



Renaissance

Sri Aurobindo Society
INDIA FROM PAST DAWNS TO FUTURE NOONS



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Theme: The Divine in Nature

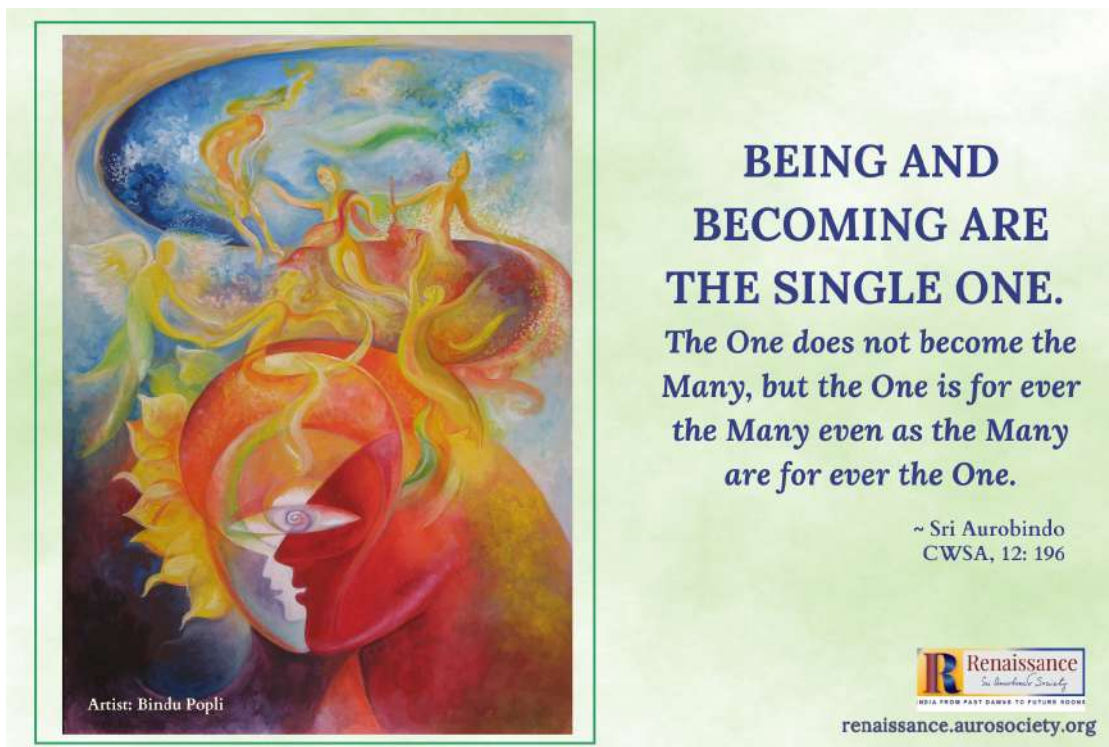
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GOD AT THE BEGINNING, GOD IN THE MIDDLE, GOD AT THE END, GOD EVERYWHERE

Sri Aurobindo



Editor's Note: For our Guiding Light feature, we have selected some deeply evocative passages from Sri Aurobindo. These passages perfectly highlight the theme of our issue – Divine in Nature. They also remind us of a few key fundamentals of the Integral Vision of Sri Aurobindo. We recall that the Universe is a gradual unfolding or a progressive manifestation of the Truth, that is One Supreme. And “all that is is the manifestation of a Divine Infinite.”

separate and contrary creations, but Matter itself is a self-creation of the Spirit.

Being and Becoming are the single One. The One does not become the Many, but the One is for ever the Many even as the Many are for ever the One.

~ CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 195-196

Nature: The World-Manifestation

The Divine is the eternal Self and Spirit; but Nature too is everlasting power of the Self, eternal conscious-Force of the Spirit. Mind, life and Matter are powers of that Power, energies of that Force, substance of that Spirit. Spirit and Matter are not

Manifestation, Not Illusion

As earth when it becomes pot, floor or oven, never ceases to be earth, so the Being even though it becomes all things and persons, is ever and

immutably the same. Becoming does not cancel Being; after millions of events in a million universes have passed in the Infinite, its infinity remains the same for ever.

The Mayavadins fix their definition, their rigid *iti* to the Parabrahman, the Absolute, and say that since it is that, it can never be anything else and therefore the world must be an illusion. But the Absolute is beyond all definitions, descriptions, qualifications, he is [not] bound by them, neither by features nor featurelessness, by unity nor multiplicity[.]

~ CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 209

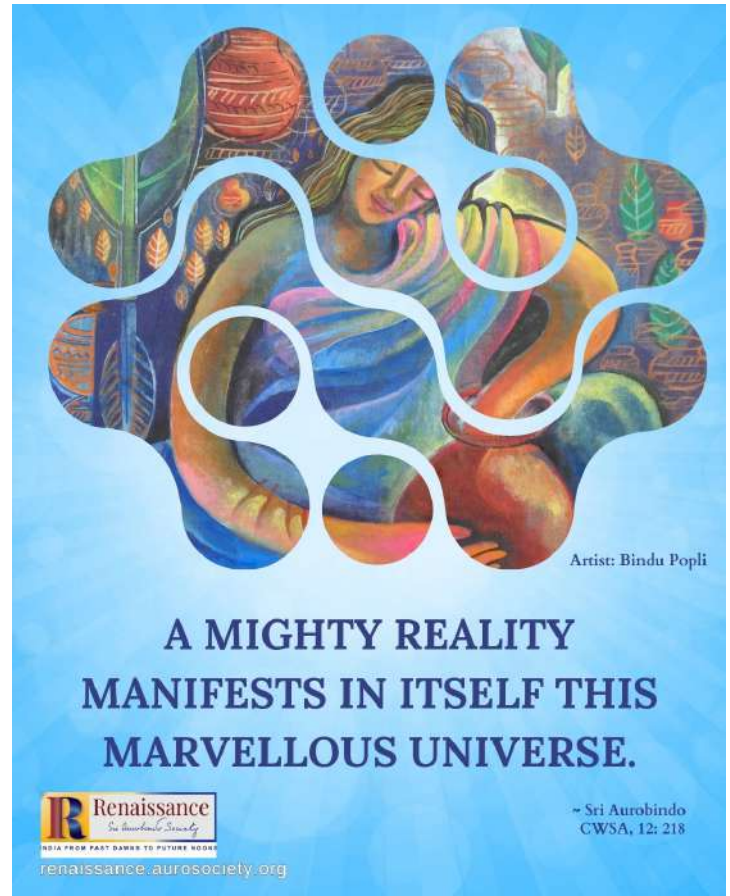
Hidden Divine Presence in All Existence

Existence is not a fluke, a random creation by nobody, a thing that unaccountably happened to be. It carries in itself the Word of God, it is full of a hidden Divine Presence.

Existence is not a blind machine that somehow came and started a set ignoble motion without object or sense or purpose. Existence is a Truth of things unfolding by a gradual process of manifestation, an evolution of its own involved Reality.

Existence is not an illusion, a Maya that had no reason, no business to exist, could not exist, does not exist but only seems to be. A mighty Reality manifests in itself this marvellous universe.

~ CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 218



All That Is...

All that is is the manifestation of a Divine Infinite. The universe has no other reason for existence.

There is an eternal manifestation and there is a temporal manifestation; both are without end or beginning even as That which manifests is without end or beginning. Time and its creations are for ever.

The temporal manifestation is cast partly in a gradation of enduring types; partly it moves through a long unrolling series of vicissitudes of change and new formation and is evolutionary in its process.

The typical worlds do not change. In his own world a god is always a god, the Asura always an Asura, the demon always a demon. To change they must either migrate into an evolutionary body or else die

entirely to themselves that they may be new born into other Nature.

~ CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 218-219

Progressive Self-revelation

All that is is the manifestation, even as all that is not is the self-reservation, of a Supreme, an Infinite who veils himself in the play of impersonal forces, in the recesses of a mysterious Inconscience and will at last rediscover here his most intimate presence, his most integral power, light, beauty, Ananda and all vast and ineffable being through a growing illumination of the still ignorant consciousness now evolving in Matter, a consciousness of which Man is only one stage, at once the summit of an ascent that is finished and the starting point of a far greater ascension that is still only preparing its commencement.

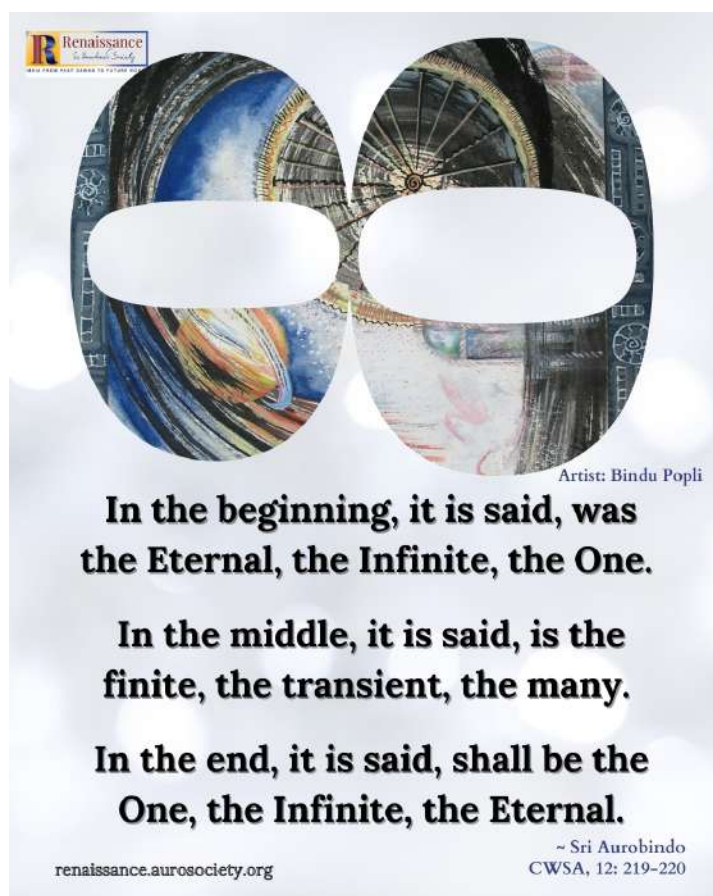
All manifestation that is not evolution is a play and self-formulation of the One Infinite in one term or another of his existence, consciousness-force, Ananda, his self-knowledge, self-power, self-delight, for the glory, joy and beauty of the play and for no other reason.

All evolution is the progressive self-revelation of the One to himself in the terms of the Many out of the Inconscience through the Ignorance towards self-conscious perfection.

The evolution has a purpose, but it is a purpose in a circle. It is not a straight line or other figure of progression from the not to the is, from the less to the more.

There is no beginning or end of the Universe in space or time; for the universe is the manifestation of the Eternal and Infinite.

Manifestation is not an episode of the Eternal. It is his face and body of glory that is imperishable, it



is the movement of his joy and power that needs not to sleep or rest as do finite things from their labour.

In the beginning, it is said, was the Eternal, the Infinite, the One. In the middle, it is said, is the finite, the transient, the many. In the end, it is said, shall be the One, the Infinite, the Eternal.

~ CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 219-220

Indian Mentality that Sees the Divine in Nature

Here [in India] is a philosophy which founds itself on the immediate reality of the Infinite, the pressing claim of the Absolute. And this is not as a thing to speculate about, but as a real presence and a constant Power which demands the soul of man and calls it. Here is a mentality which sees the Divine in Nature and man and animal and inanimate thing, God at the

beginning, God in the middle, God at the end, God everywhere.

And all this is not a permissible poetical play of the imagination that need not be taken too seriously by life, but is put forward as a thing to be lived, realised, put at the back even of outward action, turned into stuff of thought, feeling and conduct! And whole disciplines are systematised for this purpose, disciplines which men still practise!

And whole lives are given up to this pursuit of the supreme Person, the universal Godhead, the One, the Absolute, the Infinite! And to pursue this immaterial aim men are still content to abandon the outward

life and society and home and family and their most cherished pursuits and all that has to a rational mind a substantial and ascertainable value!

Here is a country which is still heavily coloured with the ochre tint of the garb of the Sannyasin, where the Beyond is still preached as a truth and men have a living belief in other worlds and reincarnation and a whole army of antique ideas whose truth is quite unverifiable by the instruments of physical Science. Here the experiences of Yoga are held to be as true or more true than the experiments of the laboratory.

~ CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 143-144



THE ONE WHO FASHIONS A COSMOS AND A CURL

Beloo Mehra

Who can forget these marvellous lines from Sri Aurobindo's poem, *Who?*

The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven, Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl.

~ Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 202

The entire poem is a super-delight for every part of my being, every single time I read it. But it is these two lines that are always a bit extra special because they are simply so... endearing! Yes, that's the word.

Sri Aurobindo, the seer-poet, the *kavi*, the *rishi* of the mantra that is *Savitri*, in these two simple lines reminds, through such lovable and charming an image, that the Divine is not somewhere far away. He or She or That is right here — with you, in you, in fact it is Divine's Hand only which is fashioning that unruly curl of yours!



Lest we forget, it is the same Hand that also fashioned Jupiter and makes its spinning possible! So yes, the Supreme Divine has all the eternity. To create and sustain all the universes. And it uses the same eternity when it works behind that hand of yours which is struggling with curling iron!

But we generally forget both these truths, of the Divine Transcendent and the Divine Immanent. And we go about our day in forgetfulness. In our ignorance and on this plane of Ignorance, we get sucked in by the minutiae of mind, life and matter. And the only time we ever think of God is when we decide to step away from the demands of these three to connect with that Supreme Entity.

However, that is a God removed from everything else – though in truth That can never be removed for there is nothing but That, – one whom we picture sitting far away somewhere with whom we seek to make a contact, away from the chaos of the world. Our rishis and yogis have seen and spoken of That Transcendent Divine – one above the Manifestation.

But they have also sang of the Universal Divine who is present in the entire Manifestation. Of the One who is not separate from it all, who is the Lord and Master of the whole Cosmos. And they have also realized the truth of the Individual Divine. Of the One who is seated in each and every creature, every particle of all that is in the triple world of Ignorance.

Ishá vásyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyám jagat

For habitation by the Lord is all this, everything whatsoever that is moving thing in her that moves.

*~ Isha Upanishad, 1
(translation by Sri Aurobindo)*

So it is no miracle — or may be everything is a miracle — that the same Supreme who ensures the movement of all the planets is also in you and me when we brush our hair or cook in the kitchen.

It is in the flower as it blooms or withers away; in the pattern and fragrance of the flower. It is in the tree, in the seed which becomes the tree. And in the ether in which both the tree and seed are. In the words I type, in the words I delete, and in the inspiration from where these words come. Also in the spaces between the letters and words, and in the silences that will not be expressed through words. The term for this Supreme It or That, given to us, by our sages and seers is Brahman.



He is the centre of the circle of God,
He the circumference of Nature's run.
His slumber is an Almighty in things,
Awake, he is the Eternal and Supreme.

~ Sri Aurobindo, Savitri
CWSA, 34: 681-682



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The Brahman Alone Is

The Brahman alone is, and because of It all are. For all are the Brahman, says the spiritual vision of India.

This Supreme Reality is the reality of everything that we see in Self and Nature, reminds Sri Aurobindo. All Manifestation is in Brahman alone. Brahman is the Absolute, the Transcendent and incommunicable; and also the Supracosmic Existence that sustains the cosmos. Brahman is the Absolute which takes all relativities in its embrace. Quoting the Upanishadic wisdom he writes in poetic prose:

Brahman is the Consciousness that knows itself in all that exists; Brahman is the Force that sustains the power of God and Titan and Demon, the Force that acts in man and animal and the forms and energies of Nature; Brahman is the Ananda, the secret Bliss of existence which is the ether of our being and without which none could breathe or live. Brahman is the inner Soul in all; it has taken a form in correspondence with each created form which it inhabits.

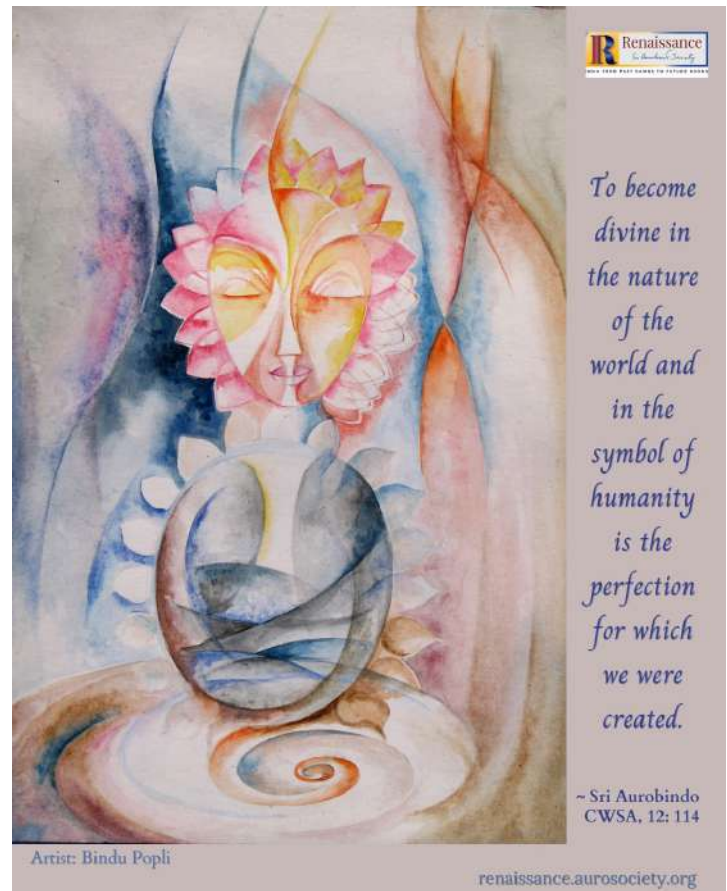
The Upanishads affirm that all this is the Brahman; Mind is Brahman, Life is Brahman, Matter is Brahman; addressing Vayu, the Lord of Air, of Life, it is said “O Vayu, thou art manifest Brahman”; and, pointing to man and beast and bird and insect, each separately is identified with the One,—“O Brahman, thou art this old man and boy and girl, this bird, this insect.”

The Lord of Beings is that which is conscious in the conscious being, but he is also the Conscious in inconscient things, the One who is master and in control of the many that are passive in the hands of Force Nature. He is the Timeless and Time; He is Space and all that is in Space; He is Causality and the cause and the effect: He is the thinker and his thought, the warrior and his courage, the gambler and his dice-throw.

~ CWSA, Vol. 21, pp. 338-339

Brahman, the Ishwara, in his self-manifestation, by the power of his Consciousness-Force — also

known as Yoga-Maya, — becomes all that is, the *jagati*. He is the Conscious Being, Soul, Spirit, Purusha. And it is by his Nature, *Prakriti*, the force of his conscious self-existence that he is all things. He is the Isha, the omniscient and omnipotent All-ruler. And it is by his Shakti, his conscious Power, that he manifests himself in Time and governs the universe. The same power is called *Prakriti* when it is seen in its executive aspect as working out the manifestation for the Purusha or Ishwara.



Of God and Nature

The absolute Brahman manifests as the Ishwara, the one Eternal. It also manifests as the multiplicity of the One in the Jiva, the living creature. Thus creating the double aspect of **Being and Becoming**. What we call as the soul or psychic entity in the individual is an eternal portion of Brahman, the Ishwara. But what of the other parts

in an individual which move, act, and grow in the plane of Ignorance? What of the world movements, the affairs of our lives and the struggles and conflicts therein? If all these are workings of the Nature, of which our human nature is an intrinsic aspect, what is the relation of Ishwara with the Nature? Sri Aurobindo explains,

Being turns into becoming and yet it is always itself and other than its becomings; the Universal individualises itself and the Individual universalises himself; Brahman is at once void of qualities and capable of infinite qualities, the Lord and Doer of works, yet a non-doer and a silent witness of the workings of Nature.

~ CWSA, Vol. 21, pp. 340-341

Sri Aurobindo regards man as not only made in the image of God, but made to manifest God. It is true that our oh-too-human nature, at present, is limited and tortured by inner and outer conflicts. But it is intrinsically divine because it is derived from the Super-Nature or Para-Prakriti and can be transformed into it. In Sri Aurobindo's integral vision of life and existence, earthly life is the only field in the created universe where man can not only realise but also reveal God integrally. This is why we must never condemn earth or spurn earthly life.

And this is also why we do not find in Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teachings any disdain of human nature on the basis of some mistaken idea that human nature is like dog's tail and hence irremediable. Rather the emphasis is on the full development of the nature to its utmost perfection so that it can be gradually refined and transformed into what it is meant to be — a true instrument of the Divine for fulfilling His Will and purpose in the world.

Following such an integral approach to human development can help heal the chasm that has been created in modern psyche regarding Man and Nature, Nature and God, and Man and God. With a growing awareness of the workings of Nature — e.g. the *triguna prakriti* of sattva, rajas and tamas — within one's own nature — and the gradual conquering of the interplay of their movements, an individual becomes a real master of Nature in the truest sense of the term.

This is what makes it a stream of sadhana, an inner path to gradually conquering and transforming one's nature. And this sadhana also includes an aspiration to arrive at a deeper harmony with all Nature, and through that with Existence, with the Divine *in* Nature.



THE MEMORY OF A SEED (SELF-REMEMBERING)

Gayatri Majumdar



बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम्।

*bījami māmī sarvabhūtānāmī
viddhi pārtha sanātanam,*

Know me to be the eternal seed
of all existences, O son of Pritha.

~ Bhagavad Gita, 7.10



Artist: Bindu Popli

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Editor's note: In the Chandogya Upanishad, we come across a story of Uddalaka showing his son Shvetaketu the Truth of the Brahman, of the Self, of That knowing which all is known. This is done through a series of experiments. He first asks Shvetaketu to break open a seed; the conversation goes something like this:

Uddalaka: "Bring me a fruit from the banyan tree."

Shvetaketu: "Here is one, Father."

Uddalaka: "Break it open."

Shvetaketu: "It is broken, Father."

Uddalaka: "What do you see there?"

Shvetaketu: "These tiny seeds."

Uddalaka: "Now break one of them open."

Shvetaketu: "It is broken, Father."

Uddalaka: "What do you see there?"

Shvetaketu: "Nothing, Father."

Uddalaka: "My son, you know there is a subtle essence which you do not perceive, but through that essence the truly immense banyan tree exists. Believe it, my son. Everything that exists has its Self in that subtle essence. It is Truth. It is the Self, and you, Shvetaketu, are That (tattvamasi)."

Enjoy the following reflection which is reminiscent of the Upanishadic story. The author, a highly accomplished poet, publisher and editor, notes that the idea for this reflection originated following

a conversation she had with BudhaCharan Budhacharan, Director of Amaravati Ashram (a Vedic Vastu Ashram) who teaches Sanskrit, holds Satsang and facilitates TM Meditation in Chiang Mai, Thailand, during his visit to Pondicherry.

~ Beloo Mehra

* * *

Take a seed; break it apart; look for some answers in it. Nothing? There is in a simple word ‘nothing’ in it.

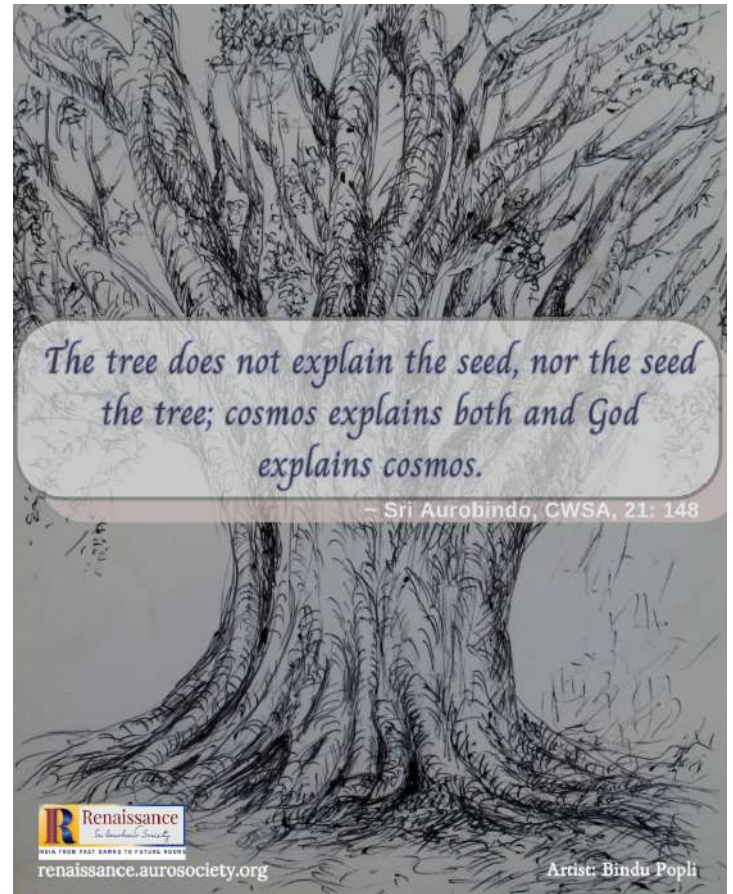
These seeds, they sit in the soil – some for months, others days. The sun shines, the wind blows and the rain drenches the earth. But nothing appears to even so much stir for a long time.

Then some movement is discerned: the soil shifts, worms hold their breath for there is this hint of a beginning. Then the seed is moved enough to remember what it had been once – the seed, not the tree.

All the secrets held within that seed – the memory of the fragrance of jasmines; colours of lilies they would bear; their symmetrically shaped petals, their stems, roots; the bark the palms the solace the memory the dream the tree.

All it takes is the breaking apart and courage to be wind-blown buoyant in the bitter-sweet joy of separation. Then the tree, she is on her own: the shaping of her sensibility; her intelligent rootedness; her abundant hours of fruiting and dreaming of old ways and days.

Experts say that there are approximately 100,000 types of trees all around the whole world. You can see millions of trees flourish on this planet; self-shape their destiny – knowing they’ve been around for millions of human years – ornamenting the planet – their heartbeats and songs heard above the honking



cabs and chattering of birds. They bend if they have to – arching towards the sun in an elegant *surya namaskar*.

Seeds remember trees and trees remember how they can magically green the eye; clutching one another with branches and roots, fanning the winds and storms, renewing their vows year after year; shedding the dead to make way for the fresh springy ones.

Canopies for the tired and restless, birds, bees, butterflies and everything else feed on them, many nest and others rest. Others chop them for fire or log them for profit.

Trees do not wander; they hardly have the need to do so. They possess other powers to wander as if

magically. Trees simply adapt even if it means that they have to cut through the concrete of cityscapes, intertwining across fences and walls, skirting the thick smog and sorrow flourishing and nourishing the planet.

Trees are found abundant everywhere spreading the good news: guys, everything you need to live is here.

In seeds, every morsel of grain, shape of leaf, bents of roots and branches are already designed and as if compressed. So when the structure takes shape; the tree emerges exactly the way it was meant to – nothing taken, nothing added: growing from a tentative seed is perfect and unique and where it is meant to be supported by what it needs to dance – birdsongs, a lake in the twilight, the slow whirring of the planet around its luminaries, dying ochre leaves.

So what are we looking at – the tree or the seed? Look again. This then is the *suchness of things*.

Trees listen to prayers and complaints of night creatures and withstand several hurricanes. Animals keep vigil from their highest of branches, and the faithful tie red and yellow prayer threads around their hearts.

They bear fruits and medicine for the troubled, but never have the need to consume the fruits of their labour. They clear the air for those less fortunate and inhale the toxins themselves. We lie and sit under them after a chaotic day; they are used to burn the dead.

They are least worried about what may or may not happen; they have no stock portfolios for an ‘uncertain’ future. They know they have everything they need right now; and what they don’t have, they can do without.

If logged away in the dead of night, or burnt on a cold morning, they never mind. For they have left some precious stuff behind – seeds.

And seeds remember. Always.



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I FOUND MY GOD ON THE TRAIL

Chirasree Mitra



This is my journey of finding my God. If you are interested, come take a walk with me.

My childhood was something straight out of a fairy tale. Doting parents, nurturing me and my siblings with just the right amount of discipline balanced with that essential space and freedom to grow and learn the true lessons that life had to offer. My two elder brothers added the perfect dash of mischievousness that led to just the right dose of trouble one needs to develop a healthy sporting spirit and face life with a great big smile!

Our days were filled with all that childhood needs – love, fun, carefree days, play, laughter, comfort, security, protection, independence. We were fed with nutritious food and important values and principles.

Our family was not religious. Both our parents were doctors. There was no regular practice of any rituals in our home. My earliest memories of religious events were the main Puja ceremonies of the Bengalis, namely Durga Puja, Kali Puja,

Lakshmi Puja and Saraswati Puja. But for me at that age these were festive times meant for special food and new clothes and lots of merriment. It was very similar to celebrating Christmas and Eid. All were big and grand festivals.

The concept of God was introduced at school. We went to good convent schools and it was during the morning assembly that we got introduced properly to God, to Jesus Christ. And I told myself, “Ok...so there is someone who can punish and reward us. But my own Father played a similar role too. Anyway, I better be a good girl”.

“Sinning” humanity is altogether a Christian idea, which falsifies our idea of the Divine—a Divine who punishes poor people because it is their misfortune to be born “sinners” would not be very generous!

~ The Mother, CWM, Vol. 4, pp. 176-177

That's how childhood tottered on and stepped into young adulthood. With that came development of intellect and curiosity. I now wanted to know a bit more about Maa Durga, Kali, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Lord Jesus and Prophet Mohammed and so on. The stories and mythology surrounding them fascinated me and left me quite awestruck!

Our parents took us on annual holidays and we travelled to various parts of India. These trips almost always included visits to temples as they were part of the regular sightseeing spots for tourists. But I never thought of God when I visited these places. I never liked the pushing and yelling crowd. However the history, the decoration, the artefacts and the architecture of these places interested and attracted me. So I volunteered for all the tours and visits.

Our parents worshipped their work and I realized my job was to worship my education and do justice to my student life. Thus studies peppered with a good amount of being naughty became my religion during those days of growing up. Life was good, life was content and there was no need for anything else outside this wonderful phase.

Then one fine day, adulthood arrived in all its glory! Was it my age or was it the events that proclaimed something significant had changed? Gradually events unfolded and life started throwing one challenge after another at my family and me. We all got affected and responded in our own way. I can talk for myself.

This was not the first time I was experiencing loss. As a child even losing a pencil or an eraser made me sad but it never touched that chord. But as I watched loved ones suffer and started losing them around me it hurt in a way like never before. The pain refused to go. But I wanted to heal.

I could not turn to my parents for that protection anymore. One had already passed away and the other I wanted to protect instead of seeking protection from her. There were well-wishers and dear friends

who provided immense support and strength but it was not enough. So there arrived this phase when I looked around for some solace, some reprieve, some panacea, some answers but could find none.

In retrospect, I knew someone was watching over me. Waiting for the right time, so that I had the right frame of mind. Serendipitous events led me to work in a hospital and eventually to meet a group of trekkers. In the hospital, interacting with individuals who were suffering and in pain led me to overcome my own trauma considerably. And I felt the urge to help more people and nurture the unbridled compassion that was surging inside me.

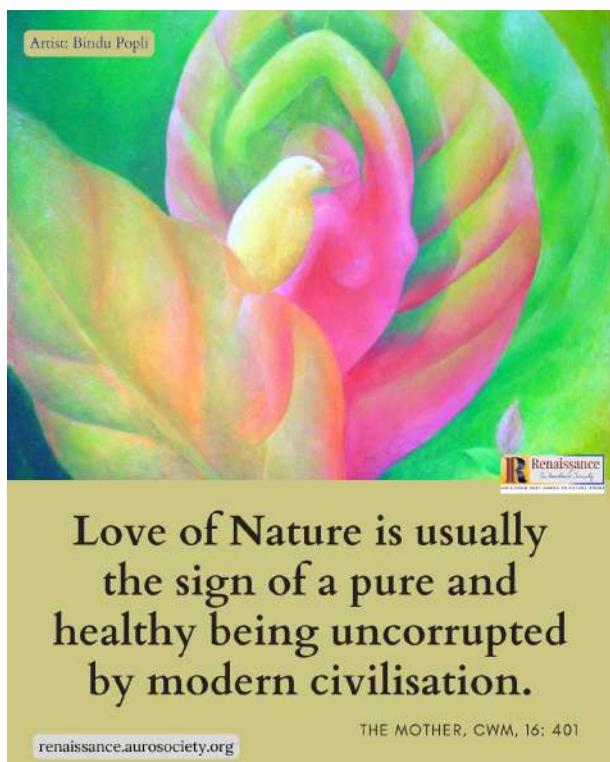
But still there was a kind of restlessness, a vacuum, a seeking, a thirst that needed to be quenched. So when my group of friends suggested a trekking trip I was quick to take up the offer. Nature had always held a very special place in my heart. I was thrilled and full of joyous anticipation knowing that we were headed to the mountains, the mighty Himalayas!

The closest that I had been to the Himalayas were visits to hill stations like Darjeeling, Gangtok, Nainital, Dalhousie, Shimla and a few more. But this was completely different.

Walking on the trail with the magnificent snow peaks for company, so near, the smell of mossy woods, the expanse of the alpine meadows, where at night I could almost touch the milky way with my fingertips, the sky changing colours like a painted canvas at dawn and dusk, the music of a gurgling stream or a distant river, the myriad wild flowers, chirpings of unknown birds, the cool fresh air filling up my lungs and the indescribable bounty of nature all around me was simply.....DIVINE!

Soon I would find out how true and literal that adjective was.

From the very first moment when my eyes beheld this panoramic vision and I inhaled the clean mountain air I was doused with a sense of



calmness. Along with the multi-sensory treat, a trek also demands a considerable physical effort. During such an arduous climb when I was struggling for my breath and trying to keep my feet steady, I lost track of time. As the sun slipped behind the mountains the temperature too dipped pretty fast.

On the trail you are never in a group, for everybody has their different pace. I found myself alone in the dark, fumbling to get the torchlight from my backpack. Gloves don't make it any easier to get hold of the bag's zip.

Exhausted, frustrated and cold I sat down on a boulder and blinked at the dark surrounding. And suddenly out of nowhere huge flashlights lit up and washed the darkness away! It was so bright that I remember bringing my hand up to guard my eyes from the brilliant shine. It took me seconds to realize it was no flashlights doing this trick but the big fat full moon gliding up into the night sky and bathing the terrain with a magical silver white sheen.

The snow peaks sparkled brightly like diamonds. I thought I might need my shades to marvel at this spectacular sight. I sat motionless totally rejuvenated with a regular breathing and pulse rate and copious amount of tears rolling down my face. They were tears of joy mingled with the pain which was bottled up. The moment had arrived. The dam had burst. My entire being was flooded with the overwhelming experiences of 'letting go', 'acceptance' and 'surrendering' at the same time.

There was nobody in sight, no temple compound, no deity and no mantras to recite. And just like that on that moonlit night, with pin drop silence all around, I found my God. I felt the embrace. I experienced the DIVINE!

Don't remember how long I sat there in a trance; but when I resumed my walk I had no need for the torchlight anymore. My steps were filled with confidence and I found my path as I followed the sound of the distant tolling of the bells. And I knew I would arrive at the Kedarnath shrine just in time for the evening ārti.

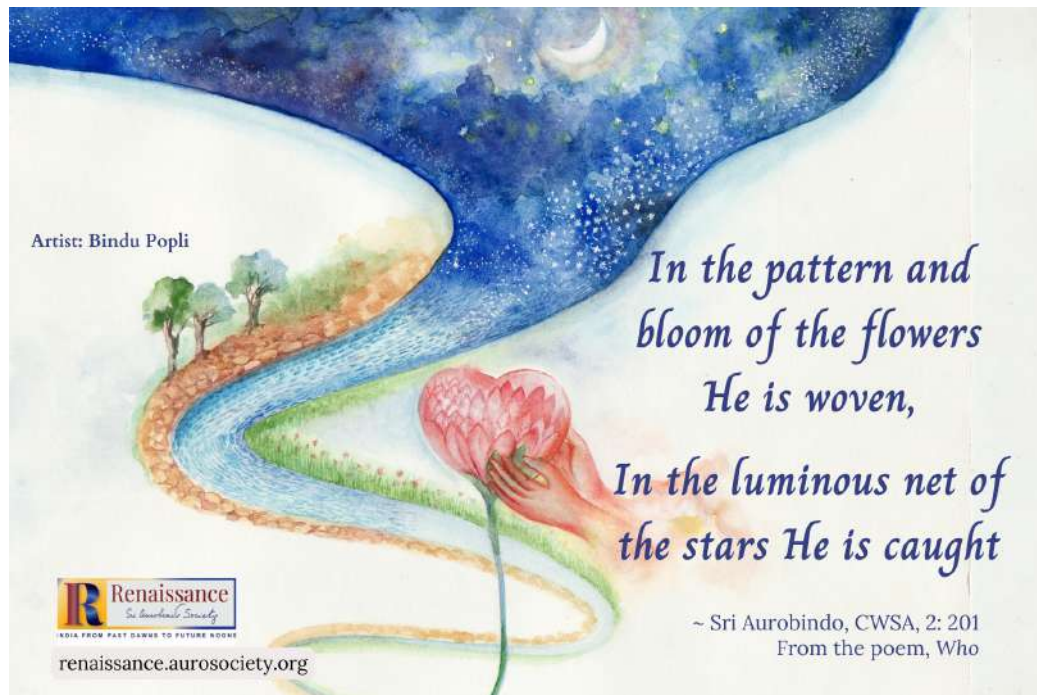
Years have passed and I have returned to the mountains over and over again. Along with my treks my journey to know and experience the Divine continues. Interactions with learned people, enlightening books, thought provoking discourses, big and small incidents in daily life have all helped me to progress in my spiritual path. But it was in the Himalayas, on that evening, on that trail that I found my God!

I keep trekking and keep seeking, trying to understand, trying to internalize further the spirit of Almighty and the journey continues...



ENVIRONMENTALIST, ASK THYSELF – IS NATURE SHE OR IT?

MS Srinivasan



In Nature's endless lines is lost the God.

~ Sri Aurobindo, Savitri

Nature sings her most exquisite songs to those who love her. She does not unfold her secrets to those who come only to gratify their desire of analysis, to gather facts, but to those who see in her manifold phenomena suggestions of lofty, delicate sentiment.

– Helen Keller

The modern environmental movement needs a radical rethinking on the nature of Nature. The crucial question is: Is Nature She or It?

One of the major causes of the present critical environmental condition is the lack of reverence or sensitivity to the living beauty and divinity of Nature. This is the result of a flawed conception of Nature as the inanimate storehouse of resources and a misguided humanism that looks at Nature as something which exists solely for fulfilling the

needs, desires or greed of human beings. As the Brazilian environmentalist, Lutzenberger points out:

The anthropocentric world-view westerners inherited – has allowed our technocrats and bureaucrats and most simple people too, to look at Planet Earth as if it were no more than free unlimited resources to be used, consumed and wasted for even our most absurd or stupid whims. We have no respect for creation.

The future of environmentalism requires a critical re-examination of this modern conception of Nature.

In the traditional scientific paradigm Nature is “It”. In the conception of physical sciences Nature is essentially an inanimate material energy. And consciousness is an “epiphenomenon”, emerging from physical nature

but not inherent in Nature. The life-sciences consider Nature as a complex living organism.

Some of the philosophical speculations spun around New Physics and the Deep Ecology movement admit the possibility of a consciousness or a living intelligence within Nature. But even these more intuitive conceptions in scientific and environmental thought are hesitant to radically question the traditional scientific conception of Nature.

However there are a few eminent scientific thinkers who are bold enough to question the crass materialism of orthodox science. For example, Max Planck, a Nobel Laureate in science and a pioneer of Quantum Physics, states:

"As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear-headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as the result of my research about the atoms, this much – there is no matter as such! All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particles of an atom to vibration and holds this minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent Mind. This Mind is the matrix of all matter."

Here comes the importance of some of the spiritual conception of Nature perceived by ancient seers.

In the scientific conception, Nature is something which cannot respond to human aspiration. And it

is something which has to be “saved” by human interventions. The spiritual paradigm, on the other hand, views Nature as someone who can respond consciously to human aspiration, prayer and action. Nature, in this paradigm, doesn’t need human beings to save her.

Nature can save herself and save us if we respond positively to her purpose and intentions.

Global warming is in fact a warning of Nature, to stop the self-destructive path we are taking and change course. If we respond positively to the warning in all the levels of our being, in our thought, feeling, will and action, with insight, prayer, love and action, Nature will respond to our aspirations. She will restore the balance and heal the damage we have wrought on her body.

It is time that the environmentalist movement goes beyond the scientific understanding of ecology. It must welcome the intuitive, inward, aesthetic and spiritual perceptions of Mother Nature. This doesn’t mean rejection of science or the present forms of environmental activism. This deeper perception will rather make environmental concerns, sensitivities or actions more meaningful and sustainable. Our efforts will be more creative when illumined by a deeper and more integral understanding of Nature. And more effective when animated by a sacred feeling for the divinity of Nature.

Our environmental actions should not be a mere dry duty to an inanimate It driven by fear of survival. It must become a loving service to a divine She inspired by a sacred and enlightened devotion.



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