

Chapter Two

Mantra and Japa

The Word

The word is a sound expressive of the idea. In the supra-physical plane when an idea has to be realised, one can by repeating the word-expression of it, produce vibrations which prepare the mind for the realisation of the idea. That is the principle of the Mantra and of japa. One repeats the name of the Divine and the vibrations created in the consciousness prepare the realisation of the Divine. It is the same idea that is expressed in the Bible, “God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light.” It is creation by the Word.

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The Word has power — even the ordinary written word has a power. If it is an inspired word it has still more power. What kind of power or power for what depends on the nature of the inspiration and the theme and the part of the being it touches. If it is the Word itself, — as in certain utterances of the great Scriptures — Veda, Upanishads, Gita, — it may well have a power to awaken a spiritual impulse, an uplifting, even certain kinds of realisation. To say that it cannot contradict spiritual experience.

The Vedic poets regarded their poetry as *mantras*, they were the vehicles of their own realisations and could become vehicles of realisation for others. Naturally, these mostly would be illuminations, not the settled and permanent realisation that is the goal of Yoga — but they could be steps on the way or at least lights on the way. Many have such illuminations, even initial realisations while meditating on verses of the Upanishads or the Gita. Anything that carries the Word, the Light in it, spoken or written, can light this fire within, open a sky, as it were, bring the effective vision of which the Word is the body. In all ages spiritual seekers have expressed their aspirations or their experiences in

poetry or inspired language and it has helped themselves and others. Therefore there is nothing absurd in my assigning to such poetry a spiritual or psychic value and effectiveness to poetry of a psychic or spiritual character.

Mantras

Mantras come to many people in meditation. The Rishis say in the Veda that they had the Truth by vision and inspiration, “truth-hearing seers”, *kavayah satyaśrutah* — Veda is *śruti* got by inner hearing.

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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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It [*the effect of japa*] depends on the way in which the japa is done.

If rightly done, the mantra is a means of opening to the light and knowledge etc. from above and it ceases as soon as that is done.

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I do not believe a mantra can change the physical consciousness. What it does, if it is effective, is to open the consciousness and to bring into it the power of that which the mantra represents.

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There is such a thing as mantra-shakti; but it acts only on certain conditions.

The Mantra OM

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 superconscious 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.

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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It [*Pranava japa*] is supposed to have a force of its own although that force cannot fully work without the meditation on the meaning. But my experience is that in these things there is no invariable rule and that most depends on the consciousness or the power of response in the sadhak. With some it has no effect, with some it has a rapid and powerful effect even without meditation — for others the meditation is necessary for any effect to come.

The Mantra *So'ham*

A divine Name or a Mantra (like the *So'ham*) can enter the adhara and move in the breathing as in your experience. When it does so, that is not the opening of which I speak in the sentence you quote, but it may come to make the aspiration effective by helping in the opening — by removing something that prevents the opening and by leading to the experience it carries in it.

The experience to which the *So'ham* mantra leads is the

realisation of one Being everywhere, all as the Divine, oneself and all as essentially one with that Divine. It is an experience in which one's separate personal existence shut up in the body ceases to be the normal thing; one feels the body as a point or small thing in a vast existence, consciousness or Ananda that is the Divine and oneself as spread out in that vast consciousness — as if the world were within us and not we inside the world or as if the world were one with us and one with the Divine. It is the “cosmic consciousness” that comes by this mantra. For our Yoga this is a beginning only, not the end as it is in the ordinary Yoga, — a liberation, not the Siddhi.

The Gayatri Mantra

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

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The Gayatri mantra is the mantra for bringing the light of Truth into all the planes of the being. The other [*Sri Aurobindo Mira*] has a general power.

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It is not necessary to give up Gayatri Japa or the process which you are following at present. Concentration in the heart is one method, concentration in the head (or above) is another; both are included in this Yoga and one has to do whichever one finds easiest and most natural. The object of the concentration in the heart is to open the centre there (heart-lotus), to feel the presence of the Divine Mother in the heart and to become aware of one's soul or psychic being which is a portion of the Divine. The object of the concentration in the head is to rise to the Divine Consciousness and bring down the Light of the Mother or her Force or Ananda into all the centres. This movement of ascent and descent is implied in the process of your japa and it is not therefore necessary to renounce it.

There is a level corresponding to the Satya Loka in the head

but the consciousness has at a certain stage to rise above the head freely to meet the same level in the universal Consciousness above.

Mantras in the Integral Yoga

The idea of your friend that it is necessary to receive a mantra from here and for that he must come is altogether wrong. There is no mantra given in this Yoga. It is the opening of the consciousness to the Mother from within that is the true initiation and that can only come by aspiration and rejection of restlessness in the mind and vital.

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We do not usually give any mantra. Those who repeat something in meditation call on the Mother.

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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. The concentration in the heart and the concentration in the head can both be used — each has its own result. The first opens up the psychic being and brings bhakti, love and union with the Mother, her presence within the heart and the action of her Force in the nature. The other opens the mind to self-realisation, to the consciousness of what is above mind, to the ascent of the consciousness out of the body and the descent of the higher consciousness into the body.

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There is not necessarily any difference of Force.¹ Usually the Mother's name has the full power in it; but in certain states of consciousness the double Name may have a special effect.

¹ *The correspondent asked whether there is any difference of Force when one repeats only the Mother's name and when one repeats both the names of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother together. — Ed.*

Namajapa or Repetition of the Name

The name of the Divine is usually called in for protection, for adoration, for increase of bhakti, for the opening up of the inner consciousness, for the realisation of the Divine in that aspect. As far as it is necessary to work in the subconscious for that, the Name must be effective there.

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It [*the effectiveness of namajapa*] depends on the person and how he does it. The Name of the Divine is in itself a power, if it is taken with the right faith and in the right attitude.

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Namajapa has a great power in it.

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Namochcharana has power but only if it comes from the heart and the soul; mere repetition with the mind is not enough.

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Whatever name is called the Power that answers is the Mother. Each name indicates a certain aspect of the Divine and is limited by that aspect; the Mother's Power is universal.

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Naturally, whatever name one concentrates on [*while awake*] will repeat itself [*in sleep*], if any does. But the calling of Mother in sleep is not necessarily a repetition — it is the inner being that often calls to her in difficulty or in need.

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I did not encourage the name with the breathing because that seemed like pranayam. Pranayam is a very powerful thing, but if done haphazardly it may lead to the raising of obstructions and even in extreme cases illness in the body.

Verses of the Gita Used as Japa

Verses of the Gita can be used as japa, if the object is to realise the Truth that the verses contain in them. If X's father has taken the salient verses containing the heart of the teaching for that purpose, then it is all right. Everything depends on the selection of the verses. A coherent summary of the Gita's teaching cannot easily be put together by putting together some verses, but that is not necessary for a purpose of this kind which could only be to put the key truths together — not for intellectual exposition but for grasping in realisation which is the object of japa.

Success in Japa

I am sorry the old reaction to the japa has recurred. Perhaps the mind is doing it too much as a means for a result. The japa is usually successful only on one of 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 Godhead 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 vibrations on the inner being to make it at a given moment suddenly open to the Presence or the Touch. But if there is a struggling or insistence for the result, then this effect which needs a quiet receptivity in the mind is impeded. That is why I insisted so much on mental quietude and on not too much straining or effort — to give time to allow the psychic and the mind to develop the necessary condition of receptivity — a receptivity as natural as when one receives an inspiration for poetry and music. It is also why I do not want you to discontinue your poetry — it helps and does not

hinder the preparation because it is a means of developing the right position of receptivity and bringing out the bhakti which is there in the inner being. To spend all the energy on japa or meditation is a strain which even those who are accustomed to successful meditation find it difficult to do — unless in periods when there is an uninterrupted flow of experiences from above.

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It is very good news that you got rid of the attack and it was the japa that helped you to do it. This and past experience also shows that if you can overcome the old association of the japa with sterility and sorrow, it can do its natural function of creating the right consciousness — for that is what the japa is intended to do. It first changes the vibrations of the consciousness, brings into it the right state and the right responses and then brings in the power or the presence of the Deity. Several times before you wrote to me that by doing japa you got rid of the old impulse and recovered calm and the right turn of the consciousness and now it has helped you to get rid of the invasion of sorrow and despondency. Let us hope that this last will also soon lose its strength like the impulse and calm and serenity begin to establish itself in the whole nature.