

MY EXPLORATIONS: PROCESS WORK THROUGH A SPIRITUAL LENS

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Abstract : 'Who am I' is an existential question that humans continuously grapple with at different stages of life. The ultimate universal search for that one Truth, for harmony, for freedom from pain and sorrows, for absolute bliss takes different forms.

To seek answers to questions such as Why am I the way I am, why is the world the way it is, some look for answers in the external, while some take the journey inward.

For me, this quest began with Process Work (PW) from 2010 which was simultaneously supported by my Spiritual sadhana. There became a need to explore both these dimensions – of process Work theory and practice and the scriptures a little more deeply. In the process, I discovered connections, synergies and points of departures. This paper is an outcome of my journey of exploration, to articulate, make sense and integrate my learnings and insights.

Process Work (PW) as practiced by leading institutions like Aastha Foundation and Sumedhas simply defined is “a tripodal body of knowledge, philosophy and praxis aimed at enhancing the well-being of individuals and their collectivities simultaneously” (S. Banerjee, 1997).

The definition of spirituality that I am using as a reference is a journey to understand the self towards balance, peace and living in joy and fulfilment. I have broadly used the framework of the Vedantic

scriptures (Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmasutras and Bhagwad Gita) and the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother to explore the spiritual dimensions.

In essence both PW and Spirituality look at unravelling the potential of individuals and free them from their limitations, incompleteness , in the process creating harmony, integration and wholesomeness in the self.

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Let me give a brief context to writing this paper.

Completing my internship in Process Work (PW) from Aastha in 2013, working with my guide and guru, Sushanto was the starting point for my quest to know, to understand what I know and to 'be' what I have understood. By a chance encounter, I was introduced to a weekly study group on Bhagwad Gita. I joined out of curiosity but within two sessions, was completely pulled into a deep immersion, as if by a higher force. The calling to delve, to read, to reflect has now turned into a daily sadhana. The more I reflected on the scriptures, the more I experienced a déjà vu- to all what I experienced through my internship phases and thereafter. There emerged in me a deep necessity to explore the theory and practices of PW and the scriptures more deeply. I discovered similarities, connections, synergies and divergences. This paper is an outcome of my need to articulate, make sense and integrate some of my explorations and insights.

I am a student and no master of either. The points of view that I will be discussing are my personal experiences with both Process Work (PW) and spirituality from my study of Vedantic Scriptures.

My first point of connect is the realm of Self Development, Self Realization and growth that both Spirituality(referred in the Vedantic scriptures) and PW point towards.

And that is how the search began. Understanding what is this Self, how does one connect with it, is there a relationship with Self to be established or to be rediscovered? What are we really seeking when we ask existential questions like; Who am I, What is the purpose of my life, what is the nature of this world etc? Are individual quests really different, what are the different paths and journeys that individuals take to grow, to evolve? This paper is an attempt to take the readers through my explorations.

I) Defining Process Work

Process Work as practiced by Institutions such as Aastha and Sumedhas evolved from the methodology developed by Dr. Pulin Garg, founder of ISISID. “**Process**” as defined by Dr. Pulin Garg “*is an ongoing recognition of the unfolding reality of the self*”. It involves paying attention to the thoughts, feelings, impulses and insights that arise in our internal landscape either as a result of outgoing actions or ongoing reflections.

Broadly the “**work**” aims to keep alive the energy of Self , to sustain the vibrancy of living. The “work” involves engagement , dialogue, reflection/contemplation to expand awareness, insightfulness, creativity, in search for greater states of aliveness, well being and wisdom.

The underpinning of process work is focused on self-discovery. The purpose of process work is to create space for visiting the inner world of human existence and phenomena with a view of taking one step closer to the truth, as it lies within each of us, that keeps us humane inspite and despite all our imperfections. The entire aim is

to recognise, acknowledge and take the next step, individually and together towards unravelling and making available more of oneself for oneself.

As a definition,

“Process Work is a tripodal body of knowledge, philosophy and praxis aimed at enhancing the well-being of individuals and their collectivities simultaneously. It is characterised by the use of groups, man’s inherent need to enquire into his condition and existence and is firmly committed to action for learning that will lead to further action”

(Banerjee, May 1997).

Process work is a recent innovation around 50 years old which offers tremendous opportunity and possibility for more people to visit the inner world as an individual and in collectives, in safe spaces that respect and dignify each human reality as is.

II) Defining Spirituality : The Vedantic framework

The simplest definition of spirituality is to connect and understand the Self within. It is the knowledge of the Consciousness, the Soul(Spirit) and the World. Spirituality is an internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness as an aspect of identifying with the larger. The true value of spirituality is that it points to the fact that there is something and someone beyond this physical world to which we need to connect. The enquiry process into Self has been mentioned as the three essential stages of sadhana: Shraavan (Listening), Manan (Reflection), Nidhidhyasan (to accept and start to live and act without an iota of doubt).

As Sri Aurobindo states:

“It is spirituality when you begin to become aware of another consciousness than the ego and begin to live in it or under its influence more and more. It is that consciousness wide, infinite, self-existent, pure of ego etc. which is called Spirit(Self, Brahman, Divine), so this necessarily must be the meaning of spirituality. Realisation is this and all else that the experience and growth of this greater consciousness bring with it”

(SriAurobindo).

Oft spirituality and religion are used interchangeably to imply one and the same thing. It is important to make a clear differentiation between the two. The overriding difference between the two is that Religion is belief in someone else’s experience while Spirituality is having one’s own experience. Religion consists of a set of beliefs and values, a set of do’s and don’ts and a set of practices and rituals and even dogmas. The religious approach often stems from a combination of nostalgia for the past, desire for structure in life, respect for authority and an inability to entertain ambiguity.

“The spiritual life (adhyatma-jivana), the religious life (dharma-jivana) and the ordinary human life of which morality is a part, are three quite different things. The spiritual life, proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and from a greater consciousness(THAT) in which one finds one's true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the THAT”

(SriAurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 137)).

The Vedantic Framework

Vedanta consists of essence of all the various sects of Hinduism according to Swami Vivekanand.

Swami Vivekanand further says that Vedanta is the *divinity within us, the oneness of existence*. While the various schools of hindu philosophy (Mimansa, Sankhya, Nyaya etc) are theoretical, when it comes to practice, it is from the standpoint of Vedanta.

Breaking the word Vedanta, “Veda” refers to the fundamental text and “Anta “ refers to the final teaching of Veda. Ved also means the knowledge to know.

The four pillars of Vedanta are the Vedantic scriptures: Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagwad Gita and the Brahmasutras.

The two parts of Vedantic scriptures are the theory and the techniques of practice.

III) What is the Purpose of engaging with the Self (Adhyatma)

Amongst all beings, humans are in the highest state of evolution. This can be attributed to the presence of a rational intellect that can discriminate (Vivekbuddhi). This discriminative awareness is the subtle instrument by which individuals enquire into the relationship between the part and the whole, the means and the goals, the good and the pleasant, the Self and the not self, the eternal and the ephemeral. With Viveka, humans are rendered capable of searching for themselves answers to Who am I, Why am I the way I am, Why is the world the way it is ? These have been the persistent preoccupation of the highest human thought since the earliest times. Within all these questions, an individual is actually searching for answers to free oneself of feelings of all limitations, incompleteness,

hopelessness and helplessness and reach immortality.

From when I was very young, I have been in touch with a strong internalization of "I am my only resource". As a result, talking to myself, seeking answers to dilemma's I encountered was something I did all the time. Asking from others somehow was not an option or a choice I thought I had. Making myself stronger, capable and self sufficient were my mobilizers. I come from a Maharashtrian culture that is steeped in values of hard work, austerity and which frowns upon display of affection and spontaneity. This framed my outer self as was. My key operating mantras have been work and action.

Simultaneously, there was another part that was alive, full of wonder, which formed deep bonds of love and togetherness. This self however was held in guilt, of being a traitor onto the other self. Yet that part kept leaking into the living processes, enriching it, creating aliveness and wellbeing that I was not even conscious of. My real quest began when the Being experienced a dryness deep within and the Becoming had drifted far away. Unable to connect with my inner Being, I was left with a deep feeling of discord, an incompleteness, a sense of things not being right (though what was not right or what is right, I knew not). My struggle can be explained exactly with this nugget from Sri Aurobindo,

"This aspiration is usually in contradiction with the present existence and normal experience of oneself which is that of a mortal being, full of imperfections, ego-ridden, largely animal, subject to transitory joys and much pain and suffering, bound by mechanical necessity. The problems of existence are problems of harmony. Discords and disorder of the materials, oppositions, demand a solution by accordance, by the discovery of a harmony. The search after these solutions by the human being is not irrational; it is rather the very effort and striving of Nature within him."

(SriAurobindo, Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, Appendix ,The Human Aspiration).

I began reading what I could. I sought answers in music, in art, in nature. Fortunately I also reconnected at that time with PW both personally and professionally.

It was as if I was hit with a boulder ! I was nudged to relook at myself, to relook at the meanings and contexts, my identity. I was so overwhelmed by the discovery of something so beautiful and yet besieged with a feeling of inadequacy simultaneously. Acknowledging vulnerability was a whole new ball game.

But deep within, the Self had caught on to the ride. And made a deep commitment to rediscover, reengage and realign. It was at once liberating and enlivening, bringing along possibilities and potentialities, of new ways of being and doing.

Shortly after my three internship phases, a chance encounter, began my quest with the Bhagwad Gita and subsequently, studies of other Vedantic scriptures. I was also drawn towards the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Aha, it all began to make sense. The scriptures, the works of Sri Aurobindo pushed me to reflect, to contemplate, to check what they said to me and my context. Words like the universality of nature, a universal consciousness began to make sense. I became aware and began to experience a force, a power bigger and larger that holds the collective. My antennae began its tuning to receiving.

I discovered for myself that the gap between what we can be and what we are in our mental zone of emotions and feelings are the root cause for discord, a disconnect with oneself and with others. My journey into that space where I could engage with the Self,

understanding myself, become aware of a higher Conscious principle, began in earnest.

IV) What is Self ?

Looking back into my internship journey, the framework of self was built through a process of Iti – Iti (This too, that too). So Self, I discovered was an amalgamation of Roles, Identity, the Being & Becoming. I began to see how and why I was the way I was (culturization, introjections, internalizations). I reviewed the consequences of holding on to an identity too tightly, how it limited my expansiveness. I began to question long held assumptions, was able to identify frozenness and deep burdens that I was carrying and to confront the chains that seemed bind me. The continuous engagement with the Self in PW settings helped to integrate and recalibrate the entire phenomenon of how I , the Self, my significant others, the community and the context work simultaneously. I connected with the idea of the Self as a process of expanding, adding and letting go. This released a fresh burst of energy, aliveness and wholesomeness within my Self.

But is that all that it is ? No. What also came strongly is that it is not a one stop journey but a continuous process. I was in touch with this propensity to fall back to old patterns, the dangers of the old self and the comfort of the known and familiar lurking in every nook and corner of the living process.

It was therefore extremely important to develop the ability to constantly reflect, to be aware of, to catch on to the emotions and the phenomenon. It also required of me an authenticity with myself,

the courage to face the not so pleasant within, the resilience and persistence to deal with all that which unfolds, to move towards the next level of growth and evolution.

I have to admit that there was a huge shift in my location. And with it, a great lightness. My relatedness and expression were more authentic, I was freer in my being, more accepting of my Self and others.

In our study group, we grappled with the question, What is Self? We explored the Self in Tattvabodha (SriAdiShankararcharya, 2016), wherein the enquiry into Truth begins with the statement:

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| <u>Atma satyam, tadanyat sarvam mithyam.</u> | The Self is Real and all other than That is unreal. |
|--|---|

The process was based on an approach of negating the superimposition of the unreal from the Real (Neti , Neti: Not this, not that). This process of distillation reveals the pure Self, the Truth. The Self, defined thus is other than the gross, subtle and causal bodies, beyond the five sheaths, the witness of the three states of consciousness. What remains then is the Self which by nature is SatChitAnanda (Existence, Consciousness, Bliss). This Self cannot be negated under any conditions (defined as the limitations of time, space and objects). Knowing the true nature of the Self means to be free from all the limitations of all conditioning- that is infinite, bliss. This concept was a deep one- and took a lot of contemplation, reflection and debate. This consciousness principle is very complex to understand initially, but slowly one begins to get glimpses of it, if one is tuned in. This Self referred to is a combination of the manifest

and the unmanifest. The Manifest is experienced through the perceptions of the sense organs, feelings of the mind (Manah), understandings of the intellect (Buddhi). The constant human preoccupation for fulfilment of desires and gratifications is propelled by an extremely powerful and binding self preservation instinct that expresses in the intellectual zone as binding desires for objects. This incessant pattern makes the individual confused and exhausted, turning away from itself and becomes unavailable to oneself.

The Unmanifest on the other hand is not available for any one of these instruments of cognition, feeling or understanding. The true reality is that the unmanifest is limitless, eternal, complete, all pervading, all encompassing. Going by the neti neti approach, the Self therefore is considered unmanifest, it is the vitality behind the sense organs (mere eyes do not see unless the self is in there to see), the feeler- potential in the mind and the very light that illumines the intellect. This is the Conscious Principle that vitalises the mind and intellect and makes them capable of feeling and thinking.

And then came the realization, that yes, there is this witness within me who "Is" , irrespective of all outer conditionings, beyond the boundaries of the transactional nature of the world. The Self then is the same everywhere, in all beings. The Self represents the awareness that knows all thoughts and all ideas in every living being. It is the knower of everything, in everyone and at all times.

It's a long journey from cognitive understanding to internalizing this aspect of the Self, the pure consciousness that powers all beings. For me, this was a track changer in many ways. It got me to think of me as a Self in many new ways. It also made me realize that intuitively, I was in touch with this larger Self and connection for a long time, which got reinforced through the PW and spiritual journeys.

One of the most powerful verse that has impacted me personally is the shloka Gita 6.5 & 6.6 which talks of how the Self can be one's best friend as also its worst enemy. The True Self is the Divinity residing within each one of us who needs to be deployed and befriended. This verse has added on to my meaning of me being my only resource.

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|---|--|
| उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् । आत्मेव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥ | Let an individual lift himself by his own self and let him not lower himself, for this self alone is the friend of oneself (aware and in control) and this Self alone is that enemy (unaware and not in Control) of oneself. |
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From Sri Aurobindo, I got the cues;

"The soul that is called to this deep and vast inward change, may arrive in different ways to the initial departure. It may come to it by its own natural development which has been leading it unconsciously towards the awakening; it may reach it through the influence of a religion or the attraction of a philosophy; it may approach it by a slow illumination or leap to it by a sudden touch or shock; it may be pushed or led to it by the pressure of outward circumstances or by an inward necessity, by a single word that breaks the seals of the mind or by long reflection, by the distant example of one who has trod the path or by contact and daily influence. According to the nature and the circumstances the call will come"

(SriAurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, Chapter II: Self-Consecration, 69).

There is a deeper understanding through both the dimensions of PW and the scriptures that Self Development cannot happen without investing in continuous sincere self effort, Conscious Action, Agency. In essence, journeying into the Self is possible if there is an aspiration, a will and authenticity. It is further enabled with trust , when judgement and evaluation is suspended to explore the “Isness” of the Self.

A question that I am currently grappling with is, If the eternal human aspiration is the enjoining and the union of the becoming and the Being, then why is it that we behave as if we are limited egocentric entities? Why is it difficult to comprehend that in essence we are the infinite, the immortal? The Gita, mentions Maya as the conditioning through which the nondual truth expresses itself, the one reality fanning out as the spectrum of the multiple universes. The principle of maya functioning in the individual is termed ignorance (avidya). To remain connected to the Being at all times and operating from the unfolding of the Becoming is the existential dilemma humans face. This dilemma is attributed to the individualized Mind (ego). In order to make its importance and relevance felt, the mind in most individuals controls and directs the unfoldment of the Becoming. The mind has the propensity to keep the self away from the present and engaged with the future or the past. This ego mind thrives on the combination of fear, desire and attachment. The pathos and the sorrows that the individual experiences in the world causes wrong actions, frozenness, indecision, ignorance, confusion and takes one away from the true nature of the Being.

The Being – Becoming dichotomy and dilemma has to a large extent been resolved cognitively through the explanations provided in the scriptures. To be constantly aware of the phenomenon and how it shapes the everyday experience and reality is a work in progress and process ! The question is active and alive in me, waiting for an integration.

The congruence of Thought, Feeling, Action (TFA) has been another very meaningful construct for me. The triad determines the flow and Pravaah that an individual experiences in their Being and Becoming in the inner that manifests as action in the outer world. Action is the ultimate and underlying truth as long as there is life.

Corollary to this is that no action is also an action. How do Thought and Feeling translate into Action? The body, mind and intellect act in the world of objects but the Self which is all pervading, the Life force, the Conscious principle does not. Without this conscious life force, the body, mind and intellect cannot function (eg comatose individual). When the body functions, one cannot necessarily say that the Consciousness functions for one can exist with little or partial awareness and yet engage in the world. As mentioned earlier, the veiling (ignorance) expresses itself at the intellectual level as thoughts, and as desires in the vital level. These thoughts coloured by mental tendencies (Nature/Prakriti) manifest themselves for their fulfilment in the outer world of objects as actions. Thus the mind's projections in the outer world are a type of crystallization of the mental desires among the objects of the world and these constitute the "action". This means that where there is a

mind, there are actions which also must be performed. These actions are therefore generated by the mind, strengthened by the mind and ultimately performed by the mind. All actions are performed in all cases depending on the qualities and tendencies of the nature (Gunas) of that individual (Gita 3.5). The pull of the mind and its turbulence is so strong that even the most evolved seekers get carried away by the senses despite striving to control them (Gita 2.60). Therefore one can't but act in accordance with one's own nature, nor can action be restricted. It can merely be altered by raising the consciousness to a higher level.

Moving to the next logical sequence: Since action is inevitable, what makes the individual capable of feeling and thinking? My understanding is : It is the Conscious Principle (Self, Being, the source of Energy) that vitalises mind and intellect and makes them capable of feeling and thinking.

The nature of individual identity is formed by the intersection of the being and the external world. It operates through a series of repetitive actions, thoughts and feeling. The identity tends to believe and tries to hold itself constant over time into set patterns that cause bondage and distancing from the Truth. As we think, so we become, the more we become, the more we think in the same given pattern(Gita 7.21).

One can take the meaning of this triad to multiple levels of understanding, experience and explorations. I have tried to summarize some of these in the table.

| Perspective | THOUGHT | FEELING | ACTION |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| PW | Intellect | Mind | Body |
| Sri Aurobindo | Mental | Vital | Physical |
| Yoga | Gyan (Discriminative knowledge) | Bhakti (Love and Surrender) | Karma (Duty consciousness) |
| Chakra | <u>Agya</u> | <u>Anahat</u> | Manipur |
| Macro | Observer | Catalyst | Doer |
| Manifestation | Intellectual | Emotional | <u>Behaviourial</u> |
| Management Jargon | Head | Heart | Hands |

The essence of the congruence between Thoughts Feeling and Action has been summarized from Chapter3 of Gita (Karma Yoga): Action without Knowledge leads to Confusion, Knowledge without Action is operating in a world of imagination and Knowledge with Right Action leads to transformation.

To me it has become clear without doubt, why each one of us is bound by our own habits, and how we are chained by our own peculiar type of thinking. Sensuous or divinity are products of individual type of thinking. Thoughts belong the realm of nature (Prakriti). The Self is the essential substratum (Purusa) that provides the world drama with its stage and scenario. An individual's experiences are perceived when the senses come in contact with the sense objects that lead to dualities of likes-dislikes, joy- sorrow etc. Dualities are the cause of disharmony in the individual's lives. The dilemma or the struggles that an individual grapples with are the dualities of Sat-Asat (Truth-Non Truth), Dharma-Adharma (Law of being-Non Being), Vivek-Avivek (discrimination-Non discrimination).

The scriptures have pointed a way for resolution : To make the Mind subtle, pure and single pointed in order to deploy its discretion and discriminative powers. Taking this to the TFA construct, Thought, with Knowledge and Feeling with Awareness lead to outcome as Action. The quality of thought (T) and the evocation and type of resultant feelings (F) determine the experience of the experience which includes the entire gamut of meaning making, choice making and role taking (A), which determines whether the individual feels discharged or replenished.

Another framework on Realms evolved while writing this paper. The various dimensions and the progression from one to the other have been captured in the Table below.

The Realms

| | REALM OF INCONSCIENT INACTIVITY & STILLNESS | REALM OF CONSCIENT ACTIVITY & MOVEMENT | REALM OF SUPER CONSCIENT ACTIVITY & STILLNESS |
|---|--|---|--|
| FIELD | InAction | Thought, Feeling, Action (TFA) | Actionlessness |
| CONTROL COMPASS | Fully driven by External | Driven by External and Internal | Fully Driven by Eternal |
| MIND PLANE | NoMind | Mind & Intellect | Higher Mind |
| TRANSITION DIMENSION | Space and Objects | Time, Space & Objects | Beyond Time, Space & Objects |
| MOVEMENT TOWARDS CONSCIOUS PRINCIPLE | Unconscious Incongruence | Conscious Congruence | Super Conscious Congruence |
| REALIZATION OF POTENTIALITIES | Matter | Life & Becoming | Being |

There are three Realms in which the world (and individuals) operate. The Realm of Conscient Activity & Movement is the Field for Action (TFA). There is a Realm of Inconscient InActivity & Stillness that occurs before and the Realm of Super Conscient Activity & Stillness that occurs after. The evolution is inevitable, moving from Inconscient Stillness to Conscient Movement to Super Conscient Stillness. This model is still work in process and would need further detailing.

V) Summarizing: my explorations of PW through a spiritual lens

- The goal of both PW and Spirituality is to make an individual gain an intimate, subjective experience of the Self within: that Self which is the knowable, realizable and the experienceable.
- Both these at the core, rely on philosophies and traditions of discovery, definition and formulations on the nature of man, the nature of phenomena and the nature of the universe. Many of the rituals, practices, aphorisms and tenets of PW have evolved from the Indian scriptures.
- PW initiated my journey, scriptures accelerated it, both providing glimpses of possibilities. PW stops short at accepting and valuing the human phenomenon. The vedantic framework of spirituality on the other hand provided comprehensive knowledge, theory of the basis of the nature of individual, world and reality and the logic of the cause and phenomenon.
- The joining in, satsang is a critical component for enabling the development and unfoldment that both the PW community and my study groups have provided.

- The format of traditional spiritual study groups, of discourses, readings, interactions do not provide spaces for individual seekers to get in touch and resolve their deeply held guilt, shame and fears that the PW spaces offers.
- PW has the potential to become an organized body. My experience says it requires sharper organization and intellectual rigour. There is a high reliance on a few veterans/ stalwarts for sharing and knowledge transfer. If the knowledge and science is not documented, there is an imminent danger of it becoming a lost art.
- PW relies purely on experiential learning while the scriptures are a repository of knowledge (Gyan- theoretical underpinnings) and a practical guide to experience Knowledge (Vigyan).
- Therefore I feel that there is a strong case to synthesize the gyan and vigyan in both PW and scriptures to make it available to a larger community waiting and wanting to rediscover and experience the Self in an ambience of love and trust.

VI) Some insights from my explorations

- This journey is possible only when there is personal commitment onto oneself, to persevere inspite of and despite.
- Love that is unconditional sans desires and expectation is way higher than any theory, principle, science, process, systems or principles.
- The philosophy of Self realization does not subscribe to rewards or punishment.

- Truth is unveiling of ignorance. Corollary: Falsity is Truth out of context.
- Knowledge is eternal, universal, limitless and all pervading. No individual or collective can actually claim it as their own.
- Spirituality is living in the Self, knowing the Self, enjoying the Self in the Self by the Self. The journey inwards allows a flow onto the journey outwards, automatically influencing the collectives.
- Letting go is difficult. To let go at a deep level requires a renunciation that comes from the core and not just external. It happens when shift from “it should / must be done” occurs to an aspiration and conviction that “this is the only way”.
- This journey moves through some universal steps. It often always begins with a deep experience, a loss, a feeling of some emptiness. Answers are then sought, sources are searched (guru, scriptures, process, cult). This is followed by an immersion into a deeper understanding, internalization, a commitment and practice. If any of this is short changed, the journey gets stymied. The final stage is of making it a way of life, a way of being, the dharma to follow.
- All situations/ conditions are actually opportunities tailor made for growth and evolution of the Self. Growth can be a circuitous loop through trial and error, or a direct route offered by deep understanding, connect and integration with the Self through a threefold path; Yoga of Knowledge, Yoga of Practice and Action and Yoga of Bhakti.
- The process of growth follows from Gross, to the senses, to mind, to the intellect to the Self (Atman). It entails living each

moment fully with the right intention and attitude. The three key inputs for altering thoughts that determine the overall quality of mind are: Ahaar(What we imbibe with our senses), Vihaar (what associations we cultivate and mingle with) and Vichaar(quality of thoughts and intentions of thoughts).

- Language/ words/ images/ associations have a limitation of not being able to capture the vastness and depth of the experience which is actually nameless, formless, timeless. To catch onto the intention and nature is the actual language of this exploration.
- There are different experiences, learning and evolution for each individual and there are no comparisons between each spiritual journey. This “Process” has no timelines nor an end destination.
- Oneness is the core individual quest, the dissolution of all dualities. It is also where the wellspring of Love resides. The Ego (Mind) has a propensity to keep the Self (individualized state) to only remain with the identification with body, mind and intellect. This identification of Me and the Other leads to the struggles of incompleteness, limitations, inadequacies. The capacity to realize this oneness requires a deep aspiration, a preparedness and readiness of the being.
- Shraddha and Surrender, are essentials for delving into the Self. Journeying into the unknown is an act of surrender. The unknown in reality is simply veiled knowledge that is unavailable for deployment consciously. Shraddha propels one to take that leap without any certainty to make known that “*known unknown*”. To surrender is extremely difficult. It is that final act, an ultimate test of the letting go of the Self (ego), to trust, to be without fear.

- The role of Guru or Facilitator, is an important medium for realization of the Self. A Guru is the provider of the four pillars : safety, trust, respect and dignity and is the sutradhar to take on the journey of Self rediscovery.
- I am aware that this inner blissful quiet world, the original source of energy and aliveness in me is available to me only when I detach from the external bindings of the senses with the sense objects and become attached to the vast inner world of limitlessness.
- Life and its calling requires one to be live integrally and authentically from the standpoint of spiritual (illumined consciousness), intellectual (reason), emotional (ethics and morality) and physical (traditions and customs). This is what I have been able to synthesize for myself. Practicing to integrate the knowledge in the living processes is the journey I have committed myself to.

VII) In Conclusion

The operating word for my unfolding continues to be in Karma (Works). I rediscovered Bhakti and Love and am learning to infuse it into my journey. What I worked with intuitively now is better understood with logic and rationale, which has considerably enhanced the nature and quality of my explorations. There is an “Easeness with the Isness”. With it, a continuous conscious attempt to integrate the physical, mental, emotional and intellectual. I feel deeply connected to that voice within that nudges me to expand the frontiers, to go beyond, to rise above. I have hopped on to the path for Self rediscovery using Sankhya (analysis) and Yoga (synthesis).

Sri Aurobindo has beautifully summarized the story of personal growth and evolution,

“All knowledge and endeavour can reach its fruition only if it is turned into experience and has become a part of the consciousness and its established operations”

(SriAurobindo, Life Divine).

Nothing that I have shared is my own knowledge, but a mere compilation of my sadhana. My exploration and reflections are not the only truth, only my subjective truth in the process of living and learning. This paper is an invitation to join in; let us together expand our subjective truths.

Life does come a full circle. I am my only resource, my initial operative word through my quest has added a vaster meaning : all resources are within me. It holds so much more of abundance, joining in and a joyousness from where the story began.

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