

The Hierarchies of *Ashram* living

“Ninety-nine out of a hundred people come here to be comfortable and do nothing; one in a hundred comes with a Spiritual aspiration, and even then...it is mixed.

The three conditions: (A set of rules for admission to *Ashram*)

- 1: The sole aim of life is to dedicate oneself to the Divine realisation.
- 2: *Sri Aurobindo's* absolute authority (represented by *The Mother*) (through inner contact) is recognised.
- 3: To those who want to practice the integral Yoga, it is strongly advised to abstain from three things. So the three things ([laughing] you put your fingers in your ears): sexual intercourse (it comes third) and drinking alcohol and...[whispering] smoking.”¹

The Mother

“The indispensable basis of our Yoga is sincerity, honesty, unselfishness, disinterested consecration to the work to be done, nobility of character and straight forwardness. They who do not practice these elementary virtues are not *Sri Aurobindo's* disciples and have no place in *Ashram*.”²

The Mother

“What is aimed at by us is a spiritual truth as the basis of life, the **first words** of which are (1) surrender and (2) union with the Divine and (3) transcendence of ego. So long as that basis is not established, a *Sadhaka* is only an ignorant and imperfect human being struggling with the evils of the lower Nature.”³

Sri Aurobindo

The collaborators of *The Mother's* work in Consciousness are *Sadhakas*, Children and Integral Yogis, who are indispensable part of collective Divine Living called the *Ashram*, the Divine Centre, while Visitors, Devotees and *Ashramites*⁴ are its dispensable organ; the former represents the indivisible Spiritual Consciousness of developed Soul and the latter stands for the divisible mental consciousness of developing Soul. Visitors, Devotees, *Ashramites*, *Sadhakas*, Children and Integral Yogis are the beginners, expanders, stabilisers, intensifiers, identifiers and integrators of Consciousness respectively. Here they do not represent an individual or a person but a transitional formative state in the hierarchy of ascending Consciousness.

A **Visitor** is he who makes his upward gaze out of curiosity and receives Divine's touch beyond his expectation. He is unable to hold this Presence. His

business in early preparatory steps is to evolve his capacity, distinguish his personality and possess firmly, powerfully and completely his own individuality. His self giving to the Divine is dependent on the evolution of well formed part of his personality. In him the **individual consciousness** appears as Mind and Intellect, and is given as a vehicle of progressive evolutionary manifestation to be clearly aware of itself and things.

An enthusiastic visitor turns into a **Devotee**, who lives in the Spiritual aspiration of the heart, accumulates inspiration towards God given work, takes the responsibility of spreading, expanding and creating Mission/Centres and devotes his time to serve the Divine Power and develops ideas, ideals and new range of activities. His analytic mind cannot transform his nature but can control, harmonise, lay on it the law of mental ideal and can impose a summery patch work to his divided and half-constructed being. The **observing and governing dynamic Consciousness** of a devotee is responsible for generalising an incomplete Spiritual movement and initial approach of mind turning towards Spirituality is a growth of religious temperament, some devotion in the heart, new values for all things, faithful in the conduct and many sided effort striving to embrace the all containing Knowledge.

So a moderate developing nature of a **Devotee** is at once a seeking after truth, light and knowledge, a struggle and war against lower desire driven own Nature and the surrounding world, a constant production, adaptation and skill applied to the gross material life and a life dedicated for part self-giving and partial service to the Divine.

A seeking devotee turns into an **Ashramite** in this life or after many births of preparation, who receives Divine's call to lead a Divine Life, yet compromises in between the Law and downward pull of his past world attraction, attachment and habits. *Ashramites* are of three types, '*tamasic, rajasic and sattwic*'⁵ based on their dynamic nature and are of four categories that of *Brahmana, Khyatriya, Vaisya and Shudra* based on the predominance of their Soul force, dominant tendencies and efficiency. An **Ashramite** stabilises the main function of collective living. His action is appreciated by entire self-giving of the outer-life. His **mental waking Consciousness** is a small selection of our entire conscious being which always limits the Illimitable and divides the Indivisible; behind it there is much vaster subliminal and subconscious mind which is identified as the starting point of true science of Spirituality.

So an '*ideal Ascetic Ashramite*'⁶ through the path of renunciation of desire and ego should neither be attached to the Divine work, *na mam karmani limpanti*,⁷ nor attached to initiation of ordinary work, *sarvarambhaparityagi*,⁸ nor attached to his home or home state, *aniketa*,⁹ nor attached to any *Shastra* or written truth,

sabdabrahmatibartate,¹⁰ nor attached towards His devotees, *madbhakta sanga barjitah*,¹¹ nor attached to the sect, community¹⁶ and limitation of religious activities, *sarvadharmān paritejya*,¹² but attached alone to Him, *Majyasakta*,¹³ who is All, with the knowledge of All Life and All Time, *veda sarvani*.¹⁴ He will do all action by uniting with the Divine, *yogasthah kuru karmani*.¹⁵

A dedicated *Ashramite* turns into a **Sadhaka** in this life or after many births of preparation, in whom the Law of integral Yoga is intensified in its process of manifestation. Each *Sadhaka* in this path is preoccupied with his own scientific method of *Yoga* developed and confirmed by regular experiment, practical analysis, psychological observation, constant revelatory results, verified Spiritual experiences and profounder understandings. He does not act according to a construction of fixed and routine system but with a sort of free, scattered and gradually intensive purposeful working based on his temperament, helpful material his nature offers, widening of consciousness and life and obstacles which he experiences to purification and perfection. An integral aim is pursued through integral and synthetic method to arrive at the result of integral Purification, Realisation, Liberation, Perfection and Delight of Divine manifestation. In a *Sadhaka* the waking consciousness is extended to **Cosmic Consciousness** by an inner enlargement from individual into universal existence and his instrumental individual energy disappears while taking up transformation action of the lower grades of this Nature. He does not think, act, will, feel but the Divine *Shakti* thinks, feels and acts in his system and he is on the way to realise the perfection and delight of active oneness.

A growing *Sadhaka* through arduous *tapasya* emerges into a consecrated **Child**, no longer cherishes a duality between a *Sadhaka* and *the Mother*, but identifies as a part and indispensable portion of Her Divine Consciousness. This working of Her **Consciousness-Force**, *Shakti*, in Knowledge through Her children is defined as possession of Calm within to accommodate the fine entries of celestial Fire into the manifesting Nature and welling out from its silence the perennial source of inexhaustible Action, Creation and *Ananda*. His action is appreciated by entire consecration of inner and outer living, knowledge on movement of Consciousness and limitless plasticity towards Divine transformation. Thus a constant dynamic Divine union is the state of the Consciousness of a Child.

An **Integral Yogi** or the dearest Child is at once a Child, not doing any *sadhana*, but it is done for him due to his entire reliance on *the Mother* and the *Sadhaka* of integral Yoga pursuing *sadhana* through effort and askesis and he can serve as a link in between the supreme Mother Consciousness and the earth consciousness. He is outwardly a mere man, *Nara* and inwardly Divine, *Narayana*, shall preoccupy himself in entire effort to reveal God in humanity,

Nara-Narayana. The goal of his **evolving Integral Consciousness, Maya**, is the basis of entire harmonisation of life, total transformation and integration of Nature and Being.

The Mother is at once the Supreme Mother, the *Chit Shakti*, the **Creatrix Mother** of the universe, not doing any *Sadhana*; as the **Mediatix Mother**, She stands in between *Sri Aurobindo's sadhana* and the World, and the *Sadhaka* of integral Yoga pursuing Her *Sadhana* in the body; as the **Executrix Mother**, She draws heaven seeking and world shunning liberated Souls earthward to reconcile Self and Nature, fills in them the equal Divine Presence and builds in the abyss of Hell a road to Heaven and as the **Ambadress Mother** She calls down Timeless Eternity and Spaceless Infinity to transform the human Nature.

Sri Aurobindo is at once the Supreme *Purusha*, the **Purushottama**, carrying within Him the immutable, the unmanifest Divine, the *Akshara Purusha* and the mutable, the manifest Divine, the *Kshara Purusha*; as an Intermediary, **the Guru**, He links the disciples with the three *Purushas* and He fuses Himself with the Supreme *Prakriti, The Mother*, for the highest action and delight of the Divine *Lila*.

The Mother is the living representative of Consciousness by whose movement one will arrive at *Sri Aurobindo*, the living representative of the Being, the Self. Their relation is the union between *Sat* and *Chit* leading the creation to *Ananda*. Supramental Consciousness, *Vijnana*, is the fourth name of the Divine activated through the multiplication of Their Soul Force and this supreme relation links the *Sachchidananda* Consciousness to lower triple creation of mind, life and body; if dynamised sufficiently then the lower creation retains the lost Divinity and the Divine Life becomes practicable.

In Their effort to enlarge the experience of integral Divine Union of three Powers that of the Will, *Ichha Shakti*, Knowledge, *Jnana Shakti* and Love, *Prema Shakti* in harmonising and transforming the earth nature, the Law of the Divine, cosmos, collectivity and individual Soul was evolved which gave birth to the ideals, norms, right standards of conduct and self-disciplines of integral Yoga. These outer laws are temporary higher and higher standards as long as they are needed to serve the Divine in the world march and in the Supramental plane they become free automatic obedience to truth of things and inevitable right execution in the action and all is determined by the consciousness and being. Any imposition of rigidly fixed set of strict principles, precise mental rules, constructed laws of conduct and artificial limiting standards are abrogated because they stand as barrier to the eternal onflow of Divine opulence. Its method has been the method of evolutionary Nature with many-sided wideness, catholicity, plasticity, universality, integration of being followed by the outcome of largest, deepest,

widest and highest form of every possible line of Spiritual realisation and Spiritual self-discipline and complete dynamism of that return to truth of our Nature.

So a Visitor feels the need to serve the Divine and becomes a Devotee. A Devotee feels the need that his service to Divine must be entire and he emerges as *Ashramite*. An *Ashramite* through mental effort of consecrated action, consecrated thought and consecrated emotion experiences static Divine union and he emerges as *Sadhaka*. A *Sadhaka* dynamises his union with the Divine to become one with the Divine *Shakti* and emerges as a Child. A Child further moves the consciousness to find the established relation between static and dynamic Divine to hold together *The Mother* and *Sri Aurobindo* and emerges as integral Yogi. To work out Their relation is the intense and large universal action in the Supramental plane.

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References:-

- 1: The Mother's Agenda-6/128-129,
- 2: MCW/13/128-29,
- 3: The Mother's Agenda-4/422,
- 4: "The other day, I told N, (and I told him loud enough for everyone to hear): 'We can dispense with a good half of the *Ashramites* straight away and not lose a single *Sadhaka*...' People imagine that by the simple fact of being here they become disciples and apprentice Yogis! But it is not true..." The Mother's Agenda-2/184,
- 5: "**Tamas** brings in all the ignorance, inertia, weakness, incapacity which afflicts our nature, a clouded reason, nescience, unintelligence, a clinging to habitual notions and mechanical ideas, the refusal to think and know, the small mind, the closed avenues, the trotting round of mental habit, the dark and the twilit places. **Tamas** brings in the impotent will, want of faith and self-confidence and initiative, the disinclination to act, the shrinking from endeavour and aspiration, the poor and little spirit, and in our moral and dynamic being the inertia, the cowardice, baseness, sloth, lax subjection to small and ignoble motives, the weak yielding to our lower nature. **Tamas** brings into our emotional nature insensibility, indifference, want of sympathy and openness, the shut soul, the callous heart, the soon spent affection and languor of the feelings, into our aesthetic and sensational nature the dull aesthesis, the limited range of response, the insensibility to beauty, all that makes in man the coarse, heavy and vulgar spirit. **Rajas** contributes our normal active nature with all its good and evil; when unchastened by a sufficient element of *sattwa*, it turns to egoism, self-will and violence, the perverse, obstinate or exaggerating action of the reason, prejudice, attachment to opinion, clinging to error, the subservience of the intelligence to our desires and preferences and not to the truth, the fanatic or the sectarian mind, self-will, pride, arrogance, selfishness, ambition, lust, greed, cruelty, hatred, jealousy, the egoisms of love, all the vices

and passions, the exaggerations of the aesthesis, the morbidities and perversions of the sensational and vital being. *Tamas* in its own right produces the coarse, dull and ignorant type of human nature, *rajas* the vivid, restless, kinetic man, driven by the breath of action, passion and desire. *Sattwa* produces a higher type. The gifts of *sattwa* are the mind of reason and balance, clarity of the disinterested truth-seeking open intelligence, a will subordinated to the reason or guided by the ethical spirit, self control, equality, calm, love, sympathy, refinement, measure, fineness of the aesthetic and emotional mind, in the sensational being delicacy, just acceptivity, moderation and poise, a vitality subdued and governed by the mastering intelligence.” CWSA-24/The Synthesis of Yoga-686,

6: “...there are a **good third** who are here only because they are comfortable: you work if you want to, you don’t work if you don’t want to, you always eat, you always have shelter and clothes, and, ultimately, you sort of do as you please (you pretend to obey, that’s all). And if you are denied a convenience, you start grumbling—Yoga is simply out of picture! It is a hundred thousand miles away from their consciousness (their mouths are full of words, but it is only lip service). Sometimes you have a little scruple in order to appear to be doing some work. And some have grown very old or come here because they have become unfit for life outside...so we cannot send them away! (It was wrong to accept them—I must say I have little to do with that acceptance: I will say no, and ninety-nine times out of hundred, they (Secretaries) will pretend they heard yes, but any way... that is life.) So I cannot send them away. But I am going to **make life ascetic for them**: one won’t be here to be comfortable anymore—then for what?” The Mother’s Agenda-5/36

7: The Gita-4.14,

8: The Gita-14.25, 12.16

9: “Take advantage of the circumstances to **get rid of all attachment** to the members of your family. You must learn that you have no more brothers, sister, father, mother, except *Sri Aurobindo* and myself, and you must feel free and unconcerned whatever happens to them. We are your whole family, your protection, your all in all.” The Mother’s Centenary Edition/14/305, “He is equal to praise and blame, who is silent, content with whatever comes, **with no attachment of home**, firm in mind, full of devotion, is dear to Me.” The Gita-12.19,

10: The Gita-6.44,

11: The Gita-11.55,

12: The Gita-18.66,

13: The Gita-7-1,

14: The Gita-4.5,

15: The Gita-2.48

16: “Therefore **attachment and desire must be utterly cast out**; there is nothing in the world to which we must be attached, not wealth nor poverty, nor joy nor suffering, nor life nor death, nor greatness nor littleness, nor vice nor virtue, nor

friend, nor wife, nor children, nor country, **nor our work and mission**, nor heaven nor earth, nor all that is within them or beyond them. And this does not mean that there is nothing at all that we shall love, nothing in which we shall take delight; for attachment is egoism in love and not love itself, desire is limitation and insecurity in a hunger for pleasure and satisfaction and not the seeking after the divine delight in things.” CWSA-23/The Synthesis of Yoga-329-30.

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