation to the thought. It is as follows: a clearly formulated thesis is set, against it is opposed its antithesis, formulated with the same precision. Then by careful reflection, the problem must be widened until a synthesis is found which unites the two contraries in a larger and higher idea."²⁸

Identification with something wide

"The easiest way is to identify yourself with something vast. For instance, when you feel that you are shut up in a completely narrow and limited thought, will, consciousness, when you feel as though you were in a shell, then if you begin thinking about something very vast, as for example, the immensity of the waters of an ocean, and if really you can think of this ocean and how it stretches out far, far, far, far, in all directions, like this (Mother stretches out her arms), how, compared with you, it is so far, so far that you cannot see the other shore, you cannot reach its end anywhere, neither behind or in front nor to the right or left... it is wide, wide, wide, wide... you think of this and then you feel that you are floating on this sea, like that, and that there are no limits... this is very easy. Then you can widen your consciousness a little.



Other people, for example, begin looking at the sky; and then they imagine all those spaces between all those stars, and all... that kind of infinity of spaces in which the earth is a tiny point, and you too are just a very tiny point, smaller than an ant, on the earth. And so you look at the sky and feel that you are floating in these infinite spaces between the planets, and that you are growing vaster and vaster to go farther. Some people succeed with this”²⁹

Overcoming Getting hurt

“There is a way also by trying to identify yourself with all things upon earth. For example, when you have a small narrow vision of something and are hurt by others’ vision and point of view, you must begin by shifting your consciousness, try to put it in others, and try gradually to identify yourself with all the different ways of thinking of all others. This is a little more... how shall I put it? ...dangerous. Because to identify oneself with the thought and will of others means to identify oneself with a heap of stupidities (*Mother laughs*) and bad wills, and this may bring consequences which are not very good. But still, some people do this more easily. For instance, when they are in disagreement with someone, in order to widen their consciousness they try to put themselves in the place of the other and see the thing not from their own point of view but from the point of the view of the other. This widens the consciousness, though not as much as by the first ways I spoke about, which are quite innocent. They don’t do you any harm, they do you much good. They make you very peaceful.”³⁰

Question to reflect upon

Points for reflection...

- 1) Take an idea you strongly believe in. State your points. Now state the opposite idea. Write reasons to support both the ideas. Now raise yourself up and try to find the truth in both the ideas. Synthesise both and state the new synthesised idea.

After a point, with the expansion of one’s consciousness one also experiences the pressing need to deepen oneself. This deepening happens only when one consciously focuses on going within – on identifying oneself with one’s deeper realities. With an intense aspiration and concentrated will one is sure to grow inwards in one’s consciousness.

GROWING IN THE INNER CONSCIOUSNESS

“The inner law, the truth of the being is the divine Presence in every human being, which should be the master and guide of our life.”³¹

What is Inner consciousness?

According to Sri Aurobindo –

- 1) “The inner consciousness means the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical and behind them the psychic which is their inmost being.”³²
- 2) By nature “... the true inner consciousness is a silent consciousness which has not to think out things, but gets the right perception, understanding and knowledge in a spontaneous way from within and speaks or acts according to that. It is the outer consciousness which has to depend on outside things and to think about them because it has not this spontaneous guidance.”³³



If we observe ourselves we see generally, our ignorant and imperfect mental and vital activities and relations stop us from coming in touch with the true inner consciousness. To perfect our instruments of consciousness we need to develop a strong will and power to quieten our mental and vital movements. The more we increase quietude and silence the more we feel close to our inner consciousness.

Reflection: My own inner journey (a self preparation)

As I look back on my life, one of the most constant and powerful things I have experienced within myself is the quest to be more than I am at this moment. I never felt satisfied with whatever I have learnt and observed from my surroundings, friends, school or parents. I always carry a desire to do more, to learn more, to express more – a desire to grow, improve and expand myself. As I am growing and progressing towards my aim, I have been giving more importance to have such qualities within me.

My Aspiration

If I was a bird

I would have enjoyed the vastness of the sky

If I was a river

I would have explored life meandering through caves
sometimes narrow, sometimes wide

If I was a sculptor

I would have shaped my life by chiseling it to perfection

If I were the sea

I would have known the depths and stillness of my being

If I were flowers

My fragrance would have filled the air,

I would have experienced the joys of self-giving

These are thoughts that I dwelt in these days

Questioning myself and looking for ways

Where I want to go and what I want to be?

The vastness of the Sky or the depths of the Sea

These are possibilities which seem a long way away

But I have the feeling...

My Aspiration will shine like a golden ray

The Mother says, “*Aspiration should be not a form of desire but the feeling of an inner soul’s need, and a quiet settled will to turn towards the Divine and seek the Divine.*”³⁴

* * *

(continued on page 22)

WATCHING KRISHNA'S PLAY

Swarms of clouds sweep the unending vast,
Like a crown of dark, cascading curls,
Adorning with their love that unfettered brow.

The shrouded moon steals from amidst the gaps,
Flashing a glimpse of Thy pearly white teeth,
Through lips that've parted in a generous smile!



Palm fronds sway gently in Thy scented breath;
An enamoured earth arches to meet the vaulting sky,
A tingling tremor awakened by a lover's caress.

The ebb and flow of the waves on the beach,
Is but the rhythm and beat of the universe's heart
Lodged in the sanctuary of a sanguine breast.

Glints of starlight appear in nebulous swathes,
Like tiny beads of perspiration on lissome skin -
An outpouring of ardour as Thy passion is spent.

At dawn, Time steals from Thy side her daily march:
A bride blushing gently with the glow of sated love -
Returning to her lover's side at dusk in a crimson rush!

All around me as I look, I can see only Thee at play,
With an aching heart and lips that sing a single refrain,
Abandoning all chores Krishna, can't I be just Thy mate?

-Amit Gujral



When I first began trying to be with myself, I often felt that I was trapped by my feelings and thoughts. I observed many negative feelings inside me making a noise that I didn't want. I found it difficult to change them. So I decided that if I was going to be with myself, I must express my feelings and thoughts without deceiving myself. The change began to happen after my becoming aware of these feelings and thoughts and accepting my limitations. Whenever I go deep within and acknowledge my feelings and thoughts they turn more positive. Often my inner consciousness shows me the way to come out from my negative feelings and thoughts. Though it demands a lot of patience and discipline yet it gives me a strange kind of joy.

The Mother says, *"It is the path to lead you to the psychic; and so this is the experience, it is the first experience. When one has the contact with the permanent part of one's immortal being, through this immortality one can go still further and reach the Eternal. This is yet another state of consciousness. But this is the way one follows the path, little by little."*³⁵

* * *

Generally if I have no work I feel blank and bored. So I like to engage myself with different works. My initial approach towards work was totally different. I remember when I joined the Gnostic Centre I was allotted work. I observed that whatever work I was doing it was based on my personal expectation or on getting praise. Though I would get the praise for my performance, it was not giving me the kind of happiness and joy I would expect. Gradually when I began to understand my nature and my purpose of life, I realised that one can not be happy if one does not go beyond one's own vital satisfaction and desire. One can not progress further when there are preferences and expectation in work. I continue doing the same work but with a different attitude and spirit. Now I feel myself more happy and satisfied than I was feeling before.

Sri Aurobindo says, *"If you want to be a true doer of divine works, your first aim must be to be totally free from all desire and self-regarding ego. All stress of egoistic choice, all banking after personal profit, all stipulation of self-regarding desire must be extirpated from the nature. There must be no demand for fruit and no seeking for reward; the only fruit for you is the pleasure of the Divine Mother and the fulfillment of her work, your only reward a constant progression in divine consciousness and calm and strength and bliss."*³⁶

* * *

Learning to be more open and receptive towards others and enjoy the spontaneity. Living in my own shell was not helping me to grow further. I felt there was a need to widen myself not only mentally but also emotionally so that I can bring harmony in my work and as well as in my relationships. The journey began when I was asked to work with one-and-a-half year old kids. I remember when Yogita di³⁷ asked me to look after those little ones in her guidance. Mentally and emotionally I was not ready to take this big responsibility on my shoulders. But there was no option or I can say she did not want to give any option for me. Many a times I had disagreements due to my own rigid behaviour and found myself hurt by it. Whenever I reflected upon it and saw a positive outcome I would appreciate her for helping me by not letting me take the easy way out. And gradually I realised that whatever she was doing, it was not out of any ill will but for my own growth. She wanted me to grow and understand the child through the heart and not by my own rigid mind. She really has put a sincere effort to help me out in this process. Her effort and my patience really have shown a shining path to me. Now when I see myself open and spontaneous in my actions, thoughts and interactions with children and others, it gives me joy and is helping me to progress inwardly.

The Mother says, *"Opening is a thing that happens by itself by sincerity of will and aspiration."*³⁸

* * *



Let thy will be done. I remember an incident which had happened recently. During my summer vacation I wanted to go to Bangalore and from there to Pondicherry. So I had done my reservation accordingly. 1st June I was all ready to go and catch my train. I had called a taxi and started my journey. I cannot say it was fortunate or unfortunate but in the middle of the way my taxi tyre got punctured. I tried for another option to get to the railway station but could not find one. So I had to rely on the same taxi. By the time I reached the railway station I saw my train passing by. I felt very sad and did not know whether I should cry or feel happy. Anyway I did not give up hope. As I had my reservation in RAC waiting, so I cancelled my ticket and I went to reserve a fresh ticket for Bangalore on the same day. I got the ticket, but it was again on waiting list. The waiting was 89. I remembered that everyone in my family was against me taking a risk by travelling on this ticket. But due to my strong positive feeling I did not listen to anyone. I can say I had gone crazy and wanted to take the risk. At the same time I had truly prayed to the Mother. I also had approached someone to get my ticket confirmed. He was not sure whether I could get the confirmation or not but he asked me to check around 5pm. Sharp 5pm I got the message that my ticket was confirmed. I was thrilled and thanked the Mother for fulfilling my wish. I spent a happy vacation in Bangalore as well as in Pondicherry. Often I noticed a feeling of anxiety occurring, wondering if while going back from Pondicherry to Delhi, I will miss my train, what will I do, from where I will fix my ticket; I don't know anything in Pondicherry, and so on. I always ignored this stupid thought by saying, 'everything will be all right.' The day arrived and a night before I packed my bag and went to sleep. Suddenly the same thought came, 'tomorrow if I miss my train then what will happen?' My mind started trembling with different thoughts. I started feeling suffocated with all these negative thoughts. Immediately I made myself read the *Prayers and Meditations* by the Mother. This helped me to feel calmer and I wrote my diary to the Mother. I expressed my problem to her and held a blessing packet in my hand and went off to sleep. After that I had a good sleep. The next day I found everything went very smoothly without any feelings of anxiety or being tense. I don't know what I should call this incident, but I can only say that this incident has really taught me that if there is a true surrender and a true prayer then the Divine is always ready to come and help in any situation and any circumstances.

Application for oneself

1. The discipline of reading good books
2. Habit of self-reflection after action
3. Meditation
4. Writing a diary
5. Keeping in touch with one's aspirations
6. Prayers

Your Aspiration

Points for reflection...

Create a quiet corner and reflect deeply and answer these following questions:

- 1) Are you aware of your inner self?
- 2) How do you feel when you're connected to your inner self?
- 3) Where does it lead you? What does it demand from you? Are you aware of it?
- 4) What do you do to come in touch with your inner consciousness?
- 5) What is the greatest aspiration of your life?
- 6) What do you do to meet it?



CONCLUSION

- A journey to identify myself
- A journey to become aware of myself
- A journey to understand my limitation
- A journey to bring purification
- A journey to widen my understanding

To conclude this I can say that it was the journey to come in touch with my inner self. Looking at the past I realised that I was more conscious towards the outer happenings and not giving much importance to my inner self. This was the time when I intently looked over all my hurdles to identify the root cause so that I can transform them for my further progress. So far I can see a remarkable change in my nature and my way of looking at things and confronting the situations. But still I have to go a long way.

As the Mother says, “Consciousness is a progressive state.”³⁹ So I can not say that I have become a master and now I am aware of everything. It was the first step which I climbed up to widen my consciousness to understand my action and myself truly. There are still many steps which I have to climb up to perfect myself and perfect my instruments of consciousness. And to bring stability in my effort I want to continue each and every step that I have been doing since a year for my future development.

As the Mother says, “If the growth of consciousness were considered as the principal goal of life, many difficulties would find their solution.”⁴⁰

- Sunaina Singh

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