

# **PRAYER AND JAPA**

Compiled by Vijay from the writings of  
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

**SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY  
PUDUCHERRY**

## **Yoga in Everyday Life – Booklet Series**

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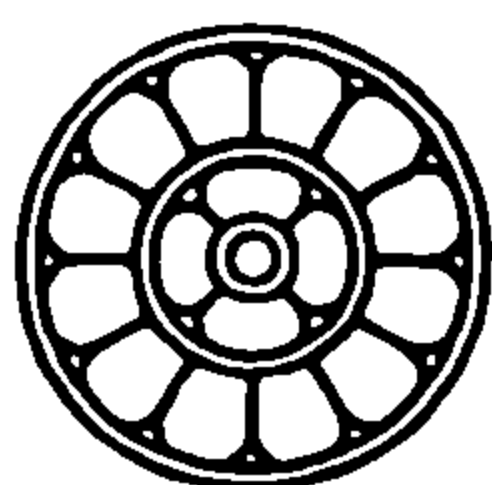
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*This is one in a series of thirty booklets published by the Sri Aurobindo Society under the title "Yoga in Everyday Life." Our effort is to bring together, from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, simple passages with a practical orientation on specific subjects, so that everyone may feel free to choose a book according to his inner need. The topics cover the whole field of human activity, because true spirituality is not the rejection of life but the art of perfecting life.*

*While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, in its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to be faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.*

*We hope these booklets will inspire the readers to go to the complete works and will help them to mould their lives and their environments towards an ever greater perfection. The quotations from Sri Aurobindo are prefaced by his symbol and those from the Mother by her symbol.*



The Mother's



Sri Aurobindo's

**"O TRUTH, COME, MANIFEST."**

**“आयाहि सत्य आविर्भव”**

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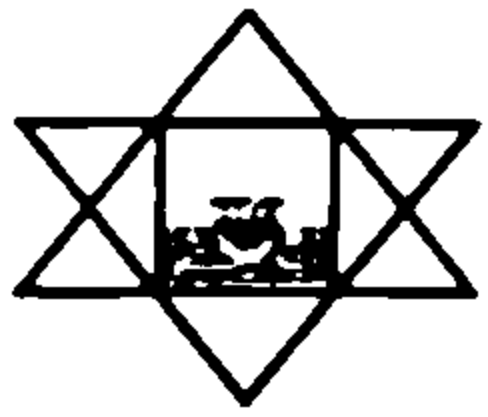
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## WHY PRAYER



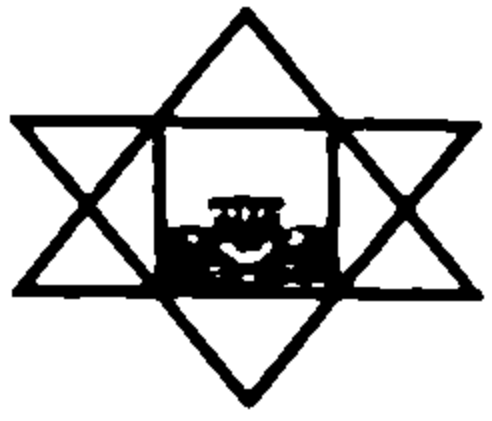
The life of man is a life of wants and needs and therefore of desires, not only in his physical and vital, but in his mental and spiritual being. When he becomes conscious of a greater Power governing the world, he approaches it through prayer for the fulfilment of his needs, for help in his rough journey, for protection and aid in his struggle. Whatever crudities there may be in the ordinary religious approach to God by prayer, and there are many, especially that attitude which imagines the Divine as if capable of being propitiated, bribed, flattered into acquiescence or indulgence by praise, entreaty and gifts and has often little regard to the spirit in which he is approached, still this way of turning to the Divine is an essential movement of our religious being and reposes on a universal truth.

The efficacy of prayer is often doubted and prayer itself supposed to be a thing irrational and necessarily superfluous and ineffective. It is true that the universal will executes always its aim and cannot be deflected by egoistic propitiation and entreaty, it is true of the Transcendent who expresses himself in the universal order that, being omniscient, his larger knowledge must foresee the thing to be done and it does not need direction or stimulation by human thought and that the individual's desires are not and cannot be in any world-order the true determining factor. But neither is that order or the execution of the universal will altogether effected by mechanical Law, but by powers and forces of which for human life at least, human will, aspiration and faith are not among the least important. Prayer is only a particular form given to that will, aspiration and faith. Its forms are very often crude and not only childlike, which is in itself no defect, but childish; but still it has a real power and significance. Its power and sense is to put the will, aspiration

and faith of man into touch with the divine Will as that of a conscious Being with whom we can enter into conscious and living relations. For our will and aspiration can act either by our own strength and endeavour, which can no doubt be made a thing great and effective whether for lower or higher purposes,— and there are plenty of disciplines which put it forward as the one force to be used,— or it can act with independence upon and with subordination to the divine or the universal Will. And this latter way, again, may either look upon that Will as responsive indeed to our aspiration, but almost mechanically, by a sort of law of energy, or at any rate quite impersonally, or else it may look upon it as responding consciously to the divine aspiration and faith of the human soul and consciously bringing to it the help, the guidance, the protection and fruition demanded, *yoga-kṣemam vahāmyaham*.

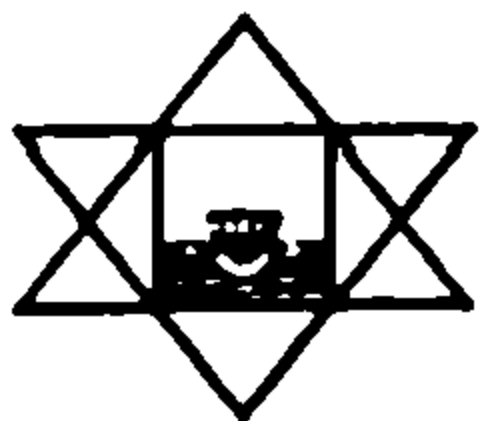
Prayer helps to prepare this relation for us at first on the lower plane even while it is there consistent with much that is mere egoism and self-delusion; but afterwards we can draw towards the spiritual truth which is behind it. It is not then the giving of the thing asked for that matters, but the relation itself, the contact of man's life with God, the conscious interchange. In spiritual matters and in the seeking of spiritual gains, this conscious relation is a great power; it is a much greater power than our own entirely self-reliant struggle and effort and it brings a fuller spiritual growth and experience. Necessarily, in the end prayer either ceases in the greater thing for which it prepared us,— in fact the form we call prayer is not itself essential so long as the faith, the will, the aspiration are there,— or remains only for the joy of the relation. Also its objects, the *artha* or interest it seeks to realise, become higher and higher until we reach the highest motiveless devotion, which is that of divine love pure and simple without any other demand or longing.

★



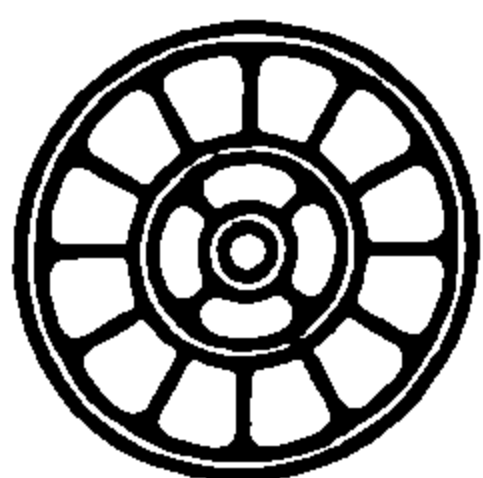
To the Divine... the human soul comes for help, for protection, for guidance, for fruition,— or if knowledge be the aim, to the Guide, Teacher, Giver of light, for the Divine is the Sun of knowledge,— or it comes in pain and suffering for relief and solace and deliverance, it may be deliverance either from the suffering itself or from the world-existence which is the habitat of the suffering or from all its inner and real causes'... The soul goes to the Mother-Soul in all its desires and troubles, and the Divine Mother wishes that it should be so, so that she may pour out her heart of love. It turns to her too because of the self-existent nature of this love and because that points us to the home towards which we turn from our wanderings in the world and to the bosom in which we find our rest.

\*



As for the prayers, the fact of praying and the attitude it brings, especially unselfish prayer for others, itself opens you to the higher Power, even if there is no corresponding result in the person prayed for. Nothing can be positively said about that, for the result must necessarily depend on the persons, whether they are open or receptive or something in them can respond to any Force the prayer brings down.

\*



Of course, people with a very strict logic tell you, "Why pray ? Why aspire ? Why ask ? The Lord does what He wants and He will do what He wants." It is quite obvious, there is no need to say it, but this

1. These are three of the four classes of devotees which are recognised by the Gita, *ārta*, *arthārthi*, *jijñāsu*, the distressed, the seeker of personal objects and the seeker of God-knowledge.

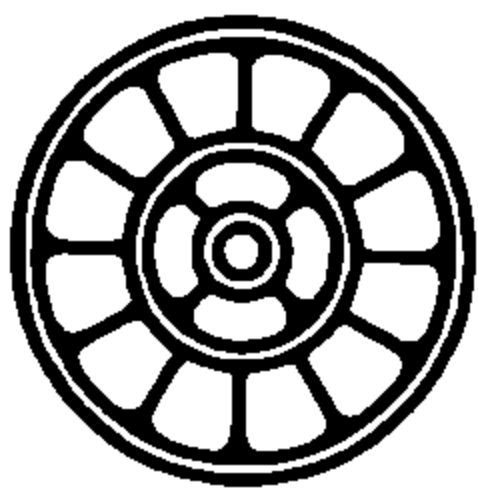
impulse : "O Lord, manifest !" gives a more intense vibration to His manifestation.

Otherwise, He would never have made the world as it is. There is a special power, a special delight, a special vibration in the intensity of the world's aspiration to become once more what it is.

And that is why – partly, fragmentarily – there is an evolution.

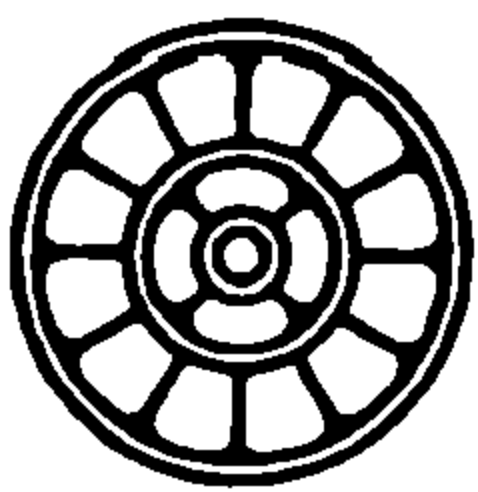
An eternally perfect universe, eternally manifesting the eternal perfection, would lack the joy of progress.

### POWER OF PRAYER



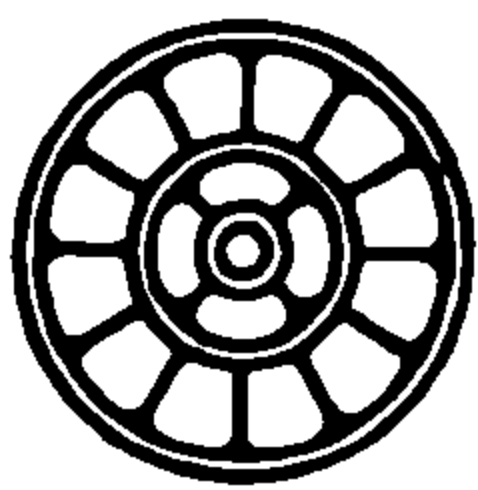
The Grace *always* grants the sincere prayers.

\*



We must learn to rely only on the Divine Grace and to call for its help in all circumstances; then it will work out constant miracles.

\*



All is there, absolute, static, eternal: but all that will be unrolled in the material world, naturally more or less one thing after another; for in the static existence all can be there, but in the becoming all becomes in time, that is, one thing after another. Well, what path will the unrolling follow? Up there is the domain of absolute freedom.... Who tells you that a sufficiently sincere aspiration, a sufficiently intense prayer is not capable of changing the path of the unrolling?

This means that all is possible.



Now, one must have a sufficient aspiration and a prayer that's sufficiently intense. But that has been given to human nature. It is one of the marvellous gifts of grace given to human nature; only, one does not know how to make use of it....

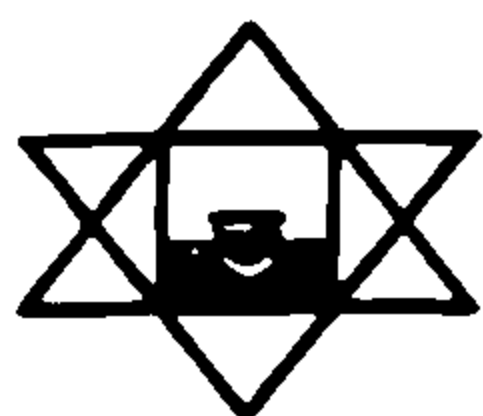
There you are, if you have an aspiration that's sincere enough or a prayer that's intense enough, you can bring down in you something that will change everything, everything – truly it changes everything. An example may be given that is extremely limited, very small, but which makes you understand things very well: a stone falls quite mechanically; say, a tile falls; if it gets loose, it will fall, won't it? But if there comes, for example, a vital or mental determinism from someone who passes by and does not want it to fall and puts his hand out, it will fall on his hand, but it will not fall on the ground. So he has changed the destiny of this stone or tile. It is another determinism that has come in, and instead of the stone falling on the head of someone, it falls upon the hand and it will not kill anybody. This is an intervention from another plane, from a conscious will that enters into the more or less unconscious mechanism....

The key, as I told you just now, is the sufficiently sincere aspiration or the sufficiently intense prayer. I said “or”, but I do not think it is «or». There are people who like one better and others the other. But in both there is magical power, you must know how to make use of it.

There is something very beautiful in both. Some dislike prayer; if they entered deep into their heart, they would find it was pride – worse than that, vanity. And then there are those who have no aspiration, they try and they cannot aspire; it is because they do not have the flame of the will, it is because they do not have the flame of humility.

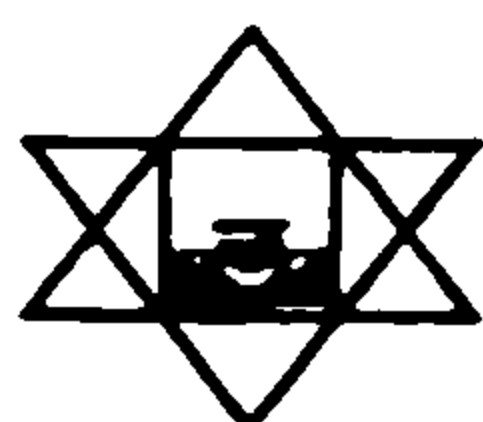
Both are needed. There must be a very great humility and a very great will to change one's Karma.

## HOW TO PRAY



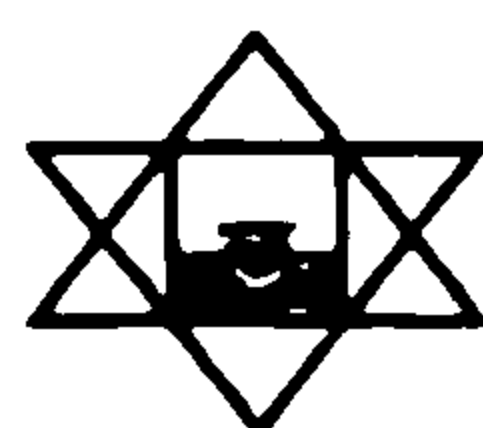
Prayer and meditation count for so much in yoga. But the prayer must well up from the heart on a crest of emotion or aspiration, the Japa or meditation come in a live push carrying the joy of the light of the thing in it. If done mechanically and merely as a thing that ought to be done (stern grim duty!), it must tend towards want of interest and dryness and so be ineffective....

★



The aim of Yoga being union, its beginning must always be a seeking after the Divine, a longing after some kind of touch, closeness or possession. When this comes on us, the adoration becomes always primarily an inner worship ; we begin to make ourselves a temple of the Divine, our thought and feelings a constant prayer of aspiration and seeking, our whole life an external service and worship.

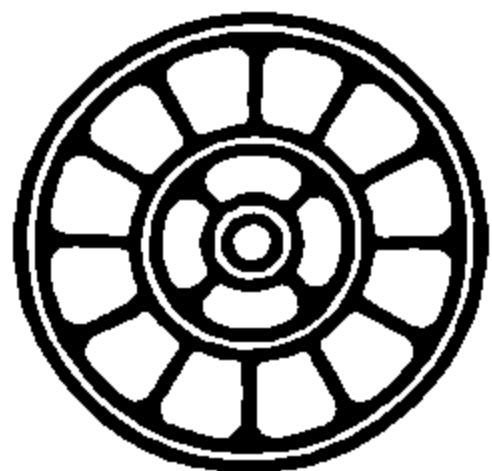
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The Divine looks into the heart and removes the veil at the moment which he knows to be the right moment to do it. You have laid stress on the Bhakti theory that one has only to call his name and he must reply, he must at once be there. Perhaps, but for whom is this true? For a certain kind of Bhakta surely who feels the power of the Name, who has the passion of the Name and puts it into his cry. If one is like that, then there may be the immediate reply – if not, one has to become like that, then there will be the reply. But some go on using the Name for years, before there is

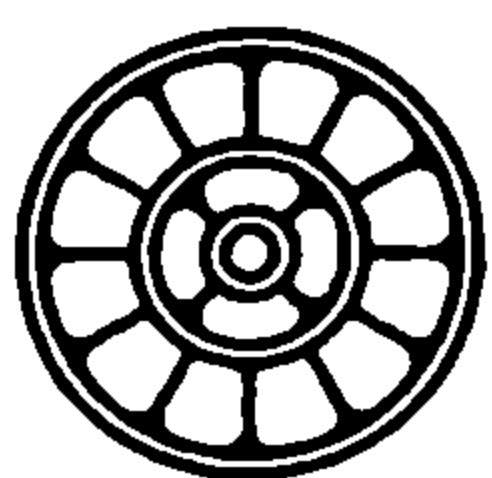
an answer. Ramakrishna himself got it after a few months, but what months! and what a condition he had to pass through before he got it! Still he succeeded quickly because he had a pure heart already – and that divine passion in it.

★



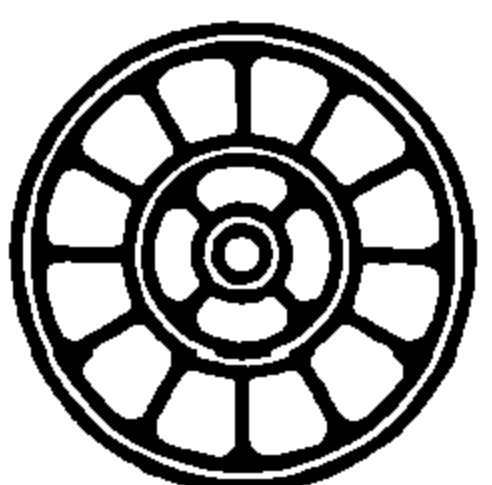
The whole of our life should be a prayer offered to the Divine.

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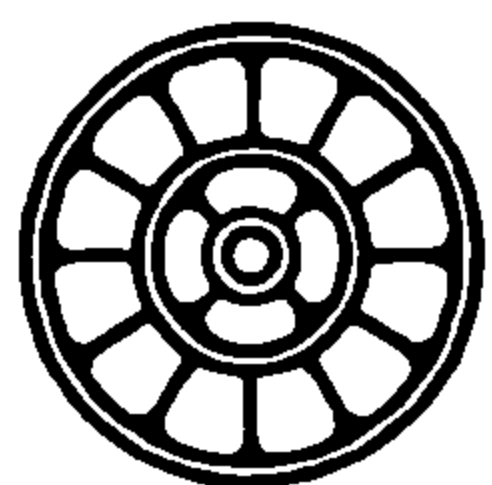
Vital prayer: Steadiness and perseverance.  
Mental prayer: Purity.  
Integral prayer: The Divine Consciousness.

★



If you call or aspire with fear that you will not be heard and with doubts about the Divine's answer then the adverse forces that are always on the watch, slip into your consciousness *through the fear and the doubts* and do their mischief. So, you must call with a true and sincere faith.

★



To aspire is indispensable. But some people aspire with such a conflict inside them between faith and absence of faith, trust and distrust, between the optimism which is sure of victory and a pessimism which asks itself when the catastrophe will come. Now if this is in the being, you may aspire but you don't get anything. And you say, "I aspired but didn't get anything." It is because you demolish your aspiration all the time by your lack of confidence. But if you truly have trust... Children when left to themselves and not deformed by older people have such a great trust that all will be well! For example, when they have a small accident,

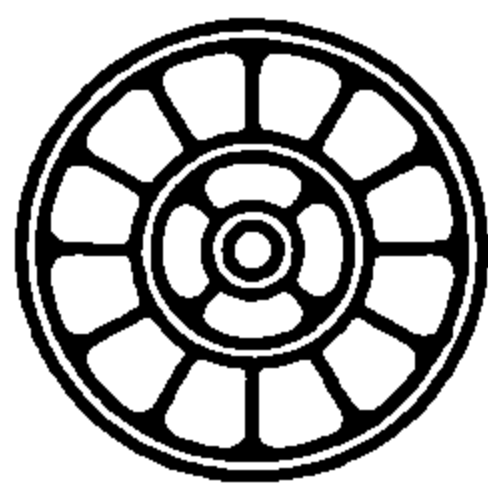
they never think that this is going to be something serious: they are spontaneously convinced that it will soon be over, and this helps so powerfully in putting an end to it.

Well, when one aspires for the Force, when one asks the Divine for help, if one asks with the unshakable certitude that it will come, that it is impossible that it won't, then it is sure to come. It is this kind... yes, this is truly an inner opening, this trustfulness. And some people are constantly in this state. When there is something to be received, they are always there to receive it. There are others, when there is something to have, a force descends, they are always absent, they are always closed at that moment; while those who have this childlike trust are always there at the right time.

And it is strange, isn't it, outwardly there is no difference. They may have exactly the same goodwill, the same aspiration, the same wish to do good, but those who have this smiling confidence within them, do not question, do not ask themselves whether they will have it or not have it, whether the Divine will answer or not – the question does not arise, it is something understood... "What I need will be given to me; if I pray I shall have an answer; if I am in a difficulty and ask for help, the help will come – and not only will it come but it will manage everything." If the trust is there, spontaneous, candid, unquestioning, it works better than anything else, and the results are marvelous. It is with the contradictions and doubts of the mind that one spoils everything, with this kind of notion which comes when one is in difficulties: "Oh, it is impossible! I shall never manage it. And if it is going to be aggravated, if this condition I am in, which I don't want, is going to grow still worse, if I continue to slide down farther and farther, if, if, if, if..." like that, and one builds a wall between oneself and the force one wants to receive. The psychic being has this trust, has it wonderfully,

without a shadow, without an argument, without a contradiction. And when it is like that, there is not a prayer which does not get an answer, no aspiration which is not realised.

★



*"I begin to meditate and pray ardently and fervently, my aspiration is intense and my prayer full of devotion; and then, after a certain length of time – sometimes short, sometimes long, – the aspiration becomes mechanical and the prayer purely verbal. What should I do?"*

This is not an individual case, it is extremely common. I have already said this a number of times, but still it was in passing – that people who claim to meditate for hours every day and spend their whole day praying, to me it seems that three-fourths of the time it must be absolutely mechanical; that is to say, it loses all its sincerity. For human nature is not made for that and the human mind is not built that way.

In order to concentrate and meditate one must do an exercise which I could call the "mental muscle-building" of concentration. One must really make an effort – as one makes a muscular effort, for instance, to lift a weight – if you want the concentration to be sincere and not artificial.

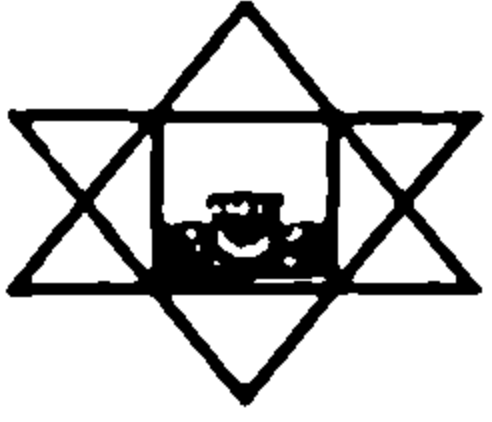
The same thing for the urge of prayer: suddenly a flame is lit, you feel an enthusiastic *élan*, a great fervour, and express it in words which, to be true, must be spontaneous. This must come from the heart, directly, with ardour, without passing through the head. That is a prayer. If there are just words jostling in your head, it is no longer a prayer. Well, if you don't throw more fuel into the flame, after a time it dies out. If you do not give your muscles time to relax, if you don't slacken the movement, your

muscles lose the capacity of taking strains. So it is quite natural, and even indispensable, for the intensity of the movement to cease after a certain time. Naturally, someone who is accustomed to lifting weights can do it much longer than one who has never done it before. It is the same thing; someone who is accustomed to concentration can concentrate much longer than one who is not in the habit. But for everybody there comes a time when one must let go, relax, in order to begin again. Therefore, whether immediately or after a few minutes or a few hours, if the movement becomes mechanical, it means that you have relaxed and that you need no longer pretend that you are meditating. It is better to do something useful.

If you cannot manage to do a little exercise, for instance, in order to neutralise the effect of the mental tension, you may read or try to note down what happened to you, you may express things. Then that produces a relaxation, the necessary relaxation. But the duration of the meditation is only relatively important; its length simply shows how far you are accustomed to this activity.

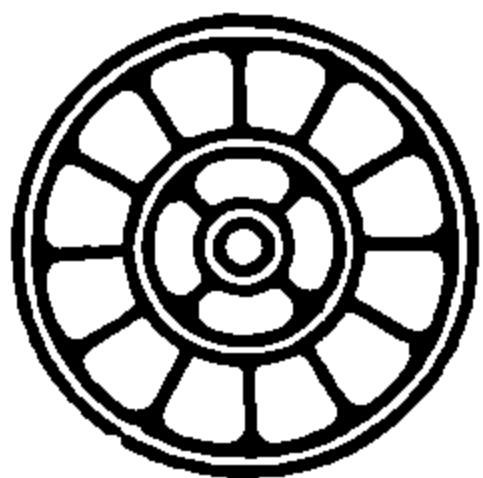
Of course, this may increase a great deal, but there is always a limit; and when the limit is reached one must stop, that's all. It is not an insincerity, it is an incapacity. What becomes insincere is if you pretend to meditate when you are no longer meditating or you say prayers like many people who go to the temple or to church, perform ceremonies and repeat their prayers as one repeats a more or less well-learned lesson. Then it is no longer either prayer or meditation, it is simply a profession. It is not interesting.

## ASKING FROM THE DIVINE



As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. You may ask, why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery: put a prayer in the slot and get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, God would be in a rather awkward hole if he had to grant all of them; it wouldn't do.

★



*But, Mother, when one prays sincerely for the intervention of the Grace, doesn't one expect a particular result?*

Excuse me, that depends on the tenor of the prayer. If one simply invokes the Grace or the Divine, and puts oneself in His hands, one does not expect a particular result. To expect a particular result one must formulate one's prayer, must ask for something. If you have only a great aspiration for the divine Grace and evoke it, implore it, without asking it for anything precise, it is the Grace which will choose what it will do for you, not you.

*That is better, isn't it?*

Ah! that's quite another question.

Why, it is higher in its quality, perhaps. But still, if one wants something precise, it is better to formulate it. If one has a special reason for invoking the Grace, it is better to formulate it precisely and clearly.

Of course, if one is in a state of complete surrender and gives oneself entirely, if one simply offers oneself to the Grace and lets it do what it likes, that is very good. But after that one must not question what it does! One must not say to it, "Oh! I did that with the idea of having this" for if one really has the idea of obtaining something, it is better to formulate it in all sincerity, simply, just as one sees it. Afterwards, it is for the Grace to choose if it will do it or not; but in any case, one will have formulated clearly what one wanted. And there is no harm in that.

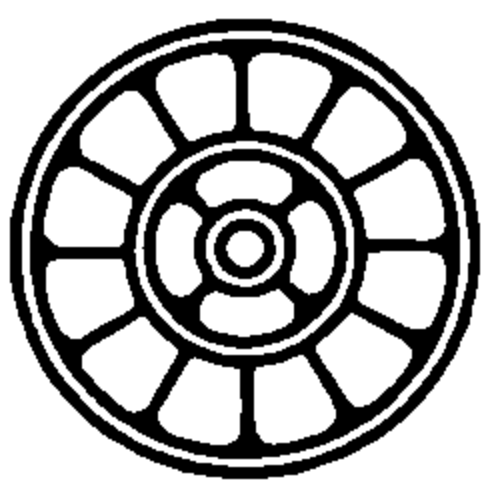
Where it becomes bad is when the request is not granted and one revolts. Then naturally it becomes bad. It is at that moment one must understand that the desire one has, or the aspiration, may not have been very enlightened and that perhaps one has asked for something which was not exactly what was good for one. Then at that moment one must be wise and say simply, "Well, let Thy Will be done." But so long as one has an inner perception and an inner preference, there is no harm in formulating it. It is a very natural movement.

For example, if one has been foolish or has made a mistake and one truly, sincerely wishes never to do it again, well, I don't see any harm in asking for it. And in fact, if one asks for it with sincerity, a true inner sincerity, there is a great chance that it will be granted.

You must not think that the Divine likes to contradict you. He is not at all keen on doing it! He can see better than you what is really good for you; but it is only when it is absolutely indispensable that He opposes your aspiration. Otherwise He is always ready to give what you ask.

★





*If, for example, one wants to know something or one needs guidance, or something else, how can one have it from the Divine, according to one's need?*

By asking the Divine for it. If you do not ask Him, how can you have it?

If you turn to the Divine and have full trust and ask Him, you will get what you need – not necessarily what you imagine you need; but the true thing you need, you will get. But you must ask Him for it.

You must make the experiment sincerely; you must not endeavour to get it by all sorts of external means and then expect the Divine to give it to you, without even having asked Him. Indeed, when you want somebody to give you something, you ask him for it, don't you? And why do you expect the Divine to give it to you without your having asked Him for it?

In the ordinary consciousness the movement is just the opposite. You assume something, saying, "I need this, I need this relationship, I need this affection, I need this knowledge, etc. Well, the Divine ought to give it to me, otherwise He is not the Divine." That is to say, you reverse the problem completely.

First of all, you say, "I need". Do you know whether you truly need it or whether it is only an impression you have or a desire or quite an ignorant movement? First point: you know nothing about it.

Second point: it is precisely your own will you want to impose upon the Divine, telling Him, "I need this". And then you don't even ask Him for it: "Give it to me". You say, "I need it.

Therefore, since I need it, it must come to me, quite naturally, spontaneously; it's the Divine's job to give me all that I need".

But if it so happens that truly you don't know what you need and it is merely an illusion and not a truth and that, into the bargain, you ask it from life around you and don't turn to the Divine, don't create any relationship between yourself and Him, don't think of Him or turn to Him with at least some sincerity in your attitude, then, as you ask nothing from Him, there is no reason for Him to give you anything.

But if you ask Him, as He is the Divine, He knows a little better than you what you need; He will give you what you need.

Or else, if you insist and want to impose your own will, He may give you what you want in order to enlighten you and make you conscious of your mistake, that it was truly not the thing you needed. And then you begin to protest – I don't mean you personally, I am speaking of all human beings – and you say, "Why has the Divine given me something which harms me?" – completely forgetting that it was you who asked for it!

In both cases you protest all the same. If He gives you what you ask and then that brings you more harm than good, you protest. And again, if He doesn't give it, you also protest: "What! I told Him I needed it and He doesn't give it to me."

In both cases you protest, and the poor Divine is accused.

Only, if instead of all that, you simply have an aspiration within you, an urge, an intense ardent need to find That, which you conceive more or less clearly to be the Truth of your being, the Source of all things, the supreme Good, the Answer to all we desire, the Solution to all problems; if there is this intense need

in you and you aspire to realise it, you won't any longer say to the Divine, "Give me this, give me that", or, "I need this, I must have that". You will tell Him, "Do what is necessary for me and lead me to the Truth of my being. Give me what Thou in Thy supreme Wisdom seest as the thing I need."

And then you are sure of not being mistaken, and He will not give you something which harms you.

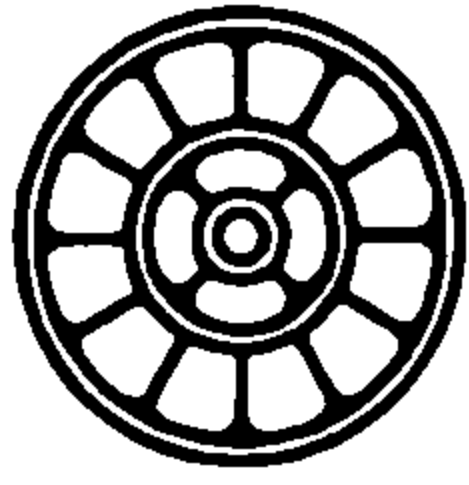
There is a still higher step, but it's a little more difficult to begin with that.

But the first one is already a much truer approach than that of telling the Divine, "I need this. Give it to me". For indeed, very few people really know what they need – very few. And the proof of it is that they are always in pursuit of the fulfilment of their desires, all their effort is bent upon that, and each time one of their desires is fulfilled, they are disappointed. And they pass on to another.

And after much seeking, making many mistakes, suffering a good deal and being very disappointed, then, sometimes, one begins to grow wise and wonders if there isn't a way out of all this, that is to say, a way to come out of one's own ignorance.

And it is then, at that moment that one can do this (*Mother opens her arms*): "Here I am, take me and lead me along the true path".

## PRAYER AND ASPIRATION



*Do prayers and aspirations also take a form like thoughts?*

Yes. At times they take even the form of the person who has the aspiration or makes the prayer – often. That depends. Aspiration sometimes take the form of that to which one aspires, but most often, and specially prayers, clearly take the form of the one who prays.

*What is the difference between prayer and aspiration?*

I have written this somewhere. There are several kinds of prayers.

There is the purely mechanical, material prayer, with words which have been learnt and are mechanically repeated. That does not signify anything much. And that has usually only one single result, that of quietening the person who prays, for if a prayer is repeated several times, the words end up by making you calm.

There is a prayer which is a spontaneous formula for expressing something precise which one wants to ask for: one prays for this thing or that, one prays for one thing or another; one can pray for somebody, for a circumstance, for oneself.

There is a point where aspiration and prayer meet, for there are prayers which are the spontaneous formulation of a lived experience: these spring up all ready from within the being, like something that's the expression of a profound experience, and which offers thanksgiving for that experience or asks its continuation or asks for its explanation also; and that indeed is quite

close to aspiration. But aspiration is not necessarily formulated in words; or if it is formulated in words, it is almost a movement of invocation. You aspire for a certain state; for instance, you have found something in yourself that is not in keeping with your ideal, a movement of darkness and ignorance, perhaps even of ill-will, something that's not in harmony with what you want to realise; then that is not going to be formulated in words; that will be like a springing flame and like an offering made of a living experience, asking to grow larger, be magnified and ever more and more clear and precise. All that may be put into words *later*, if one tries to remember and note down one's experience. But aspiration always springs up like a flame that rises high and carries in itself the thing one desires to be or what one desires to do or desires to have. I use the word "desire" but truly it is here that the word "aspire" should be used, for that does not have either the quality or the form of a desire.

It is truly like a great purifying flame of will, and it carries in its core the thing that asks to be realised.

For instance, if you have done something you regret having done, if that has unhappy consequences, which disturb things, and several people are implicated, you do not know the reactions of the others, but you yourself wish that what had been done may take a turn for the best, and that if there is a mistake, it may be understood, and that no matter what the mistake, this may be for you an opportunity for a greater progress, a greater discipline, a new ascent towards the Divine, a door open on a future that you want to be more clear and true and intense; so all this is gathered here (*pointing to the heart*) like a force, and then it surges up and rises in a great movement of ascent, and at times without the shadow of a formulation, without words, without expression, but like a springing flame.

That indeed is true aspiration. That may happen a hundred, a thousand times daily if one is in that state in which one constantly wants to progress and be more true and more fully in harmony with what the Divine Will wants of us.

Prayer is a much more external thing, generally about a precise fact, and always formulated for it is the formula that makes the prayer. One may have an aspiration and transcribe it as a prayer, but aspiration goes beyond prayer in every way. It is much closer and much more as it were self-forgetful, living only in the thing one wants to be or do, and the offering of all that one wants to do to the Divine. You may pray in order to ask for something, you may also pray to thank the Divine for what He has given you, and that prayer is much greater: it may be called an act of thanksgiving. You may pray in gratitude for the aspect of kindness the Divine has shown to you, for what He has done for you, for what you see in Him, and the praise you want to offer Him. And all this may take the form of a prayer. It is decidedly the highest prayer, for it is not exclusively preoccupied with oneself, it is not an egoistic prayer.

Certainly, one may have an aspiration in all the domains, but the very centre of aspiration is in the psychic being, whilst one may pray in all the domains, and the prayer belongs to the domain in which one prays. One may make purely material, physical prayers, vital prayers, mental prayers, psychic prayers, spiritual prayers, and each one has its special character, its special value.

There is a kind of prayer at once spontaneous and unselfish which is like a great call, usually not for one's own self personally, but like something that may be called an intercession with the Divine. It is extremely powerful. I have had countless instances of things which have been realised almost instantaneously.

neously due to prayers of this kind. It implies a great faith, a great ardour, a great sincerity, and a great simplicity of heart also, something that does not calculate, does not plan, does not bargain, does not give with the idea of receiving in exchange. For, the majority of men give with one hand and hold out the other to get something in exchange; the largest number of prayers are of that sort. But there are others of the kind I have described, acts of thanksgiving, a kind of canticle, and these are very good.

There you are. I don't know if I have made myself clear, but this is how it is.

To be clearer, we may say that prayer is always formulated in words; but the words may have different values according to the state in which they are formulated. Prayer is a formulated thing and one may aspire. But it is difficult to pray without praying to someone. For instance, those who have a conception of the universe from which they have more or less driven out the idea of the Divine (there are many people of this kind; this idea troubles them – the idea that there is someone who knows all, can do everything and who is so formidably greater than they that there can be no comparison; that's a bit troublesome for their *amour-propre*; so they try to make a world without the Divine), these people evidently cannot pray, for to whom would they pray? Unless they pray to themselves, which is not the custom! But one can aspire for something without having any faith in the Divine. There are people who do not believe in the existence of a God, but who have faith in progress. They have the idea that the world is in constant progress and that this progress will go on indefinitely without stopping, towards an ever greater betterment. Well, these people can have a very great aspiration for progress, and they don't even need any idea of a divine existence for that. Aspiration necessarily implies a

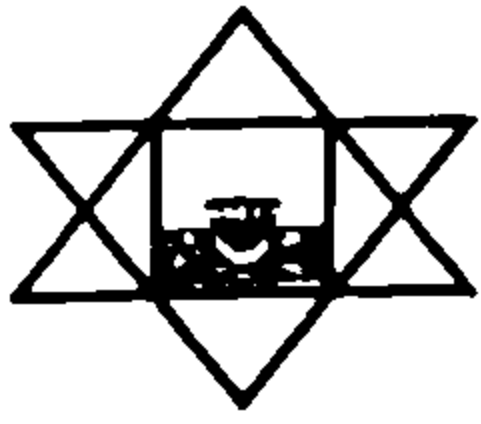
faith but not necessarily faith in a divine being; whilst prayer cannot exist if it is not addressed to a divine being. And pray to what? One does not pray to something that has no personality! One prays to someone who can hear us. If there is nobody to hear us, how could one pray? Hence, if one prays, this means that, even when one doesn't acknowledge it, one has faith in somebody infinitely higher than us, infinitely more powerful, who can change our destiny and change us also, if one prays so as to be heard. That is the essential difference.

So the more intellectual people admit aspiration and say that prayer is something inferior. The mystics tell you that aspiration is all very well but if you want to be really heard and want the Divine to listen to you, you must pray, and pray with the simplicity of a child, a perfect candour, that is, a perfect trust: "I need this or that (whether it be a moral need or a physical or material need), well, I ask You for it, give it to me." Or else: "You have given me what I asked of You, You have made me realise concretely those experiences which were unknown to me and are now marvels I can attain at will; yes, I am infinitely grateful to You and I offer a prayer of thanksgiving to sing Your praise and thank You for Your intervention." It is like that. To aspire it is not necessary to direct the aspiration to someone, towards someone. One has an aspiration for a certain state of being, for knowledge, for a realisation, a state of consciousness; one aspires for something, but it is not necessarily a prayer; prayer is something additional.

Prayer is a personal thing, addressed to a personal being, that is, to something – a force or a being – who can hear you and answer you. Otherwise you can't ask for anything.

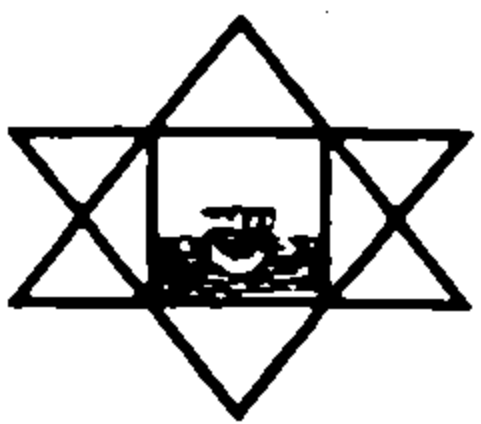


## TRUE PRAYER



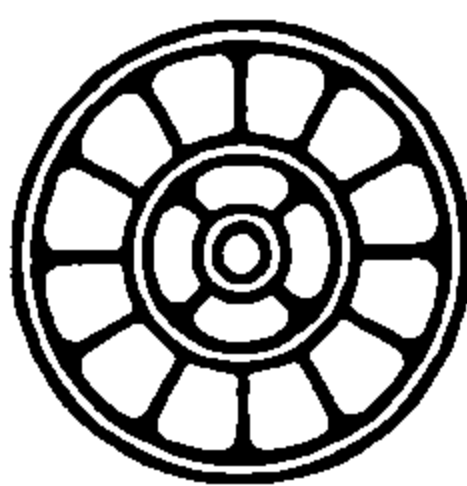
Put yourself with all your heart and all your strength into God's hands. Make no conditions, ask for nothing, not even for *siddhi* in the yoga, for nothing at all except that in you and through you his will may be directly performed. To those who demand from him, God gives what they demand, but to those who give themselves and demand nothing, he gives everything that they might otherwise have asked or needed and in addition he gives himself and the spontaneous boons of his love.

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

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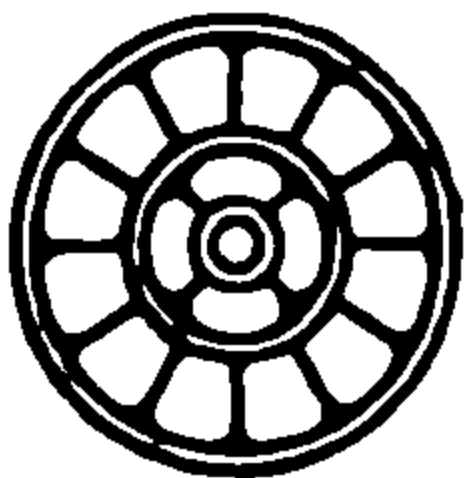


*Sweet Mother, what is meant by "the Divine gives Himself"?*

It means exactly this: that the more you give yourself the more you have the experience – it is not just a feeling or impression or sensation, it is a total experience – that the more you give yourself to the Divine the more He is with you, totally, constantly, at every minute, in all your thoughts, all your needs, and that there's no aspiration which does not receive an immediate answer; and you have the sense of a complete, constant intimacy, of a total nearness. It is as though you carried... as though the Divine were all the time with you; you walk and He walks with you, you sleep and He sleeps with you, you eat and He eats with you, you think and He thinks with you, you love

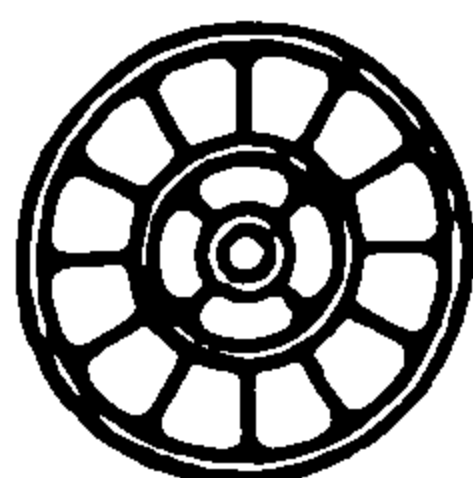
and He is the love you have. But for this one must give himself entirely, totally, exclusively, reserve nothing, keep nothing for himself and not keep back anything, not disperse anything also; the least little thing in your being which is not given to the Divine is a waste; it is the wasting of your joy, something that lessens your happiness by that much, and all that you don't give to the Divine is as though you were holding it in the way of the possibility of the Divine's giving Himself to you. You don't feel Him close to yourself, constantly with you, because you don't belong to Him, because you belong to hundreds of other things and people; in your thought, your action, your feelings, impulses... there are millions of things which you do not give Him, and that is why you don't feel Him always with you, because all these things are so many screens and walls between Him and you. But if you give Him everything, if you keep back nothing, He will be constantly and totally with you in all that you do, in all that you think, all that you feel, always, at each moment. But for this you must give yourself absolutely, keep back nothing; each little thing that you hold back is a stone you put down to build up a wall between the Divine and yourself. And then later you complain: "Oh, I don't feel Him!" What would be surprising is that you could feel Him.

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Think of the Divine alone and the Divine will be with you.

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*"He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite." – Sri Aurobindo*

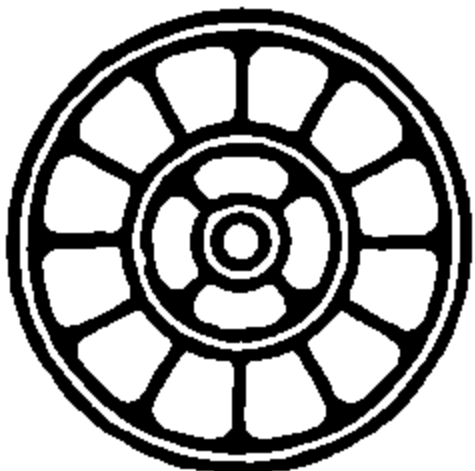
It is a magnificent sentence! And it is absolutely true....

**It is God who has chosen you, the Divine who has chosen you.  
And that is why you run after Him!**

**And this is what gives.... that kind of confidence, of certitude, precisely, that one is predestined; and if one is predestined, even if there are mountains of difficulties, what can that matter since one is sure to succeed! This gives you an indomitable courage to face all difficulties and a patience that stands all trials: you are sure to succeed.**

**And it's a fact – in fact, it is like that: the moment you thought about it, well, you thought about it because someone thought about you; you chose because you were chosen. And once you have been chosen, you are sure of the thing. Therefore, doubts, hesitations, depressions, uncertainties, all this is quite simply a waste of time and energy; it is of no use at all.**

## **COLLECTIVE PRAYER**



**There is also the collectivity formed by individuals who have gathered together around an ideal or a teaching or an action they want to carry out, and who have an organising link between them, the link of the same purpose, the same will and the same faith. These can gather in a methodical manner to practice common prayer and meditation, and if their aim is high, their organisation good, their ideal powerful, through their prayers or meditations these groups can have a considerable effect on world events or on their own inner development and collective progress. These groups are necessarily far superior to others, but they don't have the blind strength of the mobs, the collective action of the crowd. They replace this vehemence, this intensity by the strength of a deliberate and conscious organisation.**

At all times there have been on earth groups organised in this way. Some of them have had a historical life, a historical action in the world, but as a rule they have not succeeded better with the crowd, the mass, than exceptional individuals. They have always been suspected and subjected to attacks, persecutions, and often they have also been dissolved in a very brutal, obscure and ignorant way.... There were those semi-religious, semi-chivalric groups, gathered around a belief or rather a creed, with a definite aim, which have had a very interesting history in the world. And certainly, they have done much for collective progress through their individual effort.

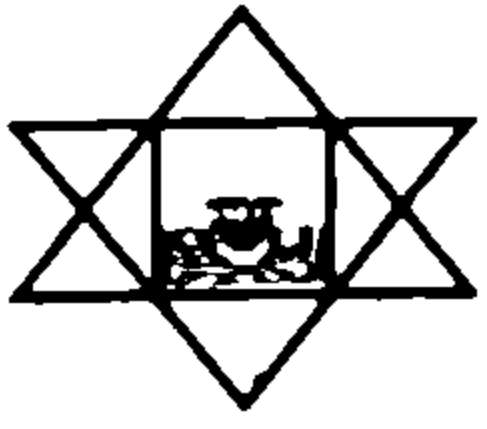
There is an ideal organisation which, if fully realised, could create a kind of very powerful unity, composed of elements all having the same aim and the same will and with enough inner development to be able to give a very coherent body to this inner oneness of purpose, motive, aspiration and action.

At all times centres of initiation have tried this, more or less successfully, and this is always mentioned in all occult traditions as an extremely powerful means of action.

If the collective unit could attain the same cohesion as the individual unit, it would multiply the strength and action of the individual.

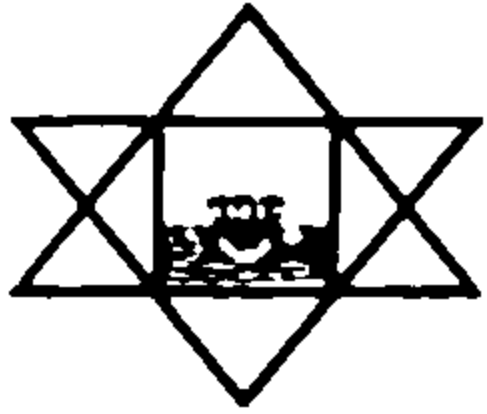
Usually, if several individuals are brought together, the collective quality of the group is much lower than the individual value of each person taken separately, but with a sufficiently conscious and coordinated organisation, it would be possible, on the contrary, to *multiply* the power of individual action.

## JAPA AND MANTRA



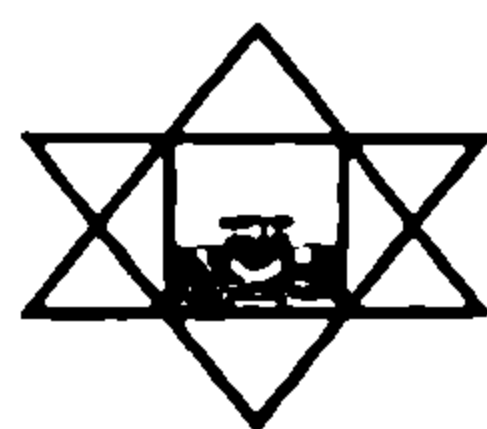
Namajapa has a great power in it.

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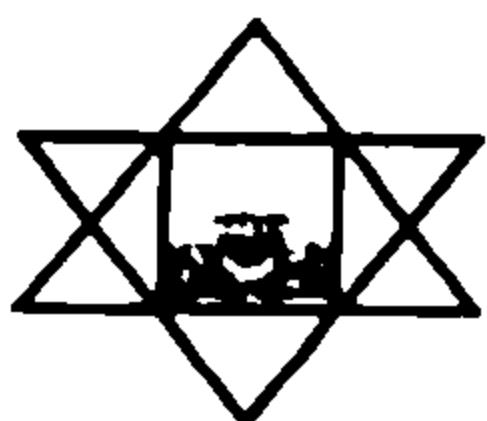
The japa is usually successful only on one or two conditions – if it is repeated with a sense of its significance, a dwelling of something in the mind on the nature, power, beauty, attraction of the God-head it signifies and is to bring into the consciousness, – that is the mental way; or if it comes up from the heart or rings in it with a certain sense or feeling of bhakti making it alive, – that is the emotional way. Either the mind or the vital has to give it support or sustenance. But if it makes the mind dry and the vital restless, it must be missing that support and sustenance. There is, of course, a third way, the reliance on the power of the mantra or name in itself; but then one has to go on till that power has sufficiently impressed its vibration on the inner being to make it at a given moment suddenly open to the Presence or the Touch.

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When one repeats a mantra regularly, very often it begins to repeat itself within, which means that it is taken up by the inner being. In that way it is more effective.

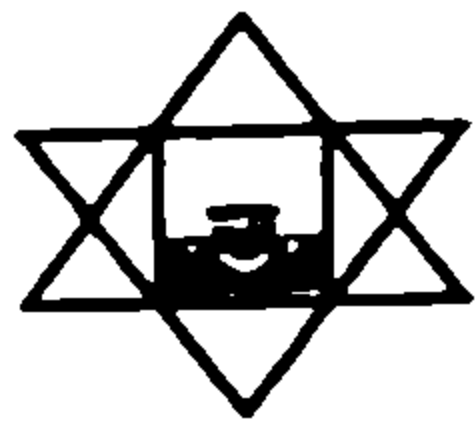
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OM is the mantra, the expressive sound-symbol of the Brahman Consciousness in its four domains from the Turiya to the external or material plane. The function of a mantra is to create vibrations in the inner consciousness that will prepare it for the realisation of what the mantra symbolises and is supposed indeed to carry within itself. The mantra OM should therefore lead towards the

opening of the consciousness to the sight and feeling of the One Consciousness in all material things, in the inner being and in the supraphysical worlds, in the causal plane above, now superconscient to us and, finally, the supreme liberated transcendence above all cosmic existence. The last is usually the main preoccupation with those who use the mantra.

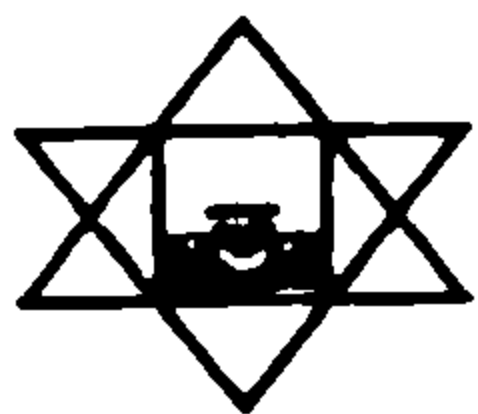
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In this yoga there is no fixed mantra, no stress is laid on mantras, although sadhaks can use one if they find it helpful or so long as they find it helpful.

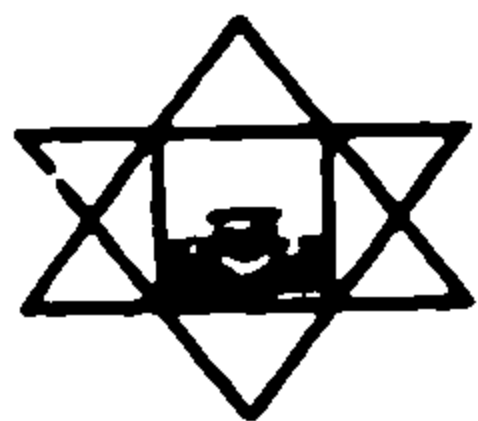
The stress is rather on an aspiration in the consciousness and a concentration of the mind, heart, will, all the being. If a mantra is found helpful for that, one uses it. OM if rightly used (not mechanically) might very well help the opening upwards and outwards (cosmic consciousness) as well as the descent.

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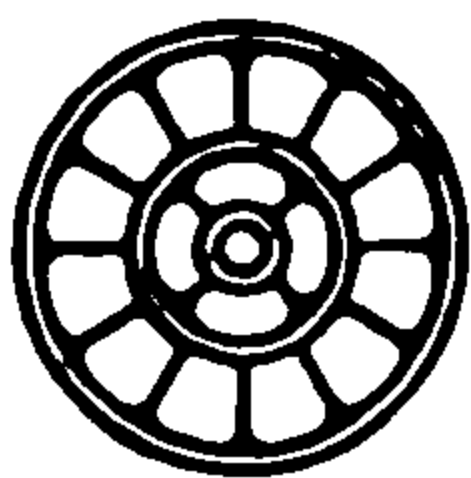
As a rule the only *mantra* used in this Sadhana is that of the Mother or of my name and the Mother's.

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The power of Gayatri is the Light of the divine Truth. It is a mantra of Knowledge.

## THE POWER OF THE MANTRA



When you are playing and suddenly become aware that something is going wrong – you are making mistakes, are inattentive, sometimes opposing currents come across what you are doing – if you develop the habit, automatically at the moment, of calling as by a mantra, of repeating a word, that has an extraordinary effect.

You choose your mantra; or rather, one day it comes to you spontaneously in a moment of difficulty. At a time when things are very difficult, when you have a sort of anguish, anxiety, when you don't know what is going to happen, suddenly this springs up in you, the word springs up in you. For each one it may be different. But if you mark this and each time you face a difficulty you repeat it, it becomes irresistible. For instance, if you feel you are about to fall ill, if you feel you are doing badly what you are doing, if you feel something evil is going to attack you, then.... But it must be spontaneity in the being, it must spring up from you without your needing to think about it: you choose your mantra because it is a spontaneous expression of your aspiration; it may be one word, two or three words, a sentence, that depends on each one, but it must be a sound which awakens in you a certain condition. Then, when you have that, I assure you that you can pass through everything without difficulty. Even in the face of a real, veritable danger, an attack, for instance, by someone who wants to kill you, if, without getting excited, without being perturbed, you quietly repeat your mantra, one can do nothing to you. Naturally, you must truly be master of yourself, one part of the being must not be trembling there like a leaf; no, you must do it entirely, sincerely, then it is all-powerful. The best is when the word comes to you spontaneously: you call in a moment of great difficulty (mental, vital, physical, emotional, whatever it may be) and suddenly that springs up in you, two or three words. Like magical words. You must remember these and form the habit of repeating them in moments when difficulties come. If you form the habit, one day it will come to you spontaneously: when the difficulty comes, at the same time the mantra will come. Then you will see that the results are wonderful. But it must not be an artificial thing or something you arbitrarily decide: "I shall use those words"; nor should somebody else tell you, "Oh! you know, this is very good" – it is perhaps very good for him but not for everyone.

## REFERENCES

### Booklet

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| b   | CWMCE Vol. 8, pp. 255-56  |     |                           |

N.B. Abbreviations: SABCL – Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library  
CWMCE – Collected Works of the Mother, Centenary Edition