Emotional Security
1. Definition

When we talk of emotional security it might be wise to first understand what is emotional and what is security. Emotions are feelings—how we feel. Feel what? Love, confidence, deprivation, anger dislike and others. These feelings may be directed towards someone or something. In their more intense forms they becomes passions and even obsessions which progressively blind us so that we become less and less aware of ourselves as separate from the emotion and mistake ourselves to be the emotion itself. For example, when I am irritated, I know or am aware that I am irritated but as I become enraged I become rage itself and cannot separate myself from the rage.

Security is a sense of being safe; of not being under attack, being confident of protection, a feeling that I cannot be violated and hence exploited, a sense that there is no fear, a sense that I cannot be betrayed or cheated.

When we put the two words together—emotional security—it means that we are confident that our feelings are respected and are important. Which are the emotions that we need safety for? Feeling of love for another, confidence that these feelings are reciprocated, are inviolable, will remain unaltered in spite of any altered circumstance, that these feelings which flow from another can never go away, can only intensify and be strengthened in time. Therefore, it is the confidence of being safe, whole (not deprived), of requiring security from another person/persons, that there can be no circumstance in which this position will or can be altered. Emotional insecurity makes us dependent on another. Emotional insecurity arises because we fear that the other will withdraw his/her love, support etc.

The moment we feel/sense some withdrawal in the other, we blame the other for it. But we become incapable of even openly blaming or fighting with the other person for fear it might drive him/her further away from us. Hence, we plead for love, understanding, sincerity. The more we plead the greater is the loss of self worth and self esteem because the more we realize that we are dependent on the other. We hate ourselves for pleading/whining but the fear of loss makes us plead more and more. The more we beg the greater is the loss of self worth and a feeling of helplessness and even despair overtakes us since we feel that our happiness depends on another who is totally outside our control. It leads to a lot of pain and suffering. What is this pain? It can be physical but in this context it is emotional agony, hurt caused by perceived loss and deprivation.

When the other is the person whom we see as a source of love or of its lack, we try to find solutions to avoid pain. We set up choices like, I will have nothing to do with him/her, or I will plead with him/her, or I will find a compensation which can be anything—work, alcohol, another person. However, we don’t understand that all these choices are limited and the focus is still the other person. These choices become either/or propositions, each one of which to the exclusion of others entails loss and hence is painful; something that we don’t want to do, each equally unacceptable, equally restricting, forcing us to miss out on something that is essential to us.

In this context what Sri Aurobindo says of human relations is very pertinent: Human affection is obviously unreliable because it is so much based upon selfishness and desire;
it is a flame of the ego sometimes turbid and misty, sometimes more clear and brightly coloured—sometimes tamasic based on instinct and habit, sometimes rajasic and fed by passion or the cry for a vital interchange, sometimes more sattvic and trying to be or look to itself disinterested. But fundamentally it depends on a personal need or a return of some kind inward or outward and when the need is not satisfied or the return ceases or is not given it most often diminishes or dies or exists only as a tepid or troubled remnant of habit from the past or else turns for satisfaction elsewhere. The more intense it is, the more it is apt to be troubled by tumults, clashes, quarrels, egoistic disturbances of all kinds, selfishness, exactions, lapses even to rage and hatred. ruptures.

In all of this, the root cause is the dependence on the other for our own wholeness and completeness whether the other is circumstance or another person. Therefore, if emotional security has to be achieved, means have to be found to remove the other from focus and to turn to our own inner resources because that is the only thing we have which is not dependent on anyone else and which no one can take away from us. Emotional security then can only be achieved by taking responsibility for our own self. The first step is to accept that we alone are responsible for our happiness or unhappiness.

2. The Self

This involves an understanding of one’s own self. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have given us an analysis of what constitutes our self. To begin with as Sri Aurobindo says, “it is fundamentally an evolution of consciousness that has been taking place in Nature,” A.S.Dalal explains that consciousness makes life emerge out of matter and mind has emerged out of life. That is, consciousness has developed higher and higher forms of its manifestation on the earth from mineral to plant, to animal and to man the mental being. Inner growth is the evolution of consciousness beyond mind. The emergence of mental marks the beginning of the new process of evolution by which the human being, through conscious will and aspiration for inner growth can become a conscious participant and collaborator in the evolution of consciousness. Even if a human being does not consciously participate and collaborate in this evolutionary process it will continue but at a very slow pace. As Sri Aurobindo says, “But what Nature aims at for the mass in a slow evolution, Yoga effects for the individual by rapid evolution.” And what is Yoga? Again in Sri Aurobindo’s words, it is “a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being…” Thus inner growth is a process of conscious evolution.

To begin with the beginning, how does an individual come into existence. It is through the ego—which can be defined as that which gives a separate and independent individuality. As long as individuality has not been formed, the human being remains an amorphous entity. more or less fused with the totality of existence. It is by the development of conscious ego—“individualisation of being in becoming”—that a person becomes an individual. The individual is made up of the superficial outer self which has the body, the vital nature and the mind. Each of these has an inner corresponding i.e. the inner body, the inner vital and the inner mind. Then there is the psychic and finally the soul. Ego causes the identification of our being with the superficial outer self. Due to the ego, a certain formation of physical, vital and mental experience is distinguished from the rest of the being and is regarded as the ‘self.’ Thus ego brings about the emergence from unconsciousness through a progressive consciousness (awareness) of the physical, vital and mental aspects of the being. Each of these has an independent life of its own.
3. The Vital

The emotions emanate from the vital. What is the vital? It is the life-force. Without it there can be no life in matter and no living action. The vital is a necessary force and nothing can be done or created in the bodily existence, if the vital is not there as an instrument. The vital is the driving force of action in the physical plane and so it is necessary for all work. If only the mind drives without the co-operation and instrumentation of the vital, there is hard and disagreeable labour and effort usually leading to results not of the best kind.

The vital proper is the life-force, acting in its own nature, impulses, emotions, feelings, desires, ambitions, etc., having as their centre what we call the outer heart of emotion, while there is an inner heart where are the higher or psychic feelings and sensibilities, the emotions or intuitive yearnings and impulses of the soul.

Further, there are four parts of the vital being—first, the mental vital which gives a mental expression by thought, speech or otherwise to the emotions, desires, passions. Sensations and other movements of the vital being; the emotion vital which is the seat of various feelings such as love, joy, sorrow, hatred, and the rest; the central vital which is the seat of the stronger vital longings and reactions, e.g. Ambitions, pride, fear, love of fame, attractions and repulsions, desires and passions of various kinds and the field of many vital energies; last, the lower vital which is occupied with small desires and feelings, such as make the greater part of daily life, e.g. food desire, sexual desire, small likings, dislikings, vanity, quarrels, love of praise, anger at blame little wishes of all kinds—and a numberless host of other things.

As Sri Aurobindo points out, the classification is essential for psychological self-knowledge, discipline and practice but it cannot be made too rigid, for things run very much into each other and a synthetical sense of these powers is an necessary as the analysis.

“The term lower,” Sri Aurobindo tells us, “must not be considered in a pejorative sense,” for although this part of the nature tends to be full of perversions like lusts, greed of all kinds, vanity, small ambitions, petty anger and envy all of which cause emotional insecurity, it is also an indispensable mediator between the inner being and the outer life. As Sri Aurobindo explains, there is behind all the vital nature in man his true vital being concealed and immobile which is quite different from the surface vital nature. The surface vital is narrow, ignorant, limited, full of obscure desires, passions, cravings, revolts, pleasures and pains, transient joys and griefs, exultations and depressions. The true vital being on the contrary, is wide, vast, calm, strong without limitations, firm and immovable, capable of all power, all knowledge, all Ananda. It is moreover without ego, for it knows itself to be a projection and instrument of the Divine: it is the divine Warrior, pure and perfect, in it is an instrumental Force for all divine realization...

It is because we live largely in the plane of the lower vital that we are subject to all these passions which manifest themselves as demands from another person or need to be fulfilled through another person. But usually the other person is also living on a similar plane and hence when the two meet, the needs or demands of the two lower vitals coming into contact clash leading to emotional insecurity among other things. The lower vital is so powerful that the distinction between us and it is lost on us and we act motivated or overcome only the emotions of the lower vital. As Sri Aurobindo says,
...the surface vital personality or life-itself asserts its dominance, and this dominance of the ignorant vital being is a principal active source of discord and disharmony, a cause of inner and outer perturbations of the life, a mainspring of wrong-doing and evil. The natural vital element in us, in so far as it is unchecked or untrained or retains its primitive character, is not concerned with truth or right consciousness or right action; it is concerned with self-affirmation, with life growth, with possession, with satisfaction of impulse, with all satisfactions of desire. This main need and demand of the life-self seems all-important to it; it would readily carry it out without any regard to truth or right or good or any other consideration: but because mind is there and has these conceptions, because the soul is there and has these soul-perceptions, it tries to dominate mind and get from it by dictation a sanction and order of execution for its own will and self-affirmation, a verdict of truth and right and good for its own vital assertions, impulses, desires; it is concerned with self-justification in order that it may have room for full self-affirmation. But if it can get the assent of mind, it is quite ready to ignore all these standards and set up only one standard, the satisfaction, growth, strength, greatness of the vital ego. The life-individual needs place, expansion, possession of its world, dominance and control of things and beings; it needs life-room, a space in the sun, self-assertion, survival. It needs these things for itself and for those with whom it associates itself, for its own ego and for the collective ego; it needs them for its ideas, creeds, ideals, interests, imaginations; for it has to assert these forms of I-ness and my-ness and impose them on the world around it or, if it is not strong enough to do that, it has at least to defend and maintain them against others to the best of its power and contrivance. It may try to do it by methods it chooses to think or represent as right; it may try to do it by the naked use of violence, ruse, falsehood, destructive aggression, crushing of other life-formations.

But, there is behind all the vital nature in man his true vital being concealed and immobile which is quite different from the surface vital nature. The surface vital is narrow, ignorant, limited, full of obscure desires, passions, craving, revolts, pleasures and pains, transient joys and griefs, exultations and depressions. The true vital being, on the contrary, is wide, vast, calm, strong, without limitations, firm and immovable, capable of all power, all knowledge, all Ananda.

If this be true, then one has to start living on the plane of the true vital rather than on that of the lower vital. How does one do that because as Sri Aurobindo recognizes, “when the lower vital rises, these (the higher selves) are pushed into the background, if not covered over for the time, by this lower vital being and this external personality.” This however has to be dealt with. Sri Aurobindo points the way.

The ego and desires of the vital, its disturbances and upheavals have to be dealt with and if not at once expelled, at least dominated and prepared for a gradual if not a rapid modification, change, illumination. This can only be done on the vital plane itself by descending to that level. The vital ego itself must become conscious of its own defects and willing to get rid of them; it must decide to throw away its vanities, ambitions, lusts and longings, its rancours and revolts and all the rest of the impure stuff and unclean movements within it. This is the time of the greatest difficulties, revolts and dangers. The vital ego hates being opposed in its desires, resents disappointment, is furious against wounds to its pride and vanity; it does not like the process of purification and it may very well declare Satyagraha against it, refuse to co-operate, justify its own demands and inclinations, offer passive resistance of many kinds, withdraw the vital support which is necessary both to the life and the sadhana and try to withdraw the being from the path of spiritual endeavour. All this has to be faced and overcome, for the temple of the being has to be swept clean if the Lord of our being is to take his place and receive our worship there.

4. Transformation of the Lower Vital
The process seems arduous and frightening. Doubts arise whether we are even capable of this transformation. Several means are possible that we may take to transform the lower vital because it we must if we want true peace, true security, true wholeness and completeness. Each one of these means must first be examined before adopting or rejecting it. One is the suppression of the lower vital but suppression, as Sri Aurobindo points out in itself is not enough because a movement suppressed is “only suspended—it is better to reject, detaching yourself from it.” The suppression has to be taken a step forward, that is its very rejection must take place. Sri Aurobindo explains the difference between the two: “The difference between suppression (nigraha) and self control (samyama) is that one says ‘I cannot help desiring but I will not satisfy my desire,’ while the other says, ‘I refuse the desire as well as the satisfaction of the desire.’

Another path is that of indulgence. Indulge in the passion so much that you tire of it. But as Sri Aurobindo points out, “the free expression of a passion may relieve the vital for a time, but at the same time it gives it a right to return always. It is not reduced at all.”

There is a third way; not to attempt to clean at all but to bring down peace. To understand, take the example of a dark room. If one has to remove the darkness of the room one can either try to sweep out the darkness which is impossible or simply light a lamp. Similarly, instead of trying to clean the vital, it is better to bring down peace. As Sri Aurobindo says, If you get peace, then to clean the vital becomes easy. If you simply clean and clean and do nothing else, you go very slowly—for the vital gets dirty again and has to be cleaned a hundred times. The peace is something that is clean in itself, so to get it is a positive way of securing your object. To look for dirt only and clean is the negative way.

5. Surrender
And this can only be done by surrender to the Divine. The solution seems pat and easy, like a formula, a quick fix. Hence it is necessary to understand what we mean by surrender to the Divine. The Mother explains, There are two paths of Yoga, one of tapasya (discipline), and the other of surrender. The path of tapasya is arduous. Here you rely solely upon yourself, you proceed by your own strength. You ascend and achieve according to the measure of your force. There is always the danger of falling down. And once you fall, you lie broken in the abyss and there is hardly a remedy. The other path, the path of surrender, is safe and sure.
She goes on to say, Surrender is the decision taken to hand over the responsibility of your life to the Divine. Without this decision nothing is at all possible; if you do not surrender, the Yoga is entirely out of the question. Everything else comes naturally after it, for the whole process starts with surrender. You can surrender either through knowledge or through devotion. You may have a strong intuition that the Divine alone is the truth and a luminous conviction that without the Divine you cannot manage. Or you may have a spontaneous feeling that this line is the only way of being happy, a strong psychic desire to belong exclusively to the Divine: “I do not belong to myself,” you say, and give up the responsibility of your being to the Truth. Then comes self-offering: “Here I am, a creature of various qualities, good and bad, dark and enlightened. I offer myself as I am to you, take me up with all my ups and downs, conflicting impulses and tendencies-do whatever you like with me.
The Mother talks of the psychic, which she explains is “a `centre of light and truth and knowledge and beauty and harmony which the Divine Self in each of you creates by his presence, little by little.” And it is the psychic that has to surrender because as the Mother tells us, the psychic being
Is that part of you which is already given to the Divine. It is its influence gradually spreading from within towards the most outward and material boundaries of your consciousness that will bring about the transformation of your entire nature. There can be no obscurity here; it is the luminous part in you.. Most people are unconscious of this psychic part within them; the effort of Yoga is to make you conscious of it, so that the process of transformation, instead of a slow labour extending through centuries, can be pressed into one life or even a few years.
Surrender is the only way to gain emotional security because Divine protection and love are eternal and cannot be taken away for any reason whatsoever. As the Mother tells us, The only way of being truly free is to make your surrender to the Divine entire, without reservation because then all that binds you, ties you down, chains you, falls away naturally from you and has no longer any importance. If someone comes and blames you, you may say, `On what authority does he blame me, does he know the supreme will?’ And the same thing when you are congratulated.
6. Surrender and Action
But would this not lead to inaction. It would be so easy to sit back and say that I don’t need to do anything, the Divine knows what is to be done and will do it. The question then arises, what is the place of action? Also, would this surrender to the Divine, not create an aridness in life? After all, we don’t want the peace of the desert but that of the oasis.

There can be no life without action as Sri Krishna explains in the Gita. As long as you exist, you act even if it is only to breathe, to eat and perform other physical functions. Action leads to experience.
If you don’t do anything, you cannot have experience. The whole life is a field of experience. Each movement you make, each thought you have, each work you do, can be an experienced, and must be an experience; and naturally work in particular is a field of experience where one must apply all the progress which one endeavours to make inwardly. If you remain in meditation or contemplation without working, well, you don’t know if you have progressed or not. You may live in an illusion, the illusion of your progress; while if you begin to work, all the circumstances of your work, the contact with others, the material occupation, all this is a field of experience in order that you may become aware not only of the progress made but of all the progress that remains to be made. If you live closed up in yourself, without acting, you may live in a completely subjective illusion; the moment you externalise your action and enter into contact with others, with circumstances and the objects of life, you become aware absolutely objectively of whether you have made progress or not, whether you are more calm, more conscious, stronger, more unselfish, whether you no longer have any desire, any preference, any weakness, any unfaithfulness—you can become aware of all this by working.

Hence, action is part of the surrender to the Divine because apart from other things, one’s own progress can only be tested through action. Then, what is this Divine we are surrendering to, if we have to constantly act, experience and evolve. Sri Aurobindo explains the Divine as a Presence or Being who is
felt as present in one’s existence and consciousness or in relation with it, without the necessity of any further qualification or description. Thus, of the “ineffable Presence” it can only be said that it is there and nothing more can or need be said about it, although at the same time one knows that all is there, personality and impersonality, Power and Light and Ananda and everything else, and all these flow from that indescribable Presence. The word may be used sometimes in a less absolute sense, but that is always the fundamental significance,—the essential perception of the essential Presence supporting everything else.

And it is in this Divine Presence that all our actions and emotions have to be situated. Sri Aurobindo’s way does not require isolation or a severance of all ties. It is based on an understanding the difference between human love and divine love.

But whatever love or goodwill the human feeling is always either based on or strongly mixed with ego,—that is why it cannot be pure. It is said in the Upanishad, ‘One does not love the wife for the sake of the wife,’ or the child or friend etc. as the case may be ‘but for one’s sake one love the wife.’ There is usually a hope of return, of benefit or advantage of some kind, or of certain pleasures and gratifications, mental, vital or physical that the person loved can give. Remove these things and the love very soon sinks, diminishes or disappears or turns into anger, reproach, indifference or even hatred.

But this does not mean that we turn away from Love itself because

Love is a supreme force which the Eternal Consciousness sent down from itself into an obscure and darkened world that it might bring back that world and its beings to the Divine. The creation moves upward through love towards the divine. This human movement of love is secretly seeking for something else than what it has yet found; but it does not know where to find it, it does not even know what it is. Once the creation is conscious, awakened, opened to love for the Divine, the Divine love pours itself without limit back into the creation; there is the joining of the extremes, supreme Spirit and manifesting Matter, and their divine union becomes constant and complete.

The mind however, still revolts. The ego says that is weakness, an abject surrender a complete loss of control over one’s own life. However it is not really a loss of control but an expansion of one’s own self. When we try to control as opposed to surrender, we limit ourselves because our perceptions are limited. When we surrender to the Divine, there are infinite possibilities as the Divine has infinite ways to love and protect us. The Mother explains this as.

Surrender will not diminish but increase; it will fortify and aggrandise it. Surrender means a free total giving with all the delight of the giving; there is no sense of sacrifice in it. If you have the slightest feeling that you are making a sacrifice, then it is no longer surrender. For it means that you reserve yourself or that you are trying to give with grudging or with pain and effort, and have not the joy of the gift, perhaps not even the feeling that you are giving. When you do anything with the sense of a compression of your being, be sure that you are doing it in the wrong way. True surrender enlarges you; it increases your capacity; it gives you a greater measure in quality and in quantity which you could not have had by yourself. This new greater measure of quality and quantity is different from anything you could attain before; you enter into another world, into a wideness which you could not have entered if you did not surrender. It is as when a drop of water falls into the sea; if it still kept there its separate identity, it would remain a little drop of water and nothing more, a little drop crushed by all the immensity around, because it has not surrendered. But, surrendering, it unites with the sea and participates in the nature and power and vastness of the whole sea.
7. Faith

The question then, remains, how do I know that the surrender will work? This has to be by its nature, a matter of faith. It is like going to a doctor and asking how do I know that your medicine will work? There are two things involved in this: an intense desire or aspiration to want real peace and emotional wholeness or self-sufficiency and to have faith that this can be achieved through surrender. Of course, there must be a willingness to try it out in all honesty. As the Mother says, “Aspiration can bring everything, provided it is sincere and constant.” Further, there must be a faith that always what is for the best happens. We may for the moment not consider it as the best because we are ignorant and also blind, because we do not see the consequences of things and what will happen later. But we must keep the faith that if it is like that, if we rely on the Divine, if we give him the full charge of ourselves, if we let Him decide everything for us, well, we must know that is always what is best for us which happens. This is an absolute fact. To the extent to which you surrender, the best happens to you. This may not be in conformity with what you would like, your preference or desire, because these things are blind: but is the best from the spiritual point of view, the best for your progress, your development, your spiritual growth, your true life. It is always that. And you must keep this faith, because faith is the expression of a trust in the Divine and the full self-giving you make to the Divine. And when you make it, it is something absolutely marvelous. That’s a fact, these are not just words, you understand, it is a fact. When you look back, all kinds of things which you did not understand when they happened to you, you realise as just the thing which was necessary in order to compel you to make the needed progress. Always, without exception. It is our blindness which prevents us from seeing it.

8. Conclusion

To sum up, emotion insecurity arises because of out functioning from the plane of the outer being rather than turning to our inner selves. When we function from the outer being, we have demands, expectations and needs that we want others to fulfil. This leads to insecurity, a feeling of being let down and hurt because the other person by his/her very nature cannot fulfil our demands. The only eternal, ever loving and ever protecting “Being” who can give us the love, security and confidence that we seek, can be the Divine Being. But, for this, we need to surrender to the Divine in a childlike trust that nothing can ever go wrong, that we are always loved and protected.

Sri Aurobindo was a seer, poet and Indian nationalist who was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. He originated the philosophy of cosmic salvation through human evolution.

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Ibid., p.iii.
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