

# INTRODUCTION

## WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

### Love and Aspiration in Plants

The movement of love is not limited to human beings and it is perhaps less distorted in other worlds than in the human. Look at the flowers and trees. When the sun sets and all becomes silent, sit down for a moment and put yourself into communion with Nature: you will feel rising from the earth, from below the roots of the trees and mounting upward and coursing through their fibres up to the highest outstretching branches, the aspiration of an intense love and longing,—a longing for something that brings light and gives happiness, for the light that is gone and they wish to have back again. There is a yearning so pure and intense that if you can feel the movement in the trees, your own being too will go up in an ardent prayer for the peace and light and love that are unmanifested here.

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Have you never watched a forest with all its countless trees and plants simply struggling to catch the light—twisting and trying in a hundred possible ways just to be in the sun? That is precisely the feeling of aspiration in the physical—the urge, the movement, the push towards the light. Plants have more of it in their physical being than men. Their whole life is a worship of light. Light is of course the material symbol of the Divine, and the sun represents, under material conditions, the Supreme Consciousness. The plants have felt it quite distinctly in their own simple, blind way. Their aspiration is intense, if you know how to become aware of it.

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Those who have studied the vegetable kingdom in detail are well aware that there is a consciousness there. For instance, plants need sunlight to live—the sun represents the active energy which makes them grow—so, if you put a plant in a place where there is no sunlight, you see it always growing up and up and up, trying, making an *effort* to

reach the sunlight. In a virgin forest, for instance, where man does not interfere, there is this kind of struggle among all the plants which are always growing straight upwards in one way or another in their *effort* to catch the sunlight. It is very interesting. But even if you put a flower-pot in a fairly small courtyard surrounded by walls, where the sun doesn't come, a plant which normally is as high as this (*gesture*), becomes as tall as that: it stretches up and makes an *effort* to find the light. Therefore there is a consciousness, a will to live which is already manifesting.

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The trees rise towards the sky, beautiful symbol of Nature's aspiration towards the light.

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It is not certain whether the plant makes an effort or not. And in any case, it has an aspiration; plants grow because they aspire for the light, for the sun, for the open air.

And it's a kind of competition. If one goes into a wood, for instance, into a park where there are many different plants, one can observe very clearly that there is a sort of competition among plants to pass each other and reach the light and open air above. It is indeed quite wonderful to see.

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We must suppose in the plant and the metal also a force to which we can give the name of consciousness although it is not the human or animal mentality for which we have hitherto preserved the monopoly of that description.

Not only is this probable but, if we will consider things dispassionately, it is certain. In ourselves there is such a vital consciousness which acts in the cells of the body and the automatic vital functions so that we go through purposeful movements and obey attractions and repulsions to which our mind is a stranger. In animals this vital consciousness is an even more important factor. In plants it is intuitively evident. The seekings and shrinkings of the plant, its pleasure and pain, its sleep and its wakefulness and all that strange life whose truth an Indian scientist [Jagadish Chandra Bose] has brought to light by rigidly scientific methods, are all movements of consciousness, but, as far as we can see, not of mentality. There is then a sub-mental, a vital consciousness which has precisely the same initial reactions as the mental, but is different in the constitution of its self-experience, even as that which is superconscious is in the constitution of its self-experience different from the mental being.

## The Care of Plants and Flowers

*How to develop our consciousness in order to work in a better way with plants and flowers?*

First you must learn to be silent, then note carefully what happens in the consciousness.

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*Why do plants fall ill and what can we do to help them?*

When man does not meddle, the illness of plants seems to be accidental. But man's action has upset the life of plants, even as that of animals, of course.

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*There are many plants we are trying to grow here which suffer because of our climate. How can we help them to grow and blossom here?*

Naturally, plants which like cold climates would grow in greenhouses. Also by planting forests one could have a regulating action on the climate.

Growth of consciousness in the atmosphere will surely have an effect which it is difficult to describe beforehand.

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As a rule plants suffer if they are kept shut up in a room.

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I do not like clipped and trimmed plants, it looks too artificial.

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Just imagine, there are plants which are vain! I am speaking of plants one grows for oneself. If one pays them compliments by words or by feelings, if one admires them, well, they hold up their head—with vanity!

Look, it's Enthusiasm, see how beautiful it is! It must be put in water right away, otherwise....

It needs vital force and water is vital force. It is lovely! What fantasy!

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*Sweet Mother, what should we do with the flowers which you give us every day?*

Flowers? You ought to keep them as long as they are fresh, and when they are no longer so, you must collect them and give them to the gardener (any gardener you know), so that he can put them in the earth to produce other flowers. Yes, one must give back to the earth what it has given us, for otherwise it will become poor.

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*Can I remove the branches of shrubs which are overhanging and causing inconvenience to the inmates?*

I cannot say yes or no, as all depends on the way it is done. It is not only the welfare of the inmates that must be taken in consideration but also the welfare of the shrubs.

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The only thing I insist upon is care, gentleness, consideration as you would have for a living being—for plants are living and *they feel and suffer*.

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When a plant is tired or sick give it *rest* for a few days, in a proper place, and it will recover. Repotting is always a blow and to give a blow to a sick plant is just the way of finishing it.

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Flowers are very receptive and they are happy when they are loved.

## Dreams, Beings and Forces

*What do flowers and gardens in our dreams signify? Sometimes in dreams one sees flowers which don't exist.*

This happens undoubtedly in the subtle physical. But it may also be possible that these flowers exist physically on the earth in a place you don't know.

*What do these flowers symbolise?*

These symbols are most often individual and different people have different significances. It may happen that certain people have written books and those who read them adopt their symbology. But then it is a purely mental question. You give a certain meaning to a flower, for instance, to a rose—we have a certain meaning for the rose.

As we have given this meaning, in your dreams you see the same symbolism. If you tell me one of your dreams I could explain it to you. You see, a flower must spontaneously tell you something, then that would be symbolic for you. But that may be what we have already decided.

*Are there subtle beings who are in an intimate relation with flowers?*

That is possible, even probable. There are children who have experienced this and related it.

*Is it possible to become conscious of these beings and work in harmony with them?*

Yes. It is a question of nature and capacity.

*Is it possible to develop this capacity and how to do it?*

Certainly one can develop the capacity if one takes sufficient interest in this to put in the time and necessary effort. Naturally, it will be more or less difficult according to each one's nature.

To become conscious of one's dreams helps to do this. A silent and still concentration helps also.

*Are there forces directly hostile to vegetal nature? Are insects a manifestation of these forces?*

There do not seem to exist forces consciously and voluntarily hostile to the vegetal kingdom. Insects do harm because they feed on plants, but in this way they serve them also; both things are there, good and bad, without any conscious will. They do good, they do harm, without knowing it.

*Mother, does a plant have its own individuality and does it also reincarnate after death?*

This may happen, but it is accidental.

There are trees—trees especially—which have lived long and can be the home of a conscious being, a vital being. Generally it is vital entities which take shelter in trees, or else certain beings of the vital plane which live in forests—as certain beings of the vital live in water. There were old legends like that, but they were based on facts.

The plants serve as home and shelter, but the being is not created by the plant itself!

Innumerable like ideas, flowers are joyous companions.

### **Contact with the Psychic**

The soul of a plant or an animal is not dormant — only its means of expression are less developed than those of a human being. There is much that is psychic in the plant, much that is psychic in the animal. The plant has only the vital-physical elements evolved in its form; the consciousness behind the form of the plant has no developed or organised mentality capable of expressing itself, — the animal takes a step farther; it has a vital mind and some extent of self-expression, but its consciousness is limited, its mentality limited, its experiences are limited; the psychic essence too puts forward to represent it a less developed consciousness and experience than is possible in man. All the same, animals have a soul and can respond very readily to the psychic in man.

The plants are very psychic, but they can express it only by silence and beauty.

Directly there is organic life, the vital element comes in, and it is this vital element which gives to flowers the sense of beauty. It is not perhaps individualised in the sense we understand it, but it is a sense of the species and the species always tries to realise it. I have noticed a first rudiment of the psychic presence and vibration in vegetable life, and truly this blossoming one calls a flower is the first manifestation of the psychic presence. The psychic is individualised only in man, but it was there before him; but it is not the same kind of individualisation as in man, it is more fluid: it manifests as force, as consciousness rather than as individuality. Take the rose, for example; its great perfection of form, colour, scent expresses an aspiration and a psychic giving. Look at a rose opening in the morning at the first touch of the sun, it is a magnificent self-giving in aspiration.

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Love of flowers is a valuable help for finding and uniting with the psychic.

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*You have written: "Love of flowers is a valuable help for finding and uniting with the psychic." Could you explain this more in detail?*

Since flowers are the manifestation of the psychic in the vegetal kingdom, love of flowers would mean that one is drawn by the psychic vibration and consequently by the psychic in one's own self.

When you are receptive to the psychic vibration, that puts you in a more intimate contact with the psychic in your own self. Perhaps the beauty of flowers too is a means used by Nature to awaken in human beings the attraction for the psychic.

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*What is the best way of opening ourselves to the deep influence of flowers?*

To love them. If you can enter into psychic contact with them, then that would be perfect.

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*How can one enter into a psychic contact with flowers?*

When one is in conscious contact with one's own psychic, one becomes aware of an impersonal psychic behind the whole creation and then, through this, one can enter into contact with flowers and know the psychic prayer they represent.

*What is this impersonal psychic you spoke of?*

By impersonal psychic I mean the psychic region which does not belong to any individual in particular—the psychic region which is in the creation, as air is in the earth's atmosphere.

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*What is this psychic prayer that flowers represent?*

The psychic, when it manifests in a plant, in the form of a flower, is in the form of a wordless prayer; it is the elan of the plant towards the Divine.

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*We have flowers with such significances as 'Greed for Money', 'Passion', 'Vanity', 'Chatter', etc. How do these flowers represent a psychic prayer?*

These flowers offer their bad vibrations for transformation.

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*Do the strong-scented flowers represent a more ardent psychic prayer than the unscented ones?*

Their nature gives itself more generously and more integrally.

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*And is there the same difference among plants and trees?*

No, that is like the difference among animals; some are big, some are small. But everywhere it is like that... in minerals, in animals, in men. Each manifests its own nature and these natures are innumerable.

### **Flowers are Mediums of Transmission**

When I give flowers, it is as an answer to the aspiration coming from the very depths of your being. It is a need or an aspiration, it depends upon the person. It may fill a

void or else give you the impetus to progress, or it may help you find the inner harmony in order to establish peace. Do you understand?

Be like a flower. One must try to become like a flower: open, frank, equal, generous and kind....

A flower is open to all that surrounds it: Nature, light, the rays of the sun, the wind, etc. It exerts a spontaneous influence on all that is around it. It radiates a joy and a beauty.

It is frank: it hides nothing of its beauty, and lets it flow frankly out of itself. What is within, what is in its depths, it lets it come out so that everyone can see it.

It is equal: it has no preference. Everyone can enjoy its beauty and its perfume, without rivalry. It is equal and the same for everybody. There is no difference, or anything whatsoever.

Then generous: without reserve or restriction, how it gives the mysterious beauty and the very own perfume of Nature. It sacrifices itself entirely for our pleasure, even its life it sacrifices to express this beauty and the secret of the things gathered within itself.

And then, kind: it has such a tenderness, it is so sweet, so close to us, so loving. Its presence fills us with joy. It is always cheerful and happy.

Happy is he who can exchange his qualities with the real qualities of the flowers. Try to cultivate in yourself their refined qualities.

I give you flowers so that you may develop the Divine qualities they symbolise. And they can directly transmit into the psychic all that they contain, pure, unalloyed. They possess a very subtle and very deep power and influence. Do you understand? Now, it seems to me that you wish to become like a flower or cultivate these qualities. And, you know, each flower symbolises an aspect, an emanation, an aspiration and a progress in the evolution of the earth.\*

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On the plane of Matter they [plants] are the most open to my influence—I can transmit a state of consciousness more easily to a flower than to a man: it is very receptive, though it does not know how to formulate its experience to itself because it lacks a mind. But the pure psychic consciousness is instinctive to it. When, therefore, you offer flowers to me their condition is almost always an index to yours. There are persons who never succeed in bringing a fresh flower to me—even if the flower is fresh it becomes limp in their hands. Others, however, always bring fresh flowers and even revitalise drooping ones. If your aspiration is strong your flower-offerings will be fresh. And if you are receptive you will be also very easily able to absorb the message I put in the flowers I give you. When I give them, I give you states of consciousness; the flowers are the mediums and it all depends on your receptivity whether they are effective or not.

\* As recollected.

Flowers are extremely receptive. All the flowers to which I have given a significance receive exactly the force I put into them and transmit it. People don't always receive it because most of the time they are less receptive than the flower, and they waste the force that has been put in it through their unconsciousness and lack of receptivity. But the force is there, and the flower receives it wonderfully.

I knew this a very long time ago. Fifty years ago.... There was that occultist who later gave me lessons in occultism for two years. His wife was a wonderful clairvoyant and had an absolutely remarkable capacity—precisely—of transmitting forces. They lived in Tlemcen. I was in Paris. I used to correspond with them. I had not yet met them at all. And then, one day, she sent me in a letter petals of the pomegranate flower, “Divine’s Love”. At that time I had not given the meaning to the flower. She sent me petals of pomegranate flowers telling me that these petals were bringing me her protection and force.

Now, at that time I used to wear my watch on a chain. Wrist-watches were not known then or there were very few. And there was also a small eighteenth century magnifying-glass... it was quite small, as large as this (*gesture*).... And it had two lenses, you see, like all reading-glasses; there were two lenses mounted on a small golden frame, and it was hanging from my chain. Now, between the two glasses I put these petals and I used to carry this about with me always because I wanted to keep it with me; you see, I trusted this lady and knew she had power. I wanted to keep this with me, and I always felt a kind of energy, warmth, confidence, force which came from that thing.... I did not think about it, you see, but I felt it like that.

And then, one day, suddenly I felt quite depleted, as though a support that was there had gone. Something very unpleasant. I said, “It is strange; what has happened? Nothing really unpleasant has happened to me. Why do I feel like this, so empty, emptied of energy?” And in the evening, when I took off my watch and chain, I noticed that one of the small glasses had come off and all the petals were gone. There was not one petal left. Then I really knew that they carried a considerable charge of power, for I had felt the difference without even knowing the reason. I didn't know the reason and yet it had made a considerable difference. So it was after this that I saw how one could use flowers by charging them with forces. They are extremely receptive.

*Do flowers retain the force always, even when they decay?*

Decay? No, my child; when they dry up, yes. Decayed flowers are just nothing. A decomposition takes place, so the thing disappears. Perhaps it brings energy to the soil, that's quite possible; but still, when it decays it is good only to make manure to grow other flowers. But if it dries up, it is preserved, it can remain for quite a long time.

## The Significances of Flowers

*Sweet Mother, how do you give a significance to a flower?*

By entering into contact with it and giving a more or less precise meaning to what I feel... by entering into contact with the nature of the flower, its inner truth; then one knows what it represents.

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*Each flower has its special significance, hasn't it?*

Not as we understand it mentally. There is a mental projection when one gives a precise meaning to a flower. It may answer, vibrate to the touch of this projection, accept the meaning, but a flower has no equivalent of the mental consciousness. In the vegetable kingdom there is a beginning of the psychic, but there is no beginning of the mental consciousness. In animals it is different; mental life begins to form and for them things have a meaning. But in flowers it is rather like the movement of a little baby—it is neither a sensation nor a feeling, but something of both; it is a spontaneous movement, a very special vibration. So, if one is in contact with it, if one feels it, one gets an impression which may be translated by a thought. That is how I have given a meaning to flowers and plants—there is a kind of identification with the vibration, a perception of the quality it represents and, little by little, through a kind of approximation (sometimes this comes suddenly, occasionally it takes time), there is a coming together of these vibrations (which are of a vital-emotional order) and the vibration of the mental thought, and if there is a sufficient harmony, one has a direct perception of what the plant may signify.

In some countries (particularly here) certain plants are used as the media for worship, offering, devotion. Certain plants are given on special occasions. And I have often seen that this identification was quite in keeping with the nature of the plant, because spontaneously, without knowing anything, I happened to give the same meaning as that given in religious ceremonies. The vibration was really there in the flower itself.... Did it come from the use that had been made of it or did it come from very far, from somewhere deep down, from a beginning of the psychic life? It would be difficult to say.

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*Have flowers a power in the occult world?*

Yes, they have an occult power; they can even transmit a message if one knows how to charge them with it.

*Can the flower transmit other messages apart from the significance you have given it?*

It is not impossible, but the person who sends the message must have a great power of formation.

*Is the power of formation purely occult or can a mental or vital power of formation also transmit messages?*

The mental power of formation can certainly transmit messages. But for these messages to be received and understood, the person to whom they are sent must himself be very receptive mentally and particularly attentive.

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*When we offer flowers, with what attitude should we offer them? Does it matter if we do not know the significance?*

This depends completely on the person who gives the flowers and on his state of consciousness. The same answer may be given to both the questions. According to the degree of consciousness of people, what they do has or hasn't a deep significance.

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*If our flower-offering depends on our state of consciousness, does it help us to learn the significances of flowers even if it is purely mental to begin with?*

Yes, surely.

### **The Fragrance of Flowers**

The fragrance of flowers is physical Nature's offering to the Divine, her most subtle offering.

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It's largely the fragrances that have made me give flowers their significance.... I find these studies quite interesting; it corresponds to something really *true* in Nature.

Once, without telling me anything, someone brought me a sprig of tulsi [*Ocimum sanctum*]. I smelled it and said, "Oh, Devotion!" It was absolutely a ... a vibration of

devotion. Afterwards, I was told it is the plant of devotion to Krishna, consecrated to Krishna.

Another time, I was brought one of those big flowers (which are not really flowers) somewhat resembling corn, with long, very strongly scented stalks [Spiritual Perfume]. I smelled it and said, Ascetic Purity! ... just like that, from the odour alone. I was later told it was Shiva's flower when he was doing his *tapasya*.

These people have an age-old knowledge which they have preserved. In other words, it is something *concretely true*: it doesn't depend at all on the mind, on thought or even on feelings—it is a vibration. . . .

Yes, this flower is Shiva, doing his *tapasya*.

And interestingly enough, its smell is fantastically attractive to snakes; it makes them come from far away to nest in the shrubs. And as you know, the serpent is the power of evolution, it is Shiva's own creature; he always puts them on his head and around his neck because they symbolise the power of evolution and transformation. And snakes like this flower; it often grows near rivers, and wherever there is a cluster of the plants you are sure to discover snake nests.

I find this very interesting, for *we* didn't decide it should be like this: these are conscious vibrations in Nature. The fragrance, the colour, the shape, are simply the spontaneous expression of a true movement.

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*Is there a relation between the perfume of a flower and its significance?*

Certainly there should be one but so far I have not studied it.

*How can one begin to study this relation? What is the first step?*

Study and experience. You take a flower with a strong and definite perfume. You breathe in this perfume, trying to find what thought or image it evokes. If you find something, you compare it with the significance given to the flower.

It is a long and detailed work. After some hundreds of experiences one may arrive at a conclusion.

*In the study of perfumes of which you spoke, one observes that some perfumes seem to be made up of several perfumes. Must one then study each sub-perfume separately?*

Yes, certainly. If one wants to study this it is terribly complicated, for not only are there differences between flowers but even similar flowers must differ among themselves,

which means that the study can never come to an end and one cannot reach anything final and complete.

There is, you know, the influence of climate, the influence of the hour—day and night—the influence of the time of the year, the influence of seasons. . . .

*Scientists explain that flowers have perfume in order to attract insects. What do you think about that?*

It is men who see and find a reason for everything—but I doubt if the Supremé has any such preoccupation.

### The Offering of Roses

This is the Tenderness of the Divine for ... for himself! The tenderness He has for his creation. 'Creation'... I don't like that word, as if it all were created for nothing! It is He himself, creating with all his tenderness. Some of these roses get quite big, they are so lovely!

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*Why do you generally give red roses to men, light-coloured roses to women and different colours to the little boys and girls?*

It is because red roses give an impression of force and light-coloured roses an impression of charm and sweetness.

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*May I ask with what intention you give me one red rose and one light-coloured one?*

The human being transforms all its passions into love for the Divine and the Divine replies with His ineffable love.

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When I say Divine Love I am speaking of the vibration of love that is at the origin of all love and that fills the universe.

When I speak of the Love of the Divine I am speaking of the love that the Supreme directs specially on a point—a person or a thing.

## Blessings Packets

Those small packets which I give on Kali Puja day are made to be preserved for one year. For a year they keep their force intact and I renew them every year to make sure that... I know that there isn't one in ten among you who makes a proper use of it... but still, I give it on the off-chance for those who know how to use it. It is prepared to keep the force for one year. And when I give the new one, you can dispose of the other. Usually it has fallen to dust. Not always... but these little packets keep their charge of force exactly for one year.

## Flowers on the Samadhi

*Concerning the flowers on the Samadhi, does Sri Aurobindo transmit a special message through them, apart from their significance?*

I do not think so—that would depend on different cases. It could be rather that he would receive messages if people put them into the flowers. That is quite possible. It may happen that if people put flowers with an intention or a precise prayer, Sri Aurobindo receives the message and answers it and that one receives his answer if one is sufficiently sensitive.