

TOPIC: "LIGHTNESS OF BEING" – A PERSONAL GUIDE FOR LIVING FREELY

Quote: "In the midst of my darkness, I found the sun shining inside me" – Anonymous

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TOPIC: "Lightness of being" – A personal guide to live freely

"Peace in the storm, calm in the effort, joy in the surrender, a luminous faith, and you will become aware of the Lords constant Presence" – The Mother

PREFACE:

A story ~

The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey (Fables. - The Harvard Classics. 1909–14.)

A MAN and his son were once going with their Donkey to market. As they were walking along by its side a countryman passed them and said: "You fools, what is a Donkey for but to ride upon?"

So the Man put the Boy on the Donkey and they went on their way. But soon they passed a group of men, one of whom said: "See that lazy youngster, he lets his father walk while he rides."

So the Man ordered his Boy to get off, and got on himself. But they hadn't gone far when they passed two women, one of whom said to the other: "Shame on that lazy lout to let his poor little son trudge along."

Well, the Man didn't know what to do, but at last he took his Boy up before him on the Donkey. By this time they had come to the town, and the passers-by began to jeer and point at them. The Man stopped and asked what they were scoffing at. The men said: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself for overloading that poor Donkey of yours—you and your hulking son?"

The Man and Boy got off and tried to think what to do. They thought and they thought, till at last they cut down a pole, tied the Donkey's feet to it, and raised the pole and the Donkey to their shoulders. They went along amid the laughter of all who met them till they came to Market Bridge, when the Donkey, getting one of his feet loose, kicked out and caused the Boy to drop his end of the pole. In the struggle the Donkey fell over the bridge, and his fore-feet being tied together he was drowned.

"That will teach you," said an old man who had followed them: "PLEASE ALL, AND YOU WILL PLEASE NONE."

The End.

Moral for me ~ I am carrying a donkey on my shoulders and I want to keep it down now and be free of this unnecessary load.

When I started this course, I thought that freedom was something that comes from outside. What can I do, if someone stops my way? I felt limited. Through this course and other active practices, I have over the last year realized that everything has roots within me. *If I stop, when someone asks me to, its like I never really started.*

Freedom, peace, calm, faith is within me. I can be in chains, but I will still be free. I accept this as true, but still it has not become me. In this paper, my intention is to look within and out and see what is it, that is stopping me from freeing myself, from myself.

Further and more importantly, once I know my obstacles, I want to explore ways in which I can cross them, leave them behind and have practices in place so that either, I never have to face those obstacles again or gain the strength to just jump over them, the next time, I face them. I have drafted a 3 year plan towards the same.

My Aspiration ~ freedom at all levels ~ in and around

"Tulsi Bharose Ram ke, Nirbhaye ho kar soye. Anhoni Honi nahi, honi ho to hoye."– Shri TulisDas

Aspirations connected to the above Aspiration

- I aspire to be at peace
- I aspire to develop persistent faith in the divine
- I aspire to develop unshaken will
- I aspire to achieve an equanimous state of consciousness ~ operate from the right centre
- I aspire to be fearless
- I aspire to drop all expectations from self and others
- I aspire to be free in body, mind and soul

Ultimate Goal

- Total surrender

The most important surrender is the surrender of your character, your way of being, so that it may change. (The Mother)

Prayer:

I bow my head and I pray to you, the universal consciousness, I pray to you Mother, to help me to with this aspiration of finally living in total freedom.

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the does of the deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and short-comings, who knows the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best knows in the end the high achievement of triumph and who at worst, if he fails while daring greatly, knows his place shall never be with those timid an cold souls who know neither victory, nor defeat. Theodore Roosevelt (from The Awakening Ray - Vol 9, issue 2 – Are you strong enough to handle critics). Amen.

Introduction:

The river delights to lift us free, if only we dare let go – Illusions

Defining Freedom

Freedom ~ Living light ~ as light, as free, as transparent, as beautiful, as fresh, as a feather floating in the skies. It has no-where to be and is exerting no energy of its own. It has let-go and surrendered and is floating in freedom, wherever the wind wants to take it, it goes.

Freedom - dropping the unnecessary baggage, letting go of the self-imposed and self-accepted restrictions, conformities, judgements and patterns that I am carrying.

Freedom - dropping the vanity and petty desires that weigh me down.

Freedom – dropping the fear. I do not need to be saved, I do not need to be afraid. Ultimate faith that the divine is taking care of me.

Self-Note:

I don't know what freedom really is. I do, know that I have always looked for freedom outside of me. I know that real freedom would not be, the absence of the things that make me feel bonded. I am free at the core but layers and layers of conditioning and living in this society, have hidden my true self. I was born free, I am free. So, I want to go in, layer after layer and free myself from all the self-imposed loads and barriers.

Freedom in my everyday life, what would that mean for me:

1. Freedom from taking things personally ~ stop feeling blamed
2. Freedom from justifying myself - I want to stop feeling the need to justify what I am doing. I feel this disturbs me and makes me feel small. I no longer lie about my whereabouts, so I have to provide justifications of what I am doing and where I am going, because there are many questions and raised eyebrows
3. Freedom from wanting happiness instead of joy and pushing sadness away
4. Freedom from my strong sense of responsibility
5. Freedom from the constant chatter in my mind, that repeatedly plays the same scenes and actions
6. Freedom from – being afraid to see the truth as I should see it
7. Freedom from – being afraid to contradict or disagree
8. Freedom from – being afraid to hurt someone mentally and emotionally
9. Dropping of the doing things mechanically. I spend too much time doing the unnecessary, just out of habit. Want to consciously let go of that so that I can make the necessary, my priority.
10. Freedom from – the fear that underlies a lot of my decisions, actions and reactions

Times When I have experienced freedom blatantly:

- 1) The rebirthing breathing sessions
- 2) I experience freedom in the spiritual discourses I go to. Did not realize this before, the reasons for my strong pull
- 3) I feel free when I am looking at nature, specially the vastness in nature like mountains, fields, ocean, skies etc
- 4) The smell of the ocean, the smell of the rain on mud – makes me feel really free
- 5) When I feel the wind on my face, with my eyes closed – it makes me feel really free
- 6) Sometimes drinking alcohol makes me feel free, but I know its more like just dropping my responsibilities or my sense of me
- 7) Some guided meditations have made me feel free

An Important Question ~ What stops me from becoming Free

I gave my life to become the person I am right now. Was it worth it ~ Richard Bach

For me, a lack of complete faith in Divine, leads to a strong sense of doer-ship and results in fear of failure or not being good enough. I feel the need to justify myself and my actions and I feel the need to conform and do what is expected of me from my family.

Defining and categorizing my personal obstacles to freedom

1) FEAR ~

"Faith is freedom from fear in the middle of fear. My craving for freedom is directly proportional to my fear of freedom. Strange am I !" - Acharya Prashant

I AM:

- a. Afraid of losing what and who I have ~ afraid of rocking the boat
- b. Afraid of confrontation, conflict and contradictions
- c. Afraid of hurting people ~ why should they suffer if I have changed
- d. Not being a good mother to my child by not being present enough
- e. Afraid of losing myself ~ my perception of me
- f. Afraid of wasting this human birth
- g. Afraid that I am being too slow in this path of self-discovery
- h. Afraid of never knowing why exactly did I choose to be born
- i. Afraid of doing it all wrong

This fear makes me feel small, self-critical, judgmental, forces me to get stuck in non-trivial issues. This fear comes up specially in dealing with close relationships. This fear makes me take up self-proclaimed roles and makes me want to conform to images and certain ways. It makes me take up responsibilities, I do not want and that end up disturbing my peace.

Sometimes in situations, I feel like I act like a scared little puppy who has been mistreated and is now so sceptical of anyone trying to come close. It lashes out at the slightest provocation.

2) DOER-SHIP ~ The EGO Train ~ The "I" machine

- a. Sense of self preservation and protection
- b. The belief that I need to earn a position, reputation and respect
- c. Loads of expectations from self and others
- d. A feeling of entitlement
- e. Belief that I have to maintain a certain lifestyle or ways to be accepted
- f. Physical discomfort and verbal criticism have been major obstacles for me

All this I see is stemming from a lack of complete faith in divine.

The true source of my problem is my Ego. If I look deep, somewhere, there is this expectation that everything and everyone around me should be working to make me happy. Because I just don't know how to be happy, just being me. For me, till a large extend, happiness is not a state, it's an event, a situation, an external happening.

I' am my roadblock. My personality, thinking, reasoning, attitude, assumptions, body-identification and expectations are my roadblocks. I feel a need to conform, to obey, to please, to be accepted and approved. There is a lot of "I" in everything "I" do.

3) BITTERNESS ~ Mostly coming from PAST EXPERIENCES:

Past and my conditioning:

- a. Taking things for granted
- b. Fake sense of entitlement
- c. Expectations: movies and books have filled my head with incorrect ways of how the world works and what to expect
- d. I did not get what I was looking for or what I signed up for – because I was looking for wrong things in the wrong places

4) GENETICS

My grand mom was an unhappy person, my mom, is not a very happy person, I also have their sharp tongue and sense of entitlement. It's like the world should be working to make me happy.

I did a workshop, where they spoke about how we carry the nature of our ancestors in our cells and we need to realize, acknowledge and release it from our system. You accept the love and nothing else.

5) POWER of my lower nature

It is just on account of this very important truth that I am so tirelessly insistent in telling you to let anything happen but, for heaven's sake, not to get depressed. Live rather in the constant hope and conviction that what we are doing will prove a success. In other words, let your imagination be moulded by your faith in Sri Aurobindo; for, is not such faith the very hope and conviction that the will of Sri Aurobindo is bound to be done, that his work of transformation cannot but end in a supreme victory and that what he calls the supramental world will be brought down on earth and realised by us here and now?" – Mother

- a) I am still giving offerings at the altar of the lords of falsehood
- b) I am, a lot of times not sincere in accessing reality. I am unable to accept/ confront reality persistently and distract myself when it gets prolonged
- c) I often have violent emotions or thoughts, especially with my kid. When he is stubborn, I lose it
- d) I have sincerity issues – occasionally I can be lazy and procrastinate
- e) Sometimes, I tend to passively surrender and not take an active role in my life
- f) I have petty desires, that I have seen, give me no fulfilment
- g) I am not equanimous towards praise and criticism
- h) I do have vanity at many levels

6) TENDENCY towards CONFORMITY specially in societal roles

This tends to be the path of least resistance for me and seems to be easier done than the path which requires reasoning, resolves, discipline and contact vigilance.

7) MY self-grilling, self-criticism and never-ending EXPECTATIONS

I think, my spiritual aspirations also add on to my mental stress. I, at times, do not see progress or I see very slow progress and I get self-critical and wonder if I will ever get it. I have heard often enough that it's not something that you become, you rather have to unbecome, but I do not know how to realize that for myself.

PRACTICAL STEPS THAT I CAN TAKE TODAY – to move towards living lighter

"This truth is just the key to the whole problem of transformation. Always keep in touch with the divine presence, try to bring it down – and the very best will always take place."

"You don't look at yourself as a problem but you look at yourself as a great opportunity. And, you figure out that it's not a bad thing, or you are not bad or inadequate because you can't do this. It's just something that you need to rearrange. It is like a cupboard – you have bottles around and you just need to rearrange them, put them in different shelves. So to become conscious of how imagination works in you, how thoughts work in you and constantly focus on what you can do, what you can become, great possibilities and potential you have in front of you." – The Mother

PRACTICES I WOULD LIKE TO INCORPORATE IN MY LIFE

1) Offering of myself to the Divine

"If you truly want to receive the divine light and transform yourself, it is your whole way of being you must offer – offer by opening it" – Mother

- a) Start with making offering in a general way. You make general resolutions that I am the servant of the divine
- b) You must remember it and carry it out in all the details of your existence
- c) You feel everything as coming from the divine and you have to offer it back to its source

2) Make Peace my mini and major; long and short-term goal

Everything that I decide to do, I should first inquire to see, whether it's taking me towards this goal or away from it. Do everything that is taking me towards and unfollow whatever is a distraction on this path.

3) Time to Pray ~ call for Consciousness and Grace

- a) Radha's Prayer
- b) Other spontaneous prayer ~ varies
- c) Movement towards a more harmonious existence. *"Gather all our movements into One Life, then you have in you unity instead of division. No longer is one part of your nature given to the Divine, while the rest remains in its ordinary things, your entire life is taken up, an integral transformation is gradually realized in you. – The Mother "*
- d) Pray for strength to make this change

4) Time to Aspire

"When one can aspire fully with one's heart, soul, body and mind for something to remove these obstacles within ourselves, to remove these mental prejudices, mental forms, preconceived ideas, mental constructions – then only that action of grace takes place and there is a movement of opening. So, once again the key is aspiration. When there is intense aspiration, there is normally accompanying that surrender and faith.(Mother – text NCOS)"

5) Conscious living

- *I demand from you endurance. Firmness, heroism... I want strong men, not emotional children! – Sri Aurobindo*
- *Grant others the personal responsibility for their own lives and to accept responsibility for ours (from The Awakening Ray - Vol 6, issue 1 – Letting Go of the Past)*

6) Conscious Eating

Since the birth of my child, I have ignored my body quite a lot. I have gained about 8 extra Kgs that I would like to lose this by adopting healthy eating practices.

- Since the last 3 weeks, I am practicing what I call, conscious eating. Herein, I do not ask my desires if I want to eat and what I want to eat, rather I ask my stomach if its hungry.

Reflection:

- I see that I was eating more frequently than I needed to
- I see that I was eating bigger quantities than I needed
- I see that I was eating things that I know do not suits me
- I see that my intake has been cut by more than 60% by just seeing if I need to eat and how much makes me full
- I see that when I was going out, I was eating not because I was hungry but simply because I was out, to celebrate
- I see that often I was eating because everyone else was eating
- I see that now, that I am more aware of eating, I am enjoying what I eat more
- I see that when I actually say no to things, that otherwise my heart desires but my stomach does not care for, I am feeling a sense of pleasure in saying no to that desire
- I see that, conscious eating is coming more naturally that I expected, if I just give it time and light
- I see that if I let me desire to eat win, like give me some leeway, I tend to go weaker in my resolve
- I see that my family is having a lot of issues with this new approach and there is a lot of advice and resistance. I am seeing that, they do not even try to understand what I am doing, they just would like things to be the way they have always been
- I see that the mind does try to trick me into eating sometimes and it's a constant connection that one needs to form with one-self

7) Time to Meditate

- a) Call upon grace
- b) Dropping myself - Invoke Agni more strongly, through the Agni meditation and let go of all that is unnecessary
- c) Do guided meditations
- d) Do past life regression meditation

Active Meditation: Calm the mind and remove fear ~ do the "peace and calm calling down into the system" meditation. (I want it and I chant peace, peace, peace, peace)

Bedtime meditation: Think about the events of the day. Did something disrupt your tranquillity, what events upset him? Is there something he could have done to avoid getting upset? (*from the book – A guide to the good life by William Irvine*)

- 8) **Visualization:** This is also something I am adding to my daily schedule. Have done this in the past but did not make it a part of my schedule.

Reflection: Got the opportunity to practice this in 2 major events in the past month and it was miraculous

- 9) **Yoga:** My body has become quite inflexible and from the last 6 months, I am taking private yoga sessions at home 4 days a week. This is increasing my flexibility and over all fitness. I would like to continue with this amazing practice.

- 10) **Negative Visualization:** Take time to imagine that we have lost the things we value. (*from the book – A guide to the good life by William Irvine*)

Reflection: This new practice is really hitting me hard. Every time I am in a perfect scenario and I imagine losing it, I am so filled with gratitude for what I have that tears start rolling down my eyes. This is really helping me value what I have and making me realize the extent of my blessings. This is helping me see how trivial are the issues that bother me and it helps me see the bigger pictures in everyday issues.

- 11) **Mantra chanting like Asto-Ma, Gayatri Mantra or Chanting Om, etc**

- 12) **Getting rid of anger from my system** – A breathwork coach, during a session had once said that Anger has to be consciously and actively, removed from the body, it needs special time and attention.

- a. He had told me a practice wherein, I take a piece of paper and a pen, and just scribble, scribble, scribble, till I feel light.

- b. Whenever I feel disturbed or if I see my peace is getting affected and when I am angry and want to lash out – I have started doing the – become like a tree practice. “Look at a tree. Try and see the qualities of a tree and become for a moment, the trunk – the strength of the tree. Your consciousness also must be strong from within – very stable, very strong from within – very stable, very strong, very poised. ”

Instead of rushing out of yourself, instead of reacting, try and see if you can become as still, as mobile, quiet, strong, stable as this tree. Go within. Don't respond; don't react. Be silent. (From The Awakening Ray - Vol 9, issue 2 – responding with stillness in difficulty)

Reflection: I am not having much luck with this, but efforts and practice is on. See more on anger under Appendix 2 - Stoicism

- 13) **Develop static power** ~ Again do the 'Like a Tree-practice'. ~ I am still and solid as a tree and such things can't shake me because I am deep, deep, deep, very deep rooted. (from The Awakening Ray - Vol 9, issue 2 – student wisdom)

- 14) **Forget the past** ~ focus on now ~ let go

Use the past as a spring-board to leap towards the future ~ The Mother

- a. Do the writing exercise to get rid of unwanted thoughts
- b. To let go ~ rather than focusing on letting go 'of', it might be better to focus on letting go 'to'. In other words, the more pertinent question is not what we want to let go of but what we want to go to in our lives
- c. Completing the past: (The Awakening Ray V6 Iss 1 – Letting go of the past)
- i. Pray for those who have hurt us
 - ii. Confront both their support and hurt
 - iii. It can then be let go of, as it has been completed
 - iv. Forgiveness – it releases and heals. Do not parole
 - v. We should be willing to feel the hurt. We resist certain circumstances because they trigger our feelings of hurt and betrayal. We are actually resisting a specific hurt that lies buried in our chitta and surfaces because of our past experience. We need to be aware, find our hurt and heal it.

See more on anger under Appendix 2 - Stoicism

15) **Sing** ~ *Music causes a re-organization of the tonal structure, and the Man in essence is a vibration. The molecule sings and the heart of the atom is tone.... Man has a sound body. Kenneth G Mills from Tone to a Sound Principle (. (from The Awakening Ray - Vol 22, issue 1 –Music as medicine)*

Reflection: I now periodically sing with my son. This relaxes me greatly and gives me a release and even cured my thyroid.

16) **Don't take things too seriously:** This one is an advice from my husband. He says, I take everything very seriously. He said that if I tell him something that he does not want to listen to or agrees to, he listens to it and just does not take it in. He does not accept or fights everything thrown his way. One can listen and then decide for one self, if one wants to accept it, peacefully.

17) **Face the fears** ~ become conscious of the Light and shadows, and choose and manifest only the Light ~ Cut the chains. (more in appendix 1)

18) **Other practices/ attitude to keep in mind**, that need more attention from my end, towards this end:

There is a moment in life when a choice has to be made.... Whether to give into darkness or to fight for light. (Ameeta Mehra Journal – vol 13, issue 1)

- a. Sincerity and patience ~ Observe my habits and tendencies without attachment.
- b. Reject the movements of the vital, nature's desires, demands, passions, selfishness, arrogance, lust, greed etc
- c. Operate from a state of completeness ~ Be full and consume
- d. Practice Equanimity ~ Again the peace-calling practice will help me with that
 - i. Ability and grace to laugh in all situations that pull the vital down
 - ii. I see how people, comments, actions and reactions affect me. I have understood the smallness of this chain of events. I need to move beyond as this is preventing me from diving in the depths, that are waiting to be experienced. ~ I need to be equanimous to various situations and events
 - iii. See the falseness in my attraction to being accepted and respected.
- e. Live fully knowing this is all Leela ~ take the heaviness out of things and events.
- f. Remind myself that I am not obliged to step in line with others expectations

- g. Concentrate exclusively on what you want to be, forget as entirely as possible what you do not want to be (The Awakening Ray V6 Issue 1 – The past holds me)
- h. Work on your stress. People can't make decisions easily when stressed, are low in willpower or feeling overwhelmed. When you are too tired to make a decision, you tend to just repeat what you usually do. It's hard to change.
(from the book – mini habits by Stephen Guide)

How to make the above possible ~ Special note: Mini Habits:

(Source: Mini Habits a book by Stephen Guise)

Right-away:

I have now started with the mini habits approach ~ a very small positive behavior that I do every day. The idea is that the subconscious brain loves efficiency, so when one repeats a behavior over time, the brain learns to automate the process.

Important points towards forming new habits:

- Embrace this mini-requirement as if it is a full goal
- Life's most powerful tool is consistency ~ stay level-headed
- Small steps get us started and allow us to build momentum towards a meaningful goal
- Do not miss a day ~ If you allow yourself small concessions, you'll find them growing
- If you feel strong resistance, back off and go smaller
- Remind yourself how easy this is, believe that adding healthy behaviour is easy
- Never think a step is too small: taking small steps keeps you in control over your brain
- Put extra energy and ambition toward bonus reps, not a bigger requirement
- Your brain is always going to "register" the behavior, not the intention
- This practice exposes you to your fears in a way that feels safe and remove pressure of expectations
- "Emotions will either serve or master, depending on who is in charge." — jim rohn
- Motivation is unreliable because it's based on how you feel, and anything can alter feelings
- Willpower is reliable, but only if you don't run out of it
- There are five main causes of willpower depletion: effort, perceived difficulty, negative affect, subjective fatigue, and blood glucose levels. If you can overcome these, there is success.
- Two keys to habit change as far as the brain is concerned are repetition and reward
- Celebrating wins. Rewards will help us stick with our mini habits by encouraging further behavior *and* restoring our willpower.
- Be the person with embarrassing goals and impressive results instead of one of the many people with impressive goals and embarrassing results.
- *Fear can't exist if you've experienced something and it wasn't scary.*

Mini Habits that I have started with and is getting a lot of success with:

- 1) Meditate 1 min – everyday – morning before bedtime
- 2) Prayer – 1 line everyday
- 3) Offering – me (say this everyday)
- 4) Negative visualization – imagine myself dead for one blink of an eye
- 5) Si-Si Hung walk – 2 steps – everyday

In addition, not in the mini-habits way. I now:

- 1) Do a 60 minutes yoga session 4 times a week
- 2) Have incorporated chanting before and after the yoga session
- 3) Practice conscious eating and as much as possible avoiding restaurant food
- 4) Consciously try to not take things too seriously – accessing the cosmic importance of things
- 5) Consciously try and remind myself that peace and equanimity are the states that I am aspiring towards and I should choose my battles
- 6) Sing whenever possible

Mini habits that I would like to add on 2 at a time, after Jan 15:

- 1) Sit ups – 1 every day
- 2) Visualizations – one small everyday
- 3) Grace ~ Thank u – before one meal everyday
- 4) Walk – 20 steps every day in the garden
- 5) Carrot – one bite everyday
- 6) Qui gong – 1 step – everyday

Signs of Progress:

- Decreased resistance
- Identity: you start identify with the behavior
- Mindless action: you'll engage in the behavior without making an executive decision
- You don't worry about it: starting out, you might worry about missing a day or quitting early, but when a behavior is habit, you *know* that you'll be doing it unless there's an emergency
- Normalization: habits are non-emotional. You're not going to be excited that "you're really doing it!" once it is habit. When a behavior makes the transition to normalcy, it's habit.
- It's boring: good habits are not exciting; they're just good for you. You'll be more excited about life *because* of your habits, but don't expect it with the behavior itself.

NEXT STEPS ~ Plan for 3 years

I would like to convert these practices into habits

In last 3 months: Have started writing the journal with a to-do-good-practices list

Currently – Practicing the mini habits and other practices as mentioned above

In about 6-9 months: I hope to convert most of my mini habits into habits

- Increase my practice of some principles of Stoicism like:
 - o Negative Visualizations
 - o Put more light on the Trichotomy of control
 - o Practice self-control
- Try to prompt myself to not taking things personally
- Pray to - let the past go
- Develop static power
- Follow conscious living and conscious eating
- I aspire to lose about 3 kgs through the practice of conscious eating, yoga & prayers
- Have more peace in life

In about 12-18 months:

- I aspire to live a more equanimous and magnanimous life
- I aspire to live a sincere and patient life ~ Observe tendencies without attachment
~ Observe self without judgements
- I aspire to start facing my fears
- I aspire to incorporate a lot from stoicism in one year
 - o Work more on developing sting elimination strategies (refer to appendix 2)
 - o Practice self-control and practice self-denial
 - o I aspire to internalize all my goals
- I aspire to lose 3 kgs by conscious eating, diet plans, yoga, prayers & physical activities
- I aspire to play the role of participant and spectator in everything I do
- I aspire to start questioning and reasoning with my tendencies towards anger
- I aspire to live a lighter/freer life

In about 2 years:

- I aspire to live a more equanimous and magnanimous life
- I aspire to be stronger ~ spiritually, mentally, physically
- I aspire to operate from a state of completeness
- Make peace my mini, moderate and main goal – life is peace
- Gain more control over managing anger
- I aspire to start gaining power over the movements of the vital, nature's desires, demands, passions, selfishness, arrogance, lust, greed etc and take on voluntary discomfort
- I aspire to look at my fears more closely and release them
- I aspire to live a much lighter/freer life
- I aspire to lose 3 kgs through conscious eating, prayers and other lifestyle changes

In about 3 years:

- I aspire to achieve living an equanimous and magnanimous life
- I aspire to live in total freedom. No conformities and expectations
- I aspire to be the perfect instrument of divine
- I aspire to have the Grace, strength and wisdom to be able to reject the movements of the vital, nature's desires, demands, passions, selfishness, arrogance, lust, greed etc and take on voluntary discomfort
- I aspire to be bigger than my fears ~ I aspire to have no fears

APPENDIX 1:

“That which knows, have no fear” ~ Shri Aurobindo

SPECIAL FOCUS ON FEAR

Some new insights into fear relevant for me at this stage: mostly from the book Abhaya by Ameeta didi.

It is true that what one fears has the tendency to come until one is able to look at it in the face and overcome one's shrinking. – Shri Aurobindo

Defining Fear:

- Fear is a habit, its unconscious ~ so it's my job to shed light on it
- Fear is actually like an invention of hostile forces
- Fear is always a feeling to be rejected, because what you fear is just the thing that is likely to come to you; fear attracts the object of fear.
- Every indisposition, every illness, every malformation, even accidents, are the results of the action of the force of disintegration, just as growth, harmonious development, resistance to attack, recovery from illness, every return to the normal functioning, every progressive improvement, are due to the action of the force of transformation.
- Fear operates in:
 - a. Mental plane (thoughts)
 - b. Vital plane (sensations)
 - c. Physical plane (most difficult)

Why one feels afraid – EGO

- a. Excessive concern about one's security
- b. What one does not know always gives an uneasy feeling
- c. One does not have the habit of spontaneous trust in the divine

Tips to work on your fear:

- The only way to overcome fear is to create in ourselves a willingness to lose what we fear to lose (The Awakening Ray V6 Issue 1 – Letting go of the past)

- With yoga, one calls upon something else, and that something else is the sense of divine presence in oneself which is stronger than everything. That is the only thing that can cure you of your fear.
- As a practical means of overcoming this subconscious fear, each time that something of it comes to the surface, the more enlightened part of the being must impress on the body, the necessity of an entire trust in the Divine's Grace, the certitude that this Grace is always working for the best in our self as well as in all, and the determination to submit entirely and unreservedly to the Divine's will.
- Illness – to get cured ~ Fear opens that door through which you catch illness
 - Totally fearless
 - Complete faith in divine protection

The body must know and be convinced that its essence is divine and that if no obstacle is put in the way of the divine working, nothing can harm us. And then even if the illness succeeds in making its appearance, its strength and duration will be considerably diminished until its definitively conquered.

When physical disorders comes, one must not be afraid; one must not run away from it, must face it with courage, calmness, confidence, with the certitude that illness is a falsehood and that if one turns entirely, in full confidence, with a complete quietude to the divine grace, it will settle in these cells as its establishes itself in the depths of the being, and the cells themselves will share in the eternal Truth and Delight.

- Fear of Death:
 - Realizing that life is one and immortal. Only the forms are countless, fleeting and brittle.
 - Appeals to reason. Reason teaches us that its absurd to fear something that one cannot avoid
 - Inner seeking – beyond all the emotions, in the silent and tranquil depths of our being, there is a light shining constantly, the light of the psychic consciousness. Go in search of this light, concentrate on it; it is within you. With a persevering will you are sure to find it and as soon as you enter into it, you awake to the sense of immortality
 - For those who have faith in God, and those who have given themselves to him. They have made an absolute surrender of their will to his and feel his unvarying love and protection, wholly independent of the accidents of life and death

What to do when one feels frightened -

- If one is a reasonable being, that is, when one has a free movement of the reasoning mind, one can use it to reason with, to speak to oneself as one would to a child. Explaining that fear is a bad thing in itself and even if there is a danger, to face danger with fear is the greatest stupidity.
- If you have faith and are consecrated to the divine, a simple way – “let our will be done”. Nothing can frighten me because it is you who are guiding my life. I belong to you and you are guiding my life.
- You must observe yourself a little and say that when you are afraid it is as though the fear was attracting the thing you are afraid of.
- It is stupid to be afraid of anything, for it is precisely as though I was making a sign to that thing to come to me.

Obstacle to progress:

- What are we afraid of – fear of coming out of the rut? Fear of being free? Fear of no longer being a prisoner?
- When you have truly had enough of it, then you have the courage, the strength, the capacity to conquer these three terrible enemies ~ fear, doubt, scepticism.

Its constant practice ~

It is not enough to sit down one fine day, watch yourself be, and struggle with these things inside you once and for all. You have to do it and do it again and again and continue in a way that seems almost endless, to be sure that you have got rid of it all. In reality you are perhaps never truly rid of it, but there comes a time, when inside yourself, you are so different that you can no longer be touched by these things. You can see them, but you see them with a smile, and at a simple gesture they go away, back to where they came from, perhaps a little changed, perhaps a little less strong, less obstinate, less aggressive – until the time when the Light is so strong that all darkness vanishes.

APPENDIX 2

STOICISM – a note on this philosophy

(Source: A guide to the good life by William Irvine)

"The art of living is more like wrestling than dancing" – Marcus

Why adopt a philosophy and Stoicism:

- Having a philosophy of life - simplifies things
- When we assume responsibility for our happiness, we have a reasonable chance of gaining it
- The key to having a good life is to value things that are genuinely valuable and be indifferent to things that lack value. We will no longer sleepwalk through our life. ~ Marcus
- Consider the nature and the purpose for which God created us and live accordingly. The person who does this won't simply pursue pleasure as an animal might, instead he will use his reasoning ability to reflect on the human condition. He will then discover the reason we were created and the role we play in the cosmic scheme
- With the right philosophy, decision making is relatively straight-forward. You simply choose the option that will help you achieve the goals set by your philosophy of life. (It's hard to know what to choose, when you do not know what you want)
- With the right philosophy: one can start finding delight in the world around us. It will not depend on things. One starts to enjoying things that cannot be taken from them. While enjoying things that can be taken, one simultaneously prepares for the loss of those things. One enjoys things without feeling entitled, without clinging to them. Besides enjoying things in life, they enjoy the mere fact of being alive
- By contemplating the insignificance of everything in the world, we are forced to recognize that every time we do something, could be the last time we do it. And this recognition can invest the things we do with a significance and intensity that otherwise would be absent
- It is a profound realization that even though all this didn't have to be possible, it is possible, wonderfully, magnificently possible
- We need to take steps to prevent ourselves from taking or granted, once we get them, the things we worked so hard to get
- We need to create in ourselves a desire for the things that we already have
- Don't be on evolutionary auto-pilot. Evolutionary processes are indifferent to whether we flourish, they are concerned only that we survive and reproduce. We can use reason to circumvent behavioural tendencies that have been programmed into us by evolution

Practicing Stoicism ~ Gain A Whole New Life ~ Strategies-for-living

1. Negative visualization ~ few times a day

- *Forestall the adaptation process*
- *Reverse the adaptation process*

- Take time to imagine that we have lost the things we value
- Pause to reflect that we will not live forever and this day could be our last
- Say grace before meals – reflect that food might not have been available or we might not be able to share it with people on the table

This makes us appreciate what we have and stops us from being clingy

2. Projective visualization

- Visualize that the bad thing that happened to us, happened instead to others
- Appreciate the relative insignificance of the bad things that happen to us
- This would prevent things/events from disturbing our tranquillity

3. Practice reverse of negative visualization

- Refuse to think about how our situation could be better with respect to the past and present. We refuse to compare our situation with alternative, preferable situations in which we might have found or might find ourselves.

4. Trichotomy of control:

- Simplify one's lifestyle
- Helps in managing own anxiety and in allaying anxieties of others

Divide things into 3 categories:

- Things over which we have complete control. We should concern ourselves with these.
- Things over which we have no control – we should not concern ourselves with these
- Thing over which we have some control – we should concern ourselves with this but we should be careful to internalize the goals we form in respect to them ~ we should do what we can

5. Practice internalizing your goals

6. Become psychological Fatalist about past and present.

- we should offer ourselves to fate, in as much as "it is a great consolation that it is together with the universe we are swept along

7. Take on Voluntary discomfort ~ helps with self-discipline

"Collector of butterflies" ~ When doing things that cause physical and mental discomfort, you can view yourself as – as an opponent in a kind of game. This opponent – your "other self" – is on evolutionary autopilot: he wants nothing more than to be comfortable and to take advantage of whatever opportunities for pleasure present themselves.

The other self lacks self-discipline; left to his own devices, he will always take the path of least resistance through life and as a result will be little more than a simple – minded pleasure seeker. He is also a coward. The other self is not a friend; to the contrary he is best regarded in the words of Epictetus, "as an enemy lying in wait". "

8. We should simultaneously **play the role of participant and spectator**. So, have in ourselves an observer who watches us and comments on our attempts.

Examine each thing we do, determine our motives for doing it, and consider the value of whatever it was we were trying to accomplish.

9. Find people who can serve as **positive role models**

10. Mediations – *bedtime meditation*

-Think about the events of the day. Did something disrupt your tranquillity, which events made you upset? Is there something you can do to avoid getting upset?

11. We should likewise be **careful observers of actions of other people**, we can after all learn from their mistakes, and their successes. Avoid people who are whiney. Avoid the seek-sorrows.

12. **Self-control** is an important trait to acquire. Those who possess self-discipline, have the ability to determine what they do with their lives.

13. **Self-Denial** ~ Periodically forgo opportunities to experience pleasure. Fight battle against pleasure consciously, abstaining from pleasure can itself be pleasant.

- a. We harden ourselves against misfortune
- b. Training ourselves to be courageous
- c. Appreciate what we already have

14. Develop the capacity of joy ~ Develop strategies you can use to prevent insults, anger, grief, personal values and old age from upsetting you

A) Insults ~ Sting elimination strategy:

- 1) Pause –
 - a. See if what the insulter said was true. If it is, there is no reason to be upset
 - b. Consider how well informed the insulter is. If he is not, we should correct him
 - c. Consider the source of insult. If I value the source, his remarks should not upset me. If you do not approve of the person and he insults you, you should be glad
- 2) When a dog barks, we just make a mental note that the dog does not like us, but it would be foolish to become upset by the fact
- 3) If we can convince ourselves that the person has done no harm by insulting us ~ his insults will carry no sting

How to respond to insults

- a. Humor ~ by laughing it off, we imply that we do not take the insult or the insulter seriously
- b. No response at all ~ it's as if the insulter has not even spoken
 - i. Disconcerting to insulter
 - ii. Robbing him of the pleasure of having upset us
- c. Sometimes you can respond vigorously
 - i. To correct the improper behaviour

B) Grief – is an emotional reflex

- 1) Negative visualization helps
- 2) Retrospective negative visualization helps
- 3) Reason is our best weapon against grief – it removes whatever is excessive and superfluous
- 4) Do not catch the grief of others

C) Anger:

The worst thing you can do is to ~ get angry ~ the more you think about it and understand anger, the easier it is to control it.

- 1) Anger – is anti-joy and a waste of time
- 2) Reason – will never enlist the aid of reckless impulses over which it has no authority
- 3) Punishment should be an expression not of anger but of caution
- 4) The reason things will seem unbearable is not because they are hard but because you are soft
- 5) We should consider its cosmic insignificant
- 6) We should remember that we also anger other people
- 7) Laughter and a lot of it, is the right response to the things which drive us to tears

- 8) Turn all indications to its opposite. We should force ourselves to relax our face, soften our voice, and slow our pace of walking. If we do this our internal state will soon come to resemble our external state
- 9) Imagine yourself in an absurdist play. Things aren't supposed to make sense, people aren't supposed to be competent, justice happens by accident. Laugh don't get angry
- 10) Buddhists thought substitution technique: if you are experiencing anger, think about love. The claim is that two opposite thoughts cannot exist in one mind at one time. The wholesome thought will drive away the unwholesome thought
- 11) If you lash out, apologize immediately. That's calms us and prevent us from becoming obsessed over the thing that made us angry and makes us better by reducing chance of getting angry again

D) Personal values:

Fame

- 1) Don't be confused about what is valuable to you
- 2) Fame comes at a price, a price so high that it outweighs any benefit, fame can confer on us
- 3) Do not seek social status. If we make it our goal to please others, we will no longer be free to please ourselves
- 4) When we deal with people, we should be indifferent to what they think of us
- 5) When people praise us, proper response is to laugh
- 6) If we seek admiration of people, we will have to adapt their values. We should think if we even like their values
- 7) Most people, would want you to fail in your undertaking because your success makes them look bad.

Wealth

1. Not needing wealth is more valuable than wealth itself
2. Do not give away your ability to enjoy ordinary things
3. *He who knows contentment is rich – Lao tzu*
4. Try to enjoy something yet be indifferent to it

E) Old age

- 1) When you are young, you have a sense of entitlement
- 2) As u lose the ability to experience certain pleasures, one loses the desire to experience them

The ultimate goal~ GAINING TRANQUILLITY

- 1) Become self-aware
- 2) Use reasoning ability to overcome negative emotions and master our desires
- 3) Do not cling to luxuries
- 4) To conquer insatiability, engage in negative visualization
- 5) Nothing controls you
- 6) Be fatalistic, with respect to the external world