The Real Awakener

Further Lights on the Path

Words of the Mother – 16

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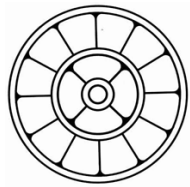

Do not take my words for a teaching. Always they are a force in action, uttered with a definite purpose, and they lose their true power when separated from that purpose.

– The Mother



The One whom we adore as the Mother is the divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence. The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates.

– Sri Aurobindo

I. On Education, Articles

1. Selected Passages from the Four Austerities and the Four Liberations*

"To pursue an integral education that leads to the supramental realisation, four austerities are necessary, and with them four liberations.

…Life on earth is not a passage or a means; by transformation it must become a goal and a realisation.** Consequently, when we speak of austerities, it is not out of contempt for the body nor to detach ourselves from it, but because of the need for control and mastery. For there is an austerity which is far greater, far more complete and far more difficult than all the austerities of the ascetic: it is the austerity which is necessary for the integral transformation, the fourfold austerity which prepares the individual for the manifestation of the supramental truth.…

…it is necessary to clarify one question which is a source of much misunderstanding and confusion in the minds of most people. It is the question of ascetic practices, which they mistake for spiritual disciplines. These practices, which consist of ill-treating the body in order, so they say, to liberate the spirit from it, are in fact a sensuous distortion of spiritual discipline; it is a kind of perverse need for suffering which drives the ascetic to self-mortification. The sadhu's recourse

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** The titles marked with an * are from the original. All the unmarked titles in the text are from the Editor.*

*** Bold letters in the text, used here for emphasis, are from the Editor and are not there in the original.*

to the bed of nails or the Christian anchorite's resort to the whip and the hair-shirt are **the result of a more or less veiled sadistic tendency, unavowed and unavowable; it is an unhealthy seeking or a subconscious need for violent sensations. In reality, these things are very far removed from all spiritual life, for they are ugly and base, dark and diseased; whereas spiritual life, on the contrary, is a life of light and balance, beauty and joy.** They are invented and extolled by a sort of mental and vital cruelty towards the body. But cruelty, even with regard to one's own body, is nonetheless cruelty, and **all cruelty is a sign of great unconsciousness.** Unconscious natures need very strong sensations, for without them they can feel nothing; and cruelty, which is one form of sadism, brings very strong sensations. The avowed purpose of such practices is to abolish all sensation so that the body may no longer stand in the way of one's flight towards the spirit; but the effectiveness of this method is open to doubt. It is a recognised fact that in order to progress rapidly, one must not be afraid of difficulties; on the contrary, by choosing to do the difficult thing at every opportunity, one increases the will-power and strengthens the nerves. Now, it is much more difficult to lead a life of moderation and balance, in equanimity and serenity, than to try to contend with over-indulgence in pleasure and the obscuration it entails, by over-indulgence in asceticism and the disintegration it causes. **It is much more difficult to achieve the harmonious and progressive development of one's physical being in calm and simplicity than to ill-treat it to the point of annihilation. It is much more difficult to live soberly and without desire than to deprive the body of its indispensable nourishment and cleanliness**

and boast proudly of one's abstinence. It is much more difficult to avoid or to surmount and conquer illness by an inner and outer harmony, purity and balance, than to disregard and ignore it and leave it free to do its work of destruction. And **the most difficult thing of all is to maintain the consciousness constantly at the height of its capacity, never allowing the body to act under the influence of a lower impulse.**

…The practice of these austerities will constitute a fourfold discipline or tapasya which can be defined as follows:

1) Tapasya of love

2) Tapasya of knowledge

3) Tapasya of power

4) Tapasya of beauty

These terms have been listed from top to bottom, so to say, but their order should not be taken to indicate anything superior or inferior, or more or less difficult, or the order in which these disciplines can and ought to be practised. The order, importance and difficulty vary with each individual and no absolute rule can be formulated. Each one must find and work out his own system according to his personal needs and capacities.

…A physical culture which aims at building a body capable of serving as a fit instrument for a higher consciousness demands very austere habits: a great regularity in sleep, food, exercise and every activity. By a scrupulous study of one's own bodily needs – for they vary with each individual – a general programme will be established; and once this has been done well, it must be followed rigorously,

without any fantasy or slackness. There must be no little exceptions to the rule that are indulged in "just for once" but which are repeated very often – **for as soon as one yields to temptation, even "just for once", one lessens the resistance of the will-power and opens the door to every failure.** One must therefore forgo all weakness: no more nightly escapades from which one comes back exhausted, no more feasting and carousing which upset the normal functioning of the stomach, no more distractions, amusements and pleasures that only waste energy and leave one without the strength to do the daily practice. One must submit to the austerity of a sensible and regular life, concentrating all one's physical attention on building a body that comes as close to perfection as possible. To reach this ideal goal, **one must strictly shun all excess and every vice, great or small; one must deny oneself the use of such slow poisons as tobacco, alcohol, etc., which men have a habit of developing into indispensable needs that gradually destroy the will and the memory.** The all-absorbing interest which nearly all human beings, even the most intellectual, have in food, its preparation and its consumption, should be replaced by an almost chemical knowledge of the needs of the body and a very scientific austerity in satisfying them. …

…One's entire physical activity should be organised to help the body to grow in balance and strength and beauty. For this purpose, one must abstain from all pleasure-seeking, including sexual pleasure. For **every sexual act is a step towards death.** That is why from the most ancient times, in the most sacred and secret schools, this act was prohibited to every aspirant towards immortality. **The sexual act is always followed by a longer or shorter period of unconsciousness**

that opens the door to all kinds of influences and causes a fall in consciousness. But if one wants to prepare oneself for the supramental life, one must never allow one's consciousness to slip into laxity and inconscience under the pretext of pleasure or even of rest and relaxation. One should find relaxation in force and light, not in darkness and weakness. **Continence is therefore the rule for all those who aspire for progress.** But especially for those who want to prepare themselves for the supramental manifestation, this continence must be replaced by a total abstinence, achieved not by coercion and suppression but by a kind of inner alchemy, as a result of which the energies that are normally used in the act of procreation are transmuted into energies for progress and integral transformation. It is obvious that for the result to be total and truly beneficial, all sexual impulses and desires must be eliminated from the mental and vital consciousness as well as from the physical will. All radical and durable transformation proceeds from within outwards, so that the external transformation is the normal, almost inevitable result of this process.

A decisive choice has to be made between lending the body to Nature's ends in obedience to her demand to perpetuate the race as it is, and preparing this same body to become a step towards the creation of the new race. For it is not possible to do both at the same time; at every moment one has to decide whether one wants to remain part of the humanity of yesterday or to belong to the superhumanity of tomorrow.

One must renounce being adapted to life as it is and succeeding in it if one wants to prepare for life as it will be

and to become an active and efficient part of it.

One must refuse pleasure if one wants to open to the delight of existence, in a total beauty and harmony.

This brings us quite naturally to vital austerity, the austerity of the sensations, the tapasya of power. For the vital being is the seat of power, of effective enthusiasm. It is in the vital that thought is transformed into will and becomes a dynamism for action. It is also true that the vital is the seat of desires and passions, of violent impulses and equally violent reactions, of revolt and depression. The normal remedy is to strangle and starve the vital by depriving it of all sensation; sensations are indeed its main sustenance and without them it falls asleep, grows sluggish and starves to death.

In fact, the vital has three sources of subsistence. The one most easily accessible to it comes from below, from the physical energies through the sensations.

The second is on its own plane, when it is sufficiently vast and receptive, by contact with the universal vital forces.

The third, to which it usually opens only in a great aspiration for progress, comes to it from above by the infusion and absorption of spiritual forces and inspiration.

To these sources men always strive more or less to add another, which is for them at the same time the source of most of their torments and misfortunes. **It is the interchange of vital forces with their fellows, usually in groups of two, which they most often mistake for love, but which is only the attraction between two forces that take pleasure in mutual interchange.**

Thus, if we do not wish to starve our vital, sensations

must not be rejected or diminished in number and intensity. Neither should we avoid them; rather we must make use of them with wisdom and discernment. Sensations are an excellent instrument of knowledge and education, but to make them serve these ends, they must not be used egoistically for the sake of enjoyment, in a blind and ignorant search for pleasure and self-satisfaction.

The senses should be capable of enduring everything without disgust or displeasure, but at the same time they must acquire and develop more and more the power of discerning the quality, origin and effect of the various vital vibrations in order to know whether they are favourable to harmony, beauty and good health or whether they are harmful to the balance and progress of the physical being and the vital. Moreover, **the senses should be used as instruments to approach and study the physical and vital worlds in all their complexity; in this way they will take their true place in the great endeavour towards transformation.**

It is by enlightening, strengthening and purifying the vital, and not by weakening it, that one can contribute to the true progress of the being. To deprive oneself of sensations is therefore as harmful as depriving oneself of food. But **just as the choice of food must be made wisely and solely for the growth and proper functioning of the body, so too the choice of sensations and their control should be made with a very scientific austerity and solely for the growth and perfection of the vital,** of this highly dynamic instrument, which is as essential for progress as all the other parts of the being.

It is by educating the vital, by making it more refined,

more sensitive, more subtle and, one should almost say, more elegant, in the best sense of the word, that one can overcome its violence and brutality, which are in fact a form of crudity and ignorance, of lack of taste.

In truth, a cultivated and illumined vital can be as noble and heroic and disinterested as it is now spontaneously vulgar, egoistic and perverted when it is left to itself without education. It is enough for each one to know how to transform in himself the search for pleasure into an aspiration for the supramental plenitude. If the education of the vital is carried far enough, with perseverance and sincerity, there comes a time when, convinced of the greatness and beauty of the goal, the vital gives up petty and illusory sensorial satisfactions in order to win the divine delight."[1]

Bulletin, February 1953

"The question of mental austerity immediately brings to mind long meditations leading to control of thought and culminating in inner silence. This aspect of yogic discipline is too well known to need dwelling upon. But there is another aspect of the subject which is usually given less attention, and that is control of speech. Apart from a very few exceptions, only absolute silence is set in opposition to loose talk. And yet it is a far greater and far more fruitful austerity to control one's speech than to abolish it altogether.

… In all cases and as a general rule, the less one speaks of others, even to praise them, the better. It is already so difficult to know exactly what is happening in oneself – how can one know with certainty what is happening in others? So you must totally abstain from pronouncing upon anybody one of those final judgments

which cannot but be foolish if not spiteful.

When a thought is expressed in speech, the vibration of the sound has a considerable power to bring the most material substance into contact with the thought, thus giving it a concrete and effective reality. That is why one must never speak ill of people or things or say things which go against the progress of the divine realisation in the world. This is an absolute general rule. And yet it has one exception. You should not criticise anything unless at the same time you have the conscious power and active will to dissolve or transform the movements or things you criticise. For this conscious power and active will have the capacity of infusing Matter with the possibility to react and refuse the bad vibration and ultimately to correct it so that it becomes impossible for it to go on expressing itself on the physical plane.

This can be done without risk or danger only by one who moves in the gnostic realms and possesses in his mental faculties the light of the spirit and the power of the truth. He, the divine worker, is free from all preference and all attachment; he has broken down the limits of his ego and is now only a perfectly pure and impersonal instrument of the supramental action upon earth.

… Certain ideas are capable of transforming the world. They are the ones that ought to be expressed; they are the ruling stars in the firmament of the spirit that will guide the earth towards its supreme realisation.

…It is a well-known fact that one must never speak of one's spiritual experiences if one does not want to see vanishing in a flash the energy accumulated in the experience,

which was meant to hasten one's progress. The only exception which can be made to the rule is with regard to one's guru, when one wants to receive some explanation or teaching from him concerning the content and meaning of one's experience. Indeed, one can speak about these things without danger only to one's guru, for only the guru is able by his knowledge to use the elements of the experience for your own good, as steps towards new ascents.

… In conclusion, I would say this: **if you want your speech to express the truth and thus acquire the power of the Word, never think out beforehand what you want to say, do not decide what is a good or bad thing to say, do not calculate the effect of what you are going to say. Be silent in mind and remain unwavering in the true attitude of constant aspiration towards the All-Wisdom, the All-Knowledge, the All-Consciousness. Then, if your aspiration is sincere, if it is not a veil for your ambition to do well and to succeed, if it is pure, spontaneous and integral, you will then be able to speak very simply, to say the words that ought to be said, neither more nor less, and they will have a creative power.**"[2]

Bulletin, April 1953

"Of all austerities the most difficult is the austerity of feelings and emotions, the tapasya of love.

Indeed, in the domain of feelings, more perhaps than in any other, man has the sense of the inevitable, the irresistible, of a fatality that dominates him and which he cannot escape. Love (or at least what human beings call love) is particularly regarded as an imperious master whose caprice one cannot elude, who strikes you according to his fancy and forces you

to obey him whether you will or not. **In the name of love the worst crimes have been perpetrated, the greatest follies committed.**

And yet men have invented all kinds of moral and social rules in the hope of controlling this force of love, of making it amenable and docile. But these rules seem to have been made only to be broken; and the restraint they impose on its free activity merely increases its explosive power. For **it is not by rules that the movements of love can be disciplined. Only a greater, higher and truer power of love can subdue the uncontrollable impulses of love. Only love can rule over love by enlightening, transforming and exalting it. For here too, more than anywhere else, control does not consist of suppression and abolition but of transmutation – a sublime alchemy. This is because, of all the forces at work in the universe, love is the most powerful, the most irresistible. Without love the world would fall back into the chaos of inconscience.**

Consciousness is indeed the creatrix of the universe, but love is its saviour. Conscious experience alone can give a glimpse of what love is, of its purpose and process. Any verbal transcription is necessarily a mental travesty of something which eludes all expression in every way. Philosophers, mystics, occultists, have all tried to define love, but in vain. I have no pretension of succeeding where they have failed. But I wish to state in the simplest possible terms what in their writings takes such an abstract and complicated form. My words will have no other aim than to lead towards the living experience, and I wish to be able to lead even a child to it.

Love is, in its essence, the joy of identity; it finds its ultimate expression in the bliss of union. Between the two lie all the phases of its universal manifestation.

At the beginning of this manifestation, in the purity of its origin, love is composed of two movements, two complementary poles of the urge towards complete oneness. On one hand there is the supreme power of attraction and on the other the irresistible need for absolute self-giving. No other movement could have better bridged the abyss that was created when in the individual being consciousness was separated from its origin and became unconsciousness.

What had been projected into space had to be brought back to itself without, however, annihilating the universe which had thus been created. That is why love burst forth, the irresistible power of union.

It brooded over the darkness and the inconscience; it was scattered and fragmented in the bosom of unfathomable night. And then began the awakening and the ascent, the slow formation of Matter and its endless progression. **It is indeed love, in a corrupted and darkened form, that is associated with all the impulses of physical and vital Nature,** as the urge behind all movement and all grouping, which becomes quite perceptible in the plant kingdom. In trees and plants, it is the need to grow in order to obtain more light, more air, more space; in flowers, it is the offering of their beauty and fragrance in a loving efflorescence. Then, in animals, it is love that lies behind hunger and thirst, the need for appropriation, expansion, procreation, in short, behind every desire, whether conscious or not. And among the higher species, it is in the self-sacrificing devotion of the female to her young. This brings

us quite naturally to the human race in which, with the triumphant advent of mental activity, this association reaches its climax, for it has become conscious and deliberate. Indeed, as soon as terrestrial development made it possible, Nature took up this sublime force of love and put it at the service of her creative work by linking and mixing it with her movement of procreation. This association has even become so close, so intimate, that very few human beings are illumined enough in their consciousness to be able to dissociate these movements from each other and experience them separately. In this way, love has suffered every degradation; it has been debased to the level of the beast.

…For one who has known love for the Divine, all other forms of love are obscure and too mixed with pettiness and egoism and darkness; they are like a perpetual haggling or a struggle for supremacy and domination, and even among the best they are full of misunderstanding and irritability, of friction and incomprehension.

Moreover, **it is a well-known fact that one grows into the likeness of what one loves. Therefore if you want to be like the Divine, love Him alone.** Only one who has known the ecstasy of the exchange of love with the Divine can know how insipid and dull and feeble any other exchange is in comparison. And even if the most austere discipline is required to arrive at this exchange, nothing is too hard, too long or too severe in order to achieve it, for it surpasses all expression.

…Since we have decided to reserve love in all its splendour for our personal relationship with the Divine, we shall replace it in our relations with others by a total,

unvarying, constant and egoless kindness and goodwill that will not expect any reward or gratitude or even any recognition. However others may treat you, you will never allow yourself to be carried away by any resentment; and in your unmixed love for the Divine, you will leave him sole judge as to how he is to protect you and defend you against the misunderstanding and bad will of others.

You will await your joys and pleasures from the Divine alone. In him alone will you seek and find help and support. He will comfort you in all your sorrows, guide you on the path, lift you up if you stumble, and if there are moments of failure and exhaustion, he will take you up in his strong arms of love and enfold you in his soothing sweetness.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I must point out here that because of the exigencies of the language in which I am expressing myself, I am obliged to use the masculine gender whenever I mention the Divine. But in fact **the reality of love I speak of is above and beyond all gender, masculine or feminine; and when it incarnates in a human body, it does so indifferently in the body of a man or a woman according to the needs of the work to be done.**

In summary, **austerity in feelings consists then of giving up all emotional attachment, of whatever nature, whether for a person, for the family, for the country or anything else, in order to concentrate on an exclusive attachment for the Divine Reality.** This concentration will culminate in an integral identification and will be instrumental to the supramental realisation upon earth."[3]

Bulletin, August 1953

2. To the Students, Young and Old*

"Sri Aurobindo, incarnating the supramental consciousness in a human body, has not only revealed to us the nature of the path to follow and the way to follow it in order to reach the goal, but has also by his own personal realisation given us the example; he has provided us, so to say, with the proof that the thing can be done and that the time has come to do it.

Consequently, we are not here to repeat what others have done, but to prepare ourselves for the blossoming of a new consciousness and a new life. That is why I address myself to you, the students, that is, to all who wish to learn, to learn always more and always better, so that one day you may be capable of opening yourselves to the new force and of giving it the possibility of manifesting on the physical plane. For that is our programme and we must not forget it. **To understand the true reason why you are here, you must remember that we want to become instruments that are as perfect as possible, instruments that express the divine will in the world. And if the instruments are to be perfect, they must be cultivated, educated, trained. They must not be left like fallow land or a formless piece of stone. A diamond reveals all its beauty only when it is artistically cut. It is the same for you. If you want your physical being to be a perfect instrument for the manifestation of the supramental consciousness, you must cultivate it, sharpen it, refine it, give it what it lacks, perfect what it already possesses. That is why you go to school, my children, whether you are big or small, for one can learn at any age…**

…Sometimes, in certain circumstances, everything seems dull, boring, stupid; this means that you are as boring as the circumstances and it clearly shows that you are not in a state of progress. **It is simply a passing wave of boredom, and nothing is more contrary to the purpose of existence. At such a moment you might make an effort and ask yourself, "This boredom shows that I have something to learn, some progress to make in myself, some inertia to conquer, some weakness to overcome."** Boredom is a dullness of the consciousness; and if you seek the cure within yourself, you will see that it immediately dissolves. **Most people, when they feel bored, instead of making an effort to rise one step higher in their consciousness, come down one step lower; they come down even lower than they were before and do stupid things, they make themselves vulgar in the hope of amusing themselves. That is why men intoxicate themselves, spoil their health, deaden their brains.** If they had risen instead of falling, they would have made use of this opportunity to progress.

In fact, the same thing holds true in all circumstances, when life gives you a severe blow, one of those blows which men call a misfortune. The first thing they try to do is to forget, as if they did not forget only too soon! And in order to forget, they do all kinds of things. When something is very painful, they try to distract themselves – what they call distracting themselves, that is, doing stupid things, lowering their consciousness instead of raising it. **If something extremely painful happens to you, never try to deaden yourself; you must not forget, you must not sink into unconsciousness. Go right to the heart of the pain and there you will find**

the light, the truth, the strength and the joy which are hidden behind this pain. But for that you must be firm and refuse to let yourself slide.

In this way **every event in life, great or small, can be an opportunity for progress.** Even the most insignificant details can lead to revelations if you know how to profit from them. Whenever you are engaged in something which does not demand the whole of your attention, use it as an opportunity to develop your faculty of observation and you will see that you will make interesting discoveries. …"[4]

Bulletin, November 1953

3. Foresight*

"To foresee destiny! How many have attempted it, how many systems have been elaborated, how many sciences of divination have been created and developed only to perish under the charge of charlatanism or superstition. And why is destiny always so unforeseeable? Since it has been proved that everything is ineluctably determined, how is it that one cannot succeed in knowing this determinism with any certainty?

Here again the solution is to be found in Yoga. And by yogic discipline one can not only foresee destiny but modify it and change it almost totally. First of all, Yoga teaches us that we are not a single being, a simple entity which necessarily has a single destiny that is simple and logical. Rather we have to acknowledge that **the destiny of most men is complex, often to the point of incoherence. Is it not this very complexity which gives us the impression of unexpectedness, of indeterminacy and consequently of unpredictability?**

To solve the problem one must know that, to begin with, all living creatures, and more especially human beings, are made up of a combination of several entities that come together, interpenetrate, sometimes organising themselves and completing each other, sometimes opposing and contradicting one another. Each one of these beings or states of being belongs to a world of its own and carries within it its own destiny, its own determinism. And it is the combination of all these determinisms, which is sometimes very heterogeneous, that results in the destiny of the individual. But as the organisation and relationship of all these entities can be altered by personal discipline and effort of will, as these various determinisms act on each other in different ways according to the concentration of the consciousness, their combination is nearly always variable and therefore unforeseeable.

For example, the physical or material destiny of a being comes from his paternal and maternal forebears, from the physical conditions and circumstances in which he is born; one should be able to foresee the events of his physical life, his state of health and approximately how long his body will last. But then there comes into play the formation of his vital being (the being of desires and passions, but also of impulsive energy and active will) which brings with it its own destiny. This destiny affects the physical destiny and can alter it completely and often even change it for the worse. For example, if a man born with a very good physical balance, who ought to live in very good health, is driven by his vital to all kinds of excesses, bad habits and even vices, he can in this way partly destroy his good physical destiny and lose the harmony of health and strength which would have been his

but for this unfortunate interference. This is only one example. But the problem is much more complex, for, to the physical and vital destinies, there must be added the mental destiny, the psychic destiny, and many others besides.

In fact, the higher a being stands on the human scale, the more complex is his being, the more numerous are his destinies and the more unforeseeable his fate seems to be as a consequence. This is however only an appearance. The knowledge of these various states of being and their corresponding inner worlds gives at the same time the capacity to discern the various destinies, their interpenetration and their combined or dominant action. Higher destinies are quite obviously the closest to the central truth of the universe, and if they are allowed to intervene, their action is necessarily beneficent. **The art of living would then consist in maintaining oneself in one's highest state of consciousness and thus allowing one's highest destiny to dominate the others in life and action. So one can say without any fear of making a mistake: be always at the summit of your consciousness and the best will always happen to you.** But that is a maximum which is not easy to reach. If this ideal condition turns out to be unrealisable, the individual can at least, when he is confronted by a danger or a critical situation, call upon his highest destiny by aspiration, prayer and trustful surrender to the divine will. Then, in proportion to the sincerity of his call, this higher destiny intervenes favourably in the normal destiny of the being and changes the course of events insofar as they concern him personally. It is events of this kind that appear to the outer consciousness as miracles, as divine interventions."[5]

Bulletin, February 1950

4. The Battles to be Fought Against Death on Four Fronts for those Who are Born Warriors

"…there are those who are born warriors. They cannot accept life as it is and they feel pulsating within them their right to immortality, an integral and earthly immortality. They possess a kind of intuitive knowledge that death is nothing but a bad habit; they seem to be born with the resolution to conquer it. But this conquest entails a desperate combat against an army of fierce and subtle assailants, a combat that has to be fought constantly, almost at every minute. Only one who has an indomitable spirit should attempt it. The battle has many fronts; it is waged on several planes that intermingle and complement each other.

The first battle to be fought is already formidable: it is the mental battle against a collective suggestion that is massive, overwhelming, compelling, a suggestion based on thousands of years of experience, on a law of Nature that does not yet seem to have had any exception. It translates itself into this stubborn assertion: it has always been so, it cannot be any different; death is inevitable and it is madness to hope that it can be anything else. The concert is unanimous and till now even the most advanced scientist has hardly dared to sound a discordant note, a hope for the future. As for the religions, most of them have based their power of action on the fact of death and they assert that God wanted man to die since he created him mortal. Many of them make death a deliverance, a liberation, sometimes even a reward. Their injunction is: submit to the will of the Highest, accept without revolt the idea of death and you shall have peace and happiness. In spite of all this, the mind must remain unshakable in its conviction and sustain an unbending will. But for one who has resolved

to conquer death, all these suggestions have no effect and cannot affect his certitude which is based on a profound revelation.

The second battle is the battle of the feelings, the fight against attachment to everything one has created, everything one has loved. By assiduous labour, sometimes at the cost of great efforts, you have built up a home, a career, a social, literary, artistic, scientific or political work, you have formed an environment with yourself at the centre and you depend on it at least as much as it depends on you. You are surrounded by a group of people, relatives, friends, helpers, and when you think of your life, they occupy almost as great a place as yourself in your thought, so much so that if they were to be suddenly taken away from you, you would feel lost, as if a very important part of your being had disappeared.

It is not a matter of giving up all these things, since they make up, at least to a great extent, the aim and purpose of your existence. But you must give up all attachment to these things, so that you may feel capable of living without them, or rather so that you may be ready, if they leave you, to rebuild a new life for yourself, in new circumstances, and to do this indefinitely, for such is the consequence of immortality. This state may be defined in this way: to be able to organise and carry out everything with utmost care and attention and yet remain free from all desire and attachment, for if you wish to escape death, you must not be bound by anything that will perish.

After the feelings come the sensations. Here the fight is pitiless and the adversaries formidable. They can sense the slightest weakness and strike where you are defenceless. The victories you win are only fleeting and the same battles are

repeated indefinitely. The enemy whom you thought you had defeated rises up again and again to strike you. You must have a strongly tempered character, an untiring endurance to be able to withstand every defeat, every rebuff, every denial, every discouragement and the immense weariness of finding yourself always in contradiction with daily experience and earthly events.

We come now to the most terrible battle of all, the physical battle which is fought in the body; for it goes on without respite or truce. It begins at birth and can end only with the defeat of one of the two combatants: the force of transformation and the force of disintegration. I say at birth, for in fact the two movements are in conflict from the very moment one comes into the world, although the conflict becomes conscious and deliberate only much later. For **every indisposition, every illness, every malformation, even accidents, are the result 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.** Later on, with the development of the consciousness, when the fight becomes deliberate, it changes into a frantic race between the two opposite and rival movements, a race to see which one will reach its goal first, transformation or death. This means a ceaseless effort, a constant concentration to call down the regenerating force and to increase the receptivity of the cells to this force, to fight step by step, from point to point against the devastating action of the forces of destruction and decline, to tear out of its grasp everything that is capable of responding to the

ascending urge, to enlighten, purify and stabilise. It is an obscure and obstinate struggle, most often without any apparent result or any external sign of the partial victories that have been won and are ever uncertain – for the work that has been done always seems to need to be redone; each step forward is most often made at the cost of a setback elsewhere and what has been done one day can be undone the next. Indeed, the victory can be sure and lasting only when it is total. And all that takes time, much time, and the years pass by inexorably, increasing the strength of the adverse forces.

All this time the consciousness stands like a sentinel in a trench: **you must hold on, hold on at all costs, without a quiver of fear or a slackening of vigilance, keeping an unshakable faith in the mission to be accomplished and in the help from above which inspires and sustains you. For the victory will go to the most enduring.**"[6]

Bulletin, February 1954

5. Occult Science and Spiritual Knowledge

"…the indispensable basis of occult studies is a recognition of the concrete and objective reality of the many states of being and the inner worlds, which is a psychological application of the theory of four-dimensional or multi-dimensional space.

Occult science could thus be defined as a concrete objectification, in the world of forms, of what spiritual disciplines teach from the purely psychological point of view. The two should complement each other for the perfection of self-development and integral action. Occult knowledge without spiritual discipline is a dangerous instrument, for the

one who uses it as for others, if it falls into impure hands. Spiritual knowledge without occult science lacks precision and certainty in its objective results; it is all-powerful only in the subjective world. The two, when combined in inner or outer action, are irresistible and are fit instruments for the manifestation of the supramental power."[7]

Bulletin, April 1954

6. A Dream*

"There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bring forth new ones. In this place, titles and positions would be replaced by opportunities to serve and organise; the bodily needs of each one would be equally provided for, and intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority would be expressed in the general organisation not by an increase in the pleasures and powers of life but by increased duties and responsibilities. Beauty in all its artistic forms,

painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be equally accessible to all; the ability to share in the joy it brings would be limited only by the capacities of each one and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one's living but a way to express oneself and to develop one's capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual's subsistence and sphere of action. In short, it would be a place where human relationships, which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood.

The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess sufficient knowledge to understand and adopt it nor the conscious force that is indispensable in order to execute it; that is why I call it a dream.

And yet this dream is in the course of becoming a reality; that is what we are striving for in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, on a very small scale, in proportion to our limited means. The realisation is certainly far from perfect, but it is progressive; little by little we are advancing towards our goal which we hope we may one day be able to present to the world as a practical and effective way to emerge from the present chaos, to be born into a new life that is more harmonious and true."[8]

Bulletin, August 1954

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II. On Education, Messages, Letters And Conversations

1. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education

*(a) Messages**

"INAUGURAL MESSAGE FOR THE

SRI AUROBINDO MEMORIAL CONVENTION

Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of **the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the élite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life.**

In his name I open today this convention meeting here with the purpose of realising one of his most cherished ideals.

24 April 1951

* * *

STUDENTS' PRAYER

Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we may be ready to receive them.

6 January 1952

* * *

I am perfectly sure, I am quite confident, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind, that this University, which is being established here, will be the greatest seat of knowledge upon earth.

It may take fifty years, it may take a hundred years, and you may doubt about my being there; I may be there or not, but these children of mine will be there to carry out my work. And those who collaborate in this divine work today will have the joy and pride of having participated in such an exceptional achievement.

28 May 1953

* * *

We are not here to do (only a little better) what the others do.

We are here to do what the others *cannot do* because they do not have the idea that it can be done.

We are here to open the way of the Future to children who belong to the Future.

Anything else is not worth the trouble and not worthy of Sri Aurobindo's help.

6 September 1961

* * *

Let the Truth be your master and your guide.

We aspire for the Truth and its triumph in our being and our activities.

Let the aspiration for the Truth be the dynamism of our efforts.

O Truth! We want to be guided by Thee. May Thy reign come upon earth.

16 December 1967

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When one lives in the truth, one is above all contradictions.

16 December 1968

* * *

You must have lived what you want to teach.

To speak of the new consciousness, let it penetrate you and reveal to you its secrets. For only then can you speak with any competence.

To rise into the new consciousness, the first condition is to have enough modesty of mind to be convinced that all that you think you know is nothing in comparison to what yet remains to be learnt.

All that you have learnt outwardly must be just a step allowing you to rise towards a higher knowledge.

16 December 1969

* * *

It is only in the calm that one can know and do. All that is done in agitation and violence is an aberration and a folly. The first sign of the divine presence in the being is peace.

We are here to do better than elsewhere and to prepare ourselves for a supramental future. This should never be forgotten. I appeal to the sincere goodwill of all so that our ideal may be realised."[9]

16 December 1971

(b) Aims*

"*Why are we here in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram?*

There is an ascending evolution in nature which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of the ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken. In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly an animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still an animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the animal, a being who will remain a man in its external form, and yet whose consciousness will rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo came upon earth to teach this truth to men. He told them that man is only a transitional being living in a mental consciousness, but with the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good and beautiful, happy and fully conscious. During the whole of his life upon earth, Sri Aurobindo gave all his time to establish in himself this consciousness he called supramental, and to help those gathered around him to realise it.

You have the immense privilege of having come quite young to the Ashram, that is to say, still plastic and capable of being moulded according to this new ideal and thus become the representatives of the new race. Here, in the Ashram, you are in the most favourable conditions with regard to the

environment, the influence, the teaching and the example, to awaken in you this supramental consciousness and to grow according to its law.

Now, all depends on your will and your sincerity. If you have the will no more to belong to ordinary humanity, no more to be merely evolved animals; if your will is to become men of the new race realising Sri Aurobindo's supramental ideal, living a new and higher life upon a new earth, you will find here all the necessary help to achieve your purpose; you will profit fully by your stay in the Ashram and eventually become living examples for the world.

24 July 1951

* * *

What is the real purpose, the aim of our Education Centre? Is it to teach Sri Aurobindo's works? And these only? And all or some of these? Or is it to prepare students to read Sri Aurobindo's works and Mother's? Is it to prepare them for the Ashram life or also for other 'outside' occupation? There are so many opinions floating around, and even those older people whom we expect to know make so many different statements, that one does not know what to believe and act by. Then on what basis can we work without any real sure knowledge? I pray, Mother, give us your guidance.

It is not a question of preparing to read these works or other works. **It is a question of pulling all those who are capable to do so, out of the general human routine of thought, feeling and action; it is to give all opportunities to those who are here to cast off from them the slavery to the human way of thinking and doing; it is to teach all those who want to listen that there is another and truer way of living, that Sri Aurobindo has taught us how to**

live and become a *true being* – and that the aim of the education here is to prepare the children and make them fit for *that life*.

For all the rest, the human ways of thinking and living, the world is vast and there is place out there for everybody.

It is not a number that we want – it is a selection; it is not brilliant students that we want, it is living souls.

* * *

It should be known and we should not hesitate to say openly that **the purpose of our school is to discover and encourage those in whom the need for progress has become conscious enough to orient their life.**

* * *

From the worldly standpoint, from the point of view of result achieved certainly things can be done better. But I am speaking of the effort put in, effort in the deepest sense of the word. Work is prayer done with the body. With that effort in your work the Divine is satisfied; the eye of the Consciousness that has viewed it is indeed pleased. Not that from the human standpoint one cannot do better. For us, however, this particular endeavour is one among many; it is only one movement in our Sadhana. We are engaged in many other things. To bring one particular item of work to something like perfection requires time and means and resources which are not at our disposal. But we do not seek perfection in one thing, our aim is an integral achievement.

An outside view may find many things to criticise and criticise much, but from the inner view what has been done has been done well. In an outside view, you come with all

kinds of mental, intellectual formations and find there is nothing uncommon in what is done here. But thereby you miss what is behind: the Sadhana. A deeper consciousness would see the march towards a realisation that surpasses all. The outside view does not see the spiritual life; it judges by its own smallness.

There are people who write wanting to join our University and they ask what kind of diploma or degree we prepare for, the career we open out. To them I say: go elsewhere, please, if you want that; there are many other places, very much better than ours, even in India, in that respect. We do not have their equipment or magnificence. You will get there the kind of success you look for. We do not compete with them. We move in a different sphere, on a different level.

But this does not mean that I ask you to feel superior to others. **The true consciousness is incapable of feeling superior. It is only the small consciousness that seeks to show its superiority.** Even a child is superior to such a being: for it is spontaneous in its movements. Rise above all that. Do not be interested in anything other than your relation with the Divine, what you wish to do for Him. That is the only thing interesting.§*

30 November 1955

* * *

We are not here to lead an easy and comfortable life. We are here to find the Divine, to become divine, to manifest the Divine.

** Whenever the symbol § appears, it indicates a spoken comment of the Mother which was noted from memory by a sadhak and approved by the Mother for publication.*

What happens to us is the Divine's affair, not ours.

The Divine knows better than we do what is good for the world's progress and for our own.

23 August 1967

* * *

To develop the spirit of service is part of the training here and it completes the other studies.

13 June 1971

* * *

You must not confuse a religious teaching with a spiritual one.

Religious teaching belongs to the past and halts progress.

Spiritual teaching is the teaching of the future – it illumines the consciousness and prepares it for the future realisation.

Spiritual teaching is above religions and strives towards a global Truth.

It teaches us to enter into direct relations with the Divine.

12 February 1972

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The aim of education is not to prepare a man to succeed in life and society, but to increase his perfectibility to its utmost.

* * *

Do not aim at success. Our aim is perfection. Remember you are on the threshold of *a new world*, participating in its birth and instrumental in its creation. There is nothing more important than the transformation. There is no interest more worthwhile.

* * *

In a general way, education, culture, refinement of the senses are the means of curing movements of crude instinct and desire and passion. To obliterate them is not curing them; instead they should be cultivated, intellectualised, refined. That is the surest way of curing them. To give them their maximum growth in view of the progress and development of consciousness, so that one may attain to a sense of harmony and exactitude of perception is a part of culture and education for the human being."[10]

*(c) Students**

"Of one thing you can be sure – *your future is in your hands*. You will become the man you *want to be* and the higher your ideal and your aspiration, the higher will be your realisation, but you must keep a firm resolution and never forget your true aim in life.

2 April 1963

* * *

To be young is to live in the future.

To be young is to be always ready to give up what we are in order to become what we must be.

To be young is never to accept the irreparable.

28 March 1967

* * *

Only those years that are passed uselessly make you grow old.

A year spent uselessly is a year during which no progress has been accomplished, no growth in consciousness has been achieved, no further step has been taken towards perfection.

Consecrate your life to the realisation of something higher and broader than yourself and you will never feel the weight of the passing years."[11]

21 February 1958

* * *

"For a happy and effective life, the essentials are sincerity, humility, perseverance and an insatiable thirst for progress. Above all, one must be convinced of a limitless possibility of progress. Progress is youth; at a hundred years of age one can be young."[12]

14 January 1972

* * *

"When a child lives in normal conditions, it has a spontaneous confidence that all it needs will be given to it.

This confidence should persist, unshaken, throughout life; but the limited idea, ignorant and superficial, of its needs which a child has, must be replaced progressively by a wider, deeper and truer conception which culminates in the perfect conception of needs in accordance with the supreme wisdom, until we realise that the Divine alone knows what our true needs are and rely upon Him for everything."[13]

19 November 1954

* * *

"The most important condition is trust, a child-like trust, the candid feeling that knows that needed things will come, that there is no question about it. When the child has need of anything he is certain that it is coming. This kind of simple trust or reliance is the most important condition."[14]

"Lord, we pray to Thee:

May we understand better why we are here,
May we do better what we have to do here,
May we be what we ought to become here,
So that Thy will may be fulfilled harmoniously."[15]

15 January 1962

(d) Study*

"My dear child,

The true wisdom is to be ready to learn from whatever source the knowledge can come.

We can learn things from a flower, an animal, a child, if we are eager to know always more, because there is only One Teacher in the world – the Supreme Lord, and He manifests through everything.

With all my love."[16]

9 March 1967

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"*For physical work it is not difficult, but for study it becomes difficult to follow the discipline when I feel bad. All the same, I have decided that on the days when I do not study, I will not eat my lunch.*

What a funny idea you have! To punish your body for a fault the vital has committed! It is not fair."[17]

22 December 1934

* * *

"The important point is to know that the mind is incapable of understanding the One Supreme – that is why all that is said and thought about it is a travesty and an approximation and is necessarily full of irreconcilable contradictions.

That is also why it has always been taught that mental silence is indispensable in order to have true knowledge."[18]

31 August 1965

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"The mind must remain quiet to let the Force flow through it for an integral manifestation."[19]

* * *

"Now, what the intellect has understood let the whole being realise. Mental knowledge must be replaced by the flaming power of progress."[20]

(e) Reading*

"**Reading novels is never beneficial.**

24 April 1937

* * *

In unformed minds what they read sinks in without any regard to its value and imprints itself as truth. It is advisable therefore to be careful about what one gives them to read and to see that only what is true and useful for their formation gets a place.

3 June 1939

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I do not approve of these literature classes in which, ostensibly for the sake of knowledge, they flounder in the mud of a state of mind which is out of place here and which cannot in any way help to build up the consciousness of tomorrow. …

18 June 1959

* * *

…To me, literature as such is on a pretty low level – it is mostly a work of the creative vital, and the highest it reaches is up to the throat centre, the external expressive mind. This mind puts one in relation with outside things. And, in its activity, literature is all a game of fitting ideas to ideas and words to ideas and words to one another. It can develop a certain skill in the mind, some capacity for discussion, description, amusement and wit.

I haven't read much of English literature – I have gone through only a few hundred books. But I know French literature very well – I have read a whole library of it. And I can say that it has no great value in terms of Truth. Real knowledge comes from above the mind. What literature gives is the play of a lot of common or petty ideas. Only on a rare occasion does some ray from above come in. If you look into thousands and thousands of books, you will find just one small intuition here and there. The rest is nothing.

I can't say that the reading of literature equips one better to understand Sri Aurobindo. On the contrary, it can be a hindrance. For, the same words are used and the purpose for which they are used is so different from the purpose for which Sri Aurobindo has made use of them, the manner in which they have been put together to express things is so different from Sri Aurobindo's that these words tend to put one off from the light which Sri Aurobindo wants to convey to us through them. **To get to Sri Aurobindo's light we must empty our minds of all that literature has said and done.** We must go inward and stay in a receptive silence and turn it upward. Then alone we get something in the right way. At the worst, I have seen that the study of literature makes one silly

and perverse enough to sit in judgment on Sri Aurobindo's English and find fault with his grammar!

* * *

There is a subtle world where you can see all possible subjects for paintings, novels, plays of all kinds, even the cinema.

It is from there that most authors receive their inspiration.

* * *

One is never too careful with books which have the most pernicious effect.

Blessings.

17 April 1967

* * *

If you want to know what is really happening in the world, you should not read newspapers of any sort, for they are full of lies.

To read a newspaper is to take part in the great collective falsehoods.

2 February 1970

* * *

Mother,

How can one know what is happening in other countries and even in our own, if we do not read papers? At least we get some idea from them, don't we? Or would it be better not to read them at all?

I did not say that you must not read papers. I said that you must not blindly believe in all that you read, you must know that truth is quite another thing.

Blessings."[21]

4 February 1970

(f) Conduct*

"WHAT A CHILD SHOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER

The necessity of an absolute sincerity.

The certitude of Truth's final victory.

The possibility of constant progress with the will to achieve.

* * *

THE IDEAL CHILD

... likes to study when he is at school,
... he likes to play when he is in the playground,
... he likes to eat at meal-time,
... he likes to sleep at bed-time,
... and always he is full of love for all those around him,
... full of confidence in the divine Grace,
... full of deep respect for the Divine.

* * *

The things to be taught to a child

1) The necessity of absolute sincerity.
2) The certitude of the final victory of Truth.
3) The possibility and the will to progress.

Good temper, fair-play, truthfulness.

Patience, endurance, perseverance.

Equanimity, courage, cheerfulness.

* * *

True strength and protection come from the Divine Presence in the heart.

If you want to keep this Presence constantly in you, avoid carefully all vulgarity in speech, behaviour and acts.

Do not mistake liberty for license and freedom for bad manners: the thoughts must be pure and the aspiration ardent.

26 February 1965

* * *

Two things need to be done. Children must be taught:

a) not to tell a lie, whatever the consequences;

b) to control violence, rage, anger.

If these two things can be done, they can be led towards superhumanity.

There is an idea that if one breaks conventions, restrictions, one is free from the limitations of ordinary humanity. But this is wrong.

Those two things must be achieved to be able to be what may be called "superman": not to tell lies and to control oneself.

A complete devotion to the Divine is the last condition, but these are the first two things to be achieved.

18 July 1971

* * *

As girls and boys are educated together here we have always insisted on the relations between them to be those of simple comradeship without any mixture of sex feeling and sensuality; and **to avoid all temptation they are forbidden to go in one another's room and to meet anywhere privately.**

This has been made clear to everybody. And if these rules are strictly followed, nothing unpleasant can happen.

16 August 1960

* * *

Some good students give so much importance to money that it gives a shock. Can we discuss the matter?

Yes, try – it is very much needed. Money seems to have become the Supreme Lord these days – truth is receding in the background, as for Love, it is quite out of sight!

I mean Divine Love because what human beings call love is a very good friend of money.

* * *

When a child wants to impress you by telling you stories of the wealth of his family, you must not keep quiet. You must explain to him that worldly wealth does not count here, only the wealth that has been offered to the Divine has some value; that you do not become big by living in big houses, travelling by first-class and spending money lavishly. You can increase in stature only by being truthful, sincere, obedient and grateful.

* * *

I have said, and I insist on this decision, that children below 15 should not go to bed later than 9 o'clock – those who do are being disobedient and this is regrettable.

* * *

Mother, why are the hours before midnight better for sleep than the later hours?

Because, symbolically, during the hours till midnight, the sun is setting, while from the very first hour after midnight

the sun begins to rise.

Blessings.

22 August 1969

* * *

Mother, how is it better to go to bed early and to get up early?

When the sun sets, a kind of peace descends upon the earth and this peace is helpful for sleep.

When the sun rises, a vigorous energy descends upon the earth and this energy is helpful for work.

When you go to bed late and get up late, you contradict the forces of Nature and that is not very wise.

Blessings."[22]

21 December 1969

(g) Holidays*

"Mother, why and how does one lose one's spiritual gain by going outside? One can make a conscious effort and your protection is always there, is it not?

To go to one's parents is to return to an influence generally stronger than any other: and few are the cases where parents help you in your spiritual progress, because they are generally more interested in a worldly realisation.

Parents who are chiefly interested in spiritual realisation do not usually ask their children to go back to visit them.

Blessings.

8 November 1969

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Holidays

Shall we say *holy days*? There are two kinds of them: traditionally, the Lord for six days (or aeons) worked to create his world and the seventh He stopped for rest, concentration and contemplation. This can be called the day of God.

The second one is: the men, the creatures, during six days work for their personal interests and egoistic motives, and the seventh they stop working to take rest and have time to look inwardly or upwardly, in contemplation of the source and origin of their existence and consciousness, in order to take a dip in It and renew their energies.

It is scarcely necessary to mention the modern manner of understanding the word or the thing, that is to say, all the possible ways of wasting time in a futile attempt at amusing oneself."[23]

(h) Teachers*

"**To love to learn is the most precious gift that one can make to a child, to learn always and everywhere.**

* * *

It is an invaluable possession for every living being to have learnt to know himself and to master himself. To know oneself means to know the motives of one's actions and reactions, the why and the how of all that happens in oneself. To master oneself means to do what one has decided to do, to do nothing but that, not to listen to or follow impulses, desires or fancies.

To give a moral law to a child is evidently not an ideal thing; but it is very difficult to do without it. The child can be

taught, as he grows up, the relativity of all moral and social laws so that he may find in himself a higher and truer law. But here one must proceed with circumspection and insist on the difficulty of discovering that true law. The majority of those who reject human laws and proclaim their liberty and their decision to "live their own life" do so only in obedience to the most ordinary vital movements which they disguise and try to justify, if not to their own eyes, at least to the eyes of others. They give a kick to morality, simply because it is a hindrance to the satisfaction of their instincts.

No one has a right to sit in judgment over moral and social laws, unless he has taken his seat above them; one cannot abandon them, unless one replaces them by something superior, which is not so easy.

In any case, the finest present one can give to a child would be to teach him to know himself and to master himself.

July 1930

* * *

PERSONALITY TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL TEACHER*

1. Complete self-control not only to the extent of not showing any anger, but remaining absolutely quiet and undisturbed under all circumstances.

2. In the matter of self-confidence, must also have a sense of the relativity of his importance.

Above all, must have the knowledge that the teacher himself must always progress if he wants his students to

** These comments were written by the Mother after she was shown a questionnaire on the subject which had been submitted to the Centre of Education by a training college for teachers.*

progress, must not remain satisfied either with what he is or with what he knows.

3. Must not have any sense of essential superiority over his students nor preference or attachment whatsoever for one or another.

4. Must know that all are equal spiritually and instead of mere tolerance must have a global comprehension or understanding.

5. 'The business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material.' (Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*)"[24]

Published in June 1954

*(i) Teaching**

"The school should be an opportunity for progress for the teacher as well as for the student. Each one should have the freedom to develop freely.

A method is never so well applied as when one has discovered it oneself. Otherwise it is as boring for the teacher as for the student.

* * *

There is one thing that I must emphasise. Don't try to follow what is done in the universities outside. Don't try to pump into the students mere data and information. Don't give them so much work that they may not get time for anything else. You are not in a great hurry to catch a train. Let

the students understand what they learn. Let them assimilate it. Finishing the course should not be your goal. You should make the programme in such a way that the students may get time to attend the subjects they want to learn. They should have sufficient time for their physical exercises. I don't want them to be very good students, yet pale, thin, anaemic. Perhaps you will say that in this way they will not have sufficient time for their studies, but that can be made up by expanding the course over a longer period. Instead of finishing a course in four years, you can take six years. Rather it would be better for them; they will be able to assimilate more of the atmosphere here and their progress will not be just in one direction at the cost of everything else. It will be an all-round progress in all directions.

10 September 1953

* * *

…What you should do is to teach the children to take interest in what they are doing – that is not the same thing as interesting the students! You must arouse in them the desire for knowledge, for progress. One can take an interest in anything – in sweeping a room, for example – if one does it with concentration, in order to gain an experience, to make a progress, to become more conscious. I often say this to the students who complain of having a bad teacher. Even if they don't like the teacher, even if he tells them useless things or if he is not up to the mark, they can always derive some benefit from their period of class, learn something of great interest and progress in consciousness.

Most teachers want to have *good students*: students who

are studious and attentive, who understand and know many things, who can answer well – good students. This spoils everything. The students begin to consult books, to study, to learn. Then they rely only on books, on what others say or write, and they lose contact with the superconscient part which receives knowledge by intuition. This contact often exists in a small child but it is lost in the course of his education.

For the students to be able to progress in the right direction, it is obvious that the teachers should have understood this and changed their old way of seeing and teaching. Without that, my work is at a standstill.

16 December 1959

* * *

Mother, would you please define in a few words what you mean essentially by "free progress"?

A progress guided by the soul and not subjected to habits, conventions or preconceived ideas."[25]

* * *

"*Up to the secondary level, it is understood that the children are too young to know about Yoga and to decide whether they want to take up Yoga or not. So the education to them is education and nothing else.*

But for the Higher Course, I think, it must be made clear that only those who are here for Yoga can be admitted as members of this Course – then the education becomes Yoga.

If Mother gives Her directive on this point, it will make things very clear to many of us.

It is not quite like that. In all the sections, Primary, Secondary and Higher Course, the children will follow yogic methods in their education and prepare and try to bring down new

knowledge. So all the students can be said to be doing Yoga.

A distinction must be made, however, between those doing Yoga and the disciples. To be a disciple one has to surrender and the decision to do so must be full and spontaneous. Such decisions have to be taken individually – when the call comes – and it cannot be imposed or even suggested.

Blessings."[26]

16 November 1967

* * *

"When you think with words, you can express what you think with those words only. To think with ideas is to be able to put the same idea in many kinds of words. The words can also be of different languages, if you happen to know more than one language. This is the first, the most elementary thing about thinking with ideas.

When you think with experience, you go much deeper and you can express the same experience with many kinds of ideas. Then thought can take this form or that form in any language and through all of them the essential realisation will remain unchanged.

* * *

To be convincing when you speak, think not in ideas but in experiences."[27]

* * *

"It is very difficult to choose games which are useful and profitable for a child. It asks for much consideration and reflection, and all that one does unthinkingly can have unhappy consequences."[28]

*(j) Discipline**

"So discipline is a rule which the child should impose on himself. How can he be led to recognise the need for it? How can he be helped to follow it?

Example is the most powerful instructor. Never demand from a child an effort of discipline that you do not make yourself. Calm, equanimity, order, method, absence of useless words, ought to be constantly practised by the teacher if he wants to instil them into his pupils.

The teacher should always be punctual and come to the class a few minutes before it begins, always properly dressed. And above all, so that his students should never lie, he must never lie himself; so that his students should never lose their tempers, he should never lose his temper with them; and to have the right to say to them, "Rough play often ends in tears", he should never raise his hand against any of them.

These are elementary and preliminary things which ought to be practised in all schools without exception.

* * *

One can be in psychological control of the children only when one is in control of one's own nature.

16 July 1963

* * *

First, know thoroughly what you have to teach. Try to get a good understanding of your students and their particular needs.

Be very calm and very patient, never get angry; one must be master of oneself in order to be a master of others.

7 December 1964

* * *

If you have to exercise authority, have authority over yourself first. If you cannot keep discipline amongst the children, don't beat or shout or get agitated – that is not permissible. Bring down calm and peace from above and under their pressure things will improve.

* * *

You are a good teacher but it is your way of dealing with the children that is objectionable.

The children must be educated in an atmosphere of love and gentleness.

No violence, never.

No scolding, never.

Always a gentle kindness and the teacher must be the *living example* of the virtues the child must acquire.

The children must be *happy* to go to school, *happy* to learn, and the teacher must be their best friend who gives them the example of the qualities they must acquire.

And all that depends exclusively on the teacher. What he does and how he behaves.

* * *

The students talk so much in the class that I have to scold them often.

It is not with severity but with *self-mastery* that children are controlled.

* * *

I must tell you that if a teacher wants to be respected, he must be *respectable*. X is not the only one to say that you use

violence to make yourself obeyed; nothing is less respectable. You must first control yourself and never use brute force to impose your will.

* * *

I have always thought that something in the teacher's character was responsible for the indiscipline of his students.

I hope you will give me precise instructions which will help me to keep order in my classes.

The most important is to master yourself and never lose your temper. If you don't have control over yourself, how can you expect to control others, above all, children, who feel it immediately when someone is not master of himself?

* * *

To the teachers of all the infant classes

One rule which must be rigorously applied:

It is *absolutely forbidden* to hit the children – all blows are forbidden, even the slightest little slap or the so-called friendly punch. To give a blow to a child because he does not obey or does not understand or because he is disturbing the others indicates a lack of self-control, and it is harmful for both teacher and student.

Disciplinary measures may be taken if necessary, but in complete calm and not because of a personal reaction."[29]

(k) Tests*

"**To be repeated each day by all the students:**

It is not for our family, it is not to secure a good position, it is not to earn money, it is not to obtain a diploma, that we study.

We study to learn, to know, to understand the world, and for the sake of the joy that it gives us.

June 1967

* * *

I find tests an obsolete and ineffective way of knowing if the students are intelligent, willing and attentive.

A silly, mechanical mind can very well answer a test if the memory is good and these are certainly not the qualities required for a man of the future.

It is by tolerance for the old habits that I consented that those who want tests can have them. But I hope that in future this concession will not be necessary.

To know if a student is good needs, if the tests are abolished, a little more inner contact and psychological knowledge for the teacher. But our teachers are expected to do Yoga, so this ought not to be difficult for them.

22 July 1967

* * *

Naturally the teacher has to test the student to know if he or she has learnt something and has made a progress. But this test must be individual and adapted to each student, not the same mechanical test for all of them. It must be a spontaneous and unexpected test leaving no room for pretence and insincerity. Naturally also, this is much more difficult for the teacher but so much more living and interesting also.

I enjoyed your remarks about your students. They prove that you have an individual relation with them – and that is essential for good teaching.

Those who are insincere do not truly want to learn but to get good marks or compliments from the teacher – they are not interesting.

25 July 1967

* * *

What should be the criteria for giving prizes in our "Free Progress Classes"?

The prizes certainly should not be based on competitive grades.

A prize of appreciation, of equivalent value, could be given to those who have exceeded a certain level of (1) capacity, plus (2) goodwill and regularity of effort.

Both should be there to warrant the prize."[30]

*(l) Curriculum**

"Sri Aurobindo came upon the earth to announce the manifestation of the supramental world and not merely did he announce this manifestation but embodied also in part the supramental force and showed by example what one must do to prepare oneself for manifesting it. **The best thing we can do is to study all that he has told us and endeavour to follow his example and prepare ourselves for the new manifestation.**

This gives life its real sense and will help us to overcome all obstacles.

Let us live for the new creation and we shall grow stronger and stronger by remaining young and progressive.

30 January 1972

* * *

If one reads Sri Aurobindo carefully one finds the answers to all that one wants to know.

25 October 1972

* * *

By studying carefully what Sri Aurobindo has said on *all subjects* one can easily reach a complete knowledge of the things of this world.

* * *

True, India is the only place in the world which is still aware that something else than Matter exists. The other countries have quite forgotten it: Europe, America and elsewhere.... That is why she still has a message to preserve and deliver to the world. But at present she is splashing and floundering in the muddle.

Sri Aurobindo has shown that the truth does not lie in running away from earthly life but in remaining *in* it, to *transform it, divinise it*, so that the Divine can manifest HERE, in this PHYSICAL WORLD…."[31]

31 March 1967

(m) Languages*

"**Hindi is good only for those who belong to a Hindi-speaking province. Sanskrit is good for all Indians.**

* * *

I have the *deepest respect* for Indian languages and continue to study Sanskrit when I have time.

* * *

The Sanskrit ought to be the national language of India.

Blessings.

19 April 1971

* * *

On certain issues where You and Sri Aurobindo have given direct answers, we (Sri Aurobindo's Action) are also specific, as for instance... on the language issue where You have said for the country that (1) the regional language should be the medium of instruction, (2) Sanskrit should be the national language, and (3) English should be the international language.

Are we correct in giving these replies to such questions?

Yes.

Blessings.

4 October 1971

* * *

(Languages to be studied in Auroville)¤

(1) Tamil

(2) French

(3) Simplified Sanskrit to replace Hindi as the language of India

(4) English as the international language."[32]

15 December 1970

(n) Arts*

"**On the physical plane it is in beauty that the Divine expresses Himself.**

* * *

In the physical world, of all things it is beauty that expresses best the Divine. The physical world is the world of

¤ *Written on the occasion of the inauguration of a school in Auroville. The Mother's message for the school was: "A sincere will to know and to progress."*

form and the perfection of form is beauty. Beauty interprets, expresses, manifests the Eternal. Its role is to put all manifested nature in contact with the Eternal through the perfection of form, through harmony and a sense of the ideal which uplifts and leads towards something higher.

* * *

Let beauty be your constant ideal.

The beauty of the soul

The beauty of sentiments

The beauty of thoughts

The beauty of the action

The beauty in the work

so that nothing comes out of your hands which is not an expression of pure and harmonious beauty.

And the Divine Help shall always be with you."[33]

* * *

"**Music follows the rule of all things on earth – unless they are turned to the Divine they cannot be divine.**

25 May 1941

* * *

Am I right in saying that when the Mother plays on the organ, certain chords of music create the necessary vibrations for the manifestation of the higher Force which the Mother wants to establish on earth?

When somebody lives in a higher consciousness, the vibrations of this higher consciousness are manifested in whatever this person does, says or thinks. These higher

vibrations are manifested by the very fact of the presence of this person upon earth.

Blessings."[34]

* * *

"The role of music lies in helping the consciousness to uplift itself towards the spiritual heights.

All that lowers the consciousness, encourages desires and excites the passions, runs counter to the true goal of music and ought to be avoided.

It is not a question of name but of inspiration – and the spiritual consciousness alone can be the judge there.

22 July 1967

* * *

Poetry is sensuality of the spirit.

* * *

For me true poetry is beyond all philosophy and beyond all explanation."[35]

*(o) National Education**

"**India has or rather *had* the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it.**

The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffers badly for it.

An integral education which could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised. …

26 July 1965

What is India's true genius and what is her destiny?

To teach to the world that matter is false and impotent unless it becomes the manifestation of the Spirit.

What illusions and delusions is our education today beset with? How could we possibly keep clear of them?

a) The almost exclusive importance given to success, career and money.

b) Insist on the paramount importance of the contact with the Spirit and the growth and manifestation of the Truth of the being."[36]

5 August 1965

2. Sri Aurobindo Ashram: Department of Physical Education*

*(a) The Olympic Rings**

"It has been officially stated that the five rings of the symbol of the Olympic Games represent the five continents, but no special significance has been attached to the colour of the rings, nor has there been any intention of allotting a specific colour to each continent.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to study these colours and to find out what meaning they may have and what message they may convey.

It is quite well known that each colour has its significance, but the meanings attached to the various colours by different interpreters vary and are often conflicting. There does not seem to exist any universally accepted classification of these significances. This is because these colours are considered from

a mental standpoint, or at least because the vision is influenced by the mind of the interpreter. But if one rises above the mind to the truly occult regions beyond, the real meaning of each colour is the same for all those who can read it directly. This is true not only in this particular case but for all occult and spiritual experience. There is a remarkable similarity in the experiences of mystics of all times and places.

Consequently, if the colours of the rings in the Olympic Symbol are viewed from this standpoint, we shall be able to find their real esoteric meaning and see how they apply to the five continents.

Green denotes a vast peaceful feeling with a direct contact and a very harmonious relationship with Nature. It could represent a continent with vast open spaces and an unspoiled population living close to the soil and Nature.

Red is the colour of the physical and material world. The red ring could therefore be allotted to a people that has achieved a great mastery over the physical world. This colour would also indicate that material success has given it predominance over the others. In any case, it represents a people that stresses physical and material things.

Blue, on the other hand, indicates a young continent with its whole future before it and great possibilities, but still new and growing.

Black is a very unfortunate choice of colour as it can only represent a continent which is fast falling into deep obscurity – the descent of a declining people into dark oblivion.

On the contrary, yellow is the most glorious colour of

all. It is the golden colour of Light – the Light which comes from the Source and Origin of all things and which, with its helping hand, will lead evolving humanity back to its divine Origin.

The arrangement of the rings also has a significance. Black is the central colour upholding all the others, and this is indeed an indication of the black chaos which now governs the world and of the blindness of those who are at present struggling to guide the ship of humanity on the dark sea of ignorance.

It is our hope that in the future this black ring will be replaced by a white one, when there comes a turn in the tide of human affairs, when the shades of ignorance are dispelled by the dawn of a new light, the bright, white, self-luminous light of the new Consciousness, and when at the helm of the ship stand those who will face this brilliant radiance and set course towards the Promised Land."[37]

Bulletin, November 1949

*(b) The Championship Badge**

"During the Athletic Championships of the J.S.A.S.A. which were held this quarter, the champion of each subgroup received as a prize a badge of championship. This badge is in the form of a golden tortoise with a full circle of red in the centre from which radiate twelve white rays.

The form and colour of the badge have an occult significance and may be interpreted as follows:

The tortoise is the symbol of terrestrial immortality, that is, the immortality of the physical body on this earth. The red centre symbolises the illumined physical and from this radiate the twelve white rays of the integral Light of Truth. The rays

are curved to indicate that the Light is dynamic in its nature and its action.

The golden colour of the tortoise itself shows that it is the Supramental which supports this terrestrial immortality and which alone can bring about the transformation."[38]

Bulletin, November 1949

*(c) Tournaments**

"…we always strive, not to win, but to play the best we can and open thus the way to a new progress.

We are not aiming at success – our aim is perfection.

We are not seeking fame or reputation; we want to prepare ourselves for a Divine manifestation. That is why we can boldly say: It is better to be than to seem. We need not appear to be good if our sincerity is perfect. And by perfect sincerity we mean that all our thoughts, feelings, sensations and actions should express nothing but the central Truth of our being."[39]

Bulletin, April 1950

*(d) Replies to Prayers of the Physical Education Groups**

"My little ones, you are the hope, you are the future. Keep always this youth which is the faculty to progress; for you the phrase "it is impossible" will have no meaning.

22 April 1949

* * *

Be always faithful and persevering and you will have your share of the realisation."[40]

22 April 1949

(e) Messages from the Mother

"**Replace the desire for success by the yearning for progress.**

Replace the eagerness for fame by the aspiration for perfection.

Physical Education is meant to bring into the body, consciousness and control, discipline and mastery, all things necessary for a higher and better life.

Keep all that in mind, practise sincerely and you will become a good athlete; this is the first step on the way to be a true man.

Blessings."[41]

15 July 1962

* * *

"The prayer of the cells in the body

Now that, by the effect of the Grace, we are slowly emerging out of inconscience and waking to a conscious life, an ardent prayer rises in us for more light, more consciousness,

'O Supreme Lord of the universe, we implore Thee, give us the strength and the beauty, the harmonious perfection needed to be Thy divine instruments upon earth'."[42]

2 December 1967

* * *

"Physical culture is the best way of developing the consciousness of the body, and the more the body is conscious, the more it is capable of receiving the divine forces that are at work to transform it and give birth to the new race."[43]

* * *

"ABOUT HATHA YOGA*

From our experience we have found that a particular system of exercises cannot be stamped as the only yogic type of exercises and we cannot definitely say that participation in those exercises only will help to gain health because they are yogic exercises.

Any rational system of exercises suited to one's need and capacity will help the participant to improve in health. Moreover it is the attitude that is more important. Any well-planned and scientifically arranged programme of exercises practised with a yogic attitude will become yogic exercises and the person practising them will draw full benefit from the point of view of physical health and moral and spiritual uplift."[44]

Bulletin, April 1959

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"**…When one is incapable of conforming to a discipline, one is also incapable of doing anything of lasting value in life.**"[45]

16 February 1967

* * *

"Sports are all the games, competitions, tournaments, etc., all the things based on contests and ending in placings and prizes.

Physical education means chiefly the combination of all exercises for the sake of the growth and upkeep of the body.

Naturally, here we have the two together. But it is particularly so because human beings, especially in their young age, still require some excitement in order to make an effort.

Blessings."[46]

14 January 1970

3. The New Age Association*

"*Do you know what is true love?*

There is only *one* true love, the love *from* the Divine, which, in human beings, turns into love *for* the Divine.

Shall we say that the nature of the Divine is Love."[47]

* * *

"What should be the attitude of the sadhak of Sri Aurobindo's yoga towards the various forms of God worshipped by different religions in the past and the present? If he continues to worship them, will it create an obstacle to his progress and prevent his realisation of his aim?

A benevolent goodwill towards all worshippers.

An enlightened indifference towards all religions.

As for the relation with the beings of the Overmind, if this relation exists already, each case must have its own solution."[48]

23 February

* * *

"**Above all words, above all thoughts, in the luminous silence of an aspiring faith give yourself totally, unreservedly, absolutely to the Supreme Lord of all existences and He will make of you what He wants you to be.**

With love and blessings."[49]

17 August 1969

* * *

"Is the aim of life to be happy?

This is just putting things topsy-turvy.

The aim of human life is to discover the Divine and to manifest It. Naturally this discovery leads to happiness; but this happiness is a consequence, not an aim in itself. And it is this mistake of taking a mere consequence for aim of life that has been the cause of most of the miseries which are afflicting human life."[50]

28 March 1970

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"**A hero fears nothing, complains of nothing and never gives way.**"[51]

12 August 1972

4. A Glimpse of the Mother's Work in the School*

"Truly speaking, *I have no opinion.* According to the truth-vision, everything is still terribly mixed, a more or less fortunate combination of light and darkness, of truth and falsehood, of knowledge and ignorance, and so long as decisions are made and action is carried out according to opinions, it will always be like that.

We want to give the example of an action that is carried out according to the truth-vision, but unfortunately we are still very far from realising this ideal; and even if the truth-vision is expressed, it is immediately distorted in its implementation.

So, in the present state of things, it is impossible to say: this is true and this is false, this leads us away from the goal, this leads us nearer to the goal.

Everything can be used for the sake of progress; *everything* can be useful if one knows how to use it.

The important thing is never to lose sight of the ideal you want to realise and to make use of every circumstance for this purpose.

After all, it is always preferable not to make any decision for or against things, but to watch events as they develop, with the impartiality of a witness, relying on the divine Wisdom which will decide for the best and do what is needful."[52]

July 1961

* * *

"Compulsion is neither the best nor the most effective principle of education.

True education must *reveal* what is already present in the developing beings and make it blossom. Just as flowers blossom in the sun, children blossom in joy. It goes without saying that joy does not mean weakness, disorder and confusion. But a luminous kindliness which encourages the good and does not severely insist on the bad.

Grace is always much closer to Truth than justice."[53]

* * *

"*The work and the discipline are becoming slack. Is it because of a "vital strike" on the teacher's part?*

Certainly. It is a weakening of the force due to the non-collaboration of the vital which causes the slackening. Children do not live in their minds enough to obey spontaneously a mental will that is not sustained by a vital force which influences them by its mere presence, without requiring any outer expression. When the vital collaborates, my force works through it and automatically maintains order simply by its presence in the vital.

Young children are not very sensitive to a mental power that is not clothed with vital power. And in order to have vital power you yourself must be *perfectly calm*."[54]

February 1961

* * *

"The problem is more far-reaching than it appears at first sight. It is in fact a revolt of the vital forces of the children against all discipline and all constraint. The normal ordinary method would have been to expel all the undisciplined children from the school and to keep only those who are "good". But this is a defeat and an impoverishment.

If, by transmitting the inner force, *in absolute calm*, one can finally control this revolt, it becomes a conversion and a true enrichment. That is what I want to try and I hope that it will be possible for you to go on collaborating with my action. And now that you have understood not only what I want to do, but also the mechanism and the process of this action, I am confident that we shall succeed. We must expect relapses and not be discouraged by them.

Vital forces, especially in children whose reason is not very well developed, fight desperately before accepting the light and allowing themselves to be converted by it. But success is certain in the end, and we must know how to endure and wait."[55]

March 1961

"…Death is the phenomenon of decentralisation and dispersion of the cells which make up the physical body.

The consciousness is, by its very nature, immortal, and

in order to manifest in the physical world, it assumes more or less lasting material forms.

The material substance is in course of transformation in order to become a multiform and increasingly perfect and lasting mode of expression for this consciousness."[56]

18 May 1968

"...Does the decentralisation occur all at once or by degrees?

Everything does not disperse all at once; it takes a long time.

The central will of the physical being abdicates its will to hold all the cells together. That is the first phenomenon. It accepts dissolution for one reason or another. One of the strongest reasons is the sense of an irreparable disharmony; the other is a kind of disgust with continuing the effort of coordination and harmonisation. In fact, there are innumerable reasons, but unless there is a violent accident, it is above all this will to maintain cohesion which abdicates for one reason or another, or without reason. It is this which inevitably precedes death. …"[57]

"*In the expression "dispersion of the cells", doesn't the word "dispersion" have a special meaning? If so, what is it?*

I used the word dispersion of the cells in its most concrete sense.

When the concentration which forms the body comes to an end and the body dissolves, all the cells that have been especially developed and have become conscious of the divine Presence within them, are scattered and enter other combinations in which they awaken, by contagion, the

consciousness of the Presence that each one has had. And in this way, by this phenomenon of concentration, development and dispersion, all matter evolves and learns by contagion, develops by contagion, has the experience by contagion.

Naturally, the cell dissolves with the body. It is the consciousness of the cells that enters other combinations."[58]

5 June 1968

5. Answers to a Monitress*

*(a) Sutras**

"1. Have no ambition, above all never lay claim to anything, but be at each moment the utmost that you can be.

25 February 1957

2. As for your place in the universal manifestation, the Supreme alone will show it to you.

2 May 1957

3. The Supreme Lord has ineluctably decreed the place you occupy in the world concert, but whatever that place may be, you have the same equal right as everyone else to scale the supreme heights as far as the supramental realisation.

17 May 1957

4. What you are in the truth of your being is ineluctably decreed and nothing and no one can prevent you from being it; but the path you will take to attain it is left to your own free choice.

19 May 1957

5. On the path of ascending evolution, each one is free to choose the direction he will take: the swift and steep ascent towards the summits of Truth, the supreme realisation, or, turning his back to the peaks, the easy descent towards the interminable meanderings of endless rebirths.

23 May 1957

6. In the course of the ages and even in the course of your present life you can make your choice once and for all, irrevocably, and then you have only to confirm it at each new occasion; or else, if you have not taken the final decision at the outset, at each moment you will have to make a new choice between falsehood and truth.

23 May 1957

7. But even supposing that you have not taken the irrevocable decision at the outset, if you have the good fortune to be alive at one of those extraordinary moments in universal history when the Grace is present, incarnate on earth, It will give you once again, at certain exceptional moments, the possibility of making a final choice that will lead you straight to the goal."[59]

23 May 1957

(b) Correspondence*

"For the last hundred years or so mankind has been suffering from a disease which seems to be spreading more and more and which has reached a climax in our times; it is what we may call "utilitarianism". People and things, circumstances and activities seem to be viewed and appreciated exclusively from this angle. Nothing has any value unless it is useful. Certainly something that is useful is better

than something that is not. But first we must agree on what we describe as useful – useful to whom, to what, for what?

For, more and more, the races who consider themselves civilised describe as useful whatever can attract, procure or produce money. Everything is judged and evaluated from a monetary angle. That is what I call utilitarianism. And this disease is highly contagious, for even children are not immune to it.

At an age when they should be dreaming of beauty, greatness and perfection, dreams that may be too sublime for ordinary common sense, but which are nevertheless far superior to this dull good sense, children now dream of money and worry about how to earn it.

So when they think of their studies, they think above all about what can be useful to them, so that later on when they grow up they can earn a lot of money.

And the thing that becomes most important for them is to prepare themselves to pass examinations with success, for with diplomas, certificates and titles they will be able to find good positions and earn a lot of money.

For them study has no other purpose, no other interest.

To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study in order to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself in order to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true... they hardly give it a thought and consider it all very utopian. The only thing

that matters is to be practical, to prepare themselves and learn how to earn money.

Children who are infected with this disease are out of place at the Centre of Education of the Ashram. And it is to make this quite clear to them that we do not prepare them for any official examination or competition and do not give them any diplomas or titles which they can use in the outside world.

We want here only those who aspire for a higher and better life, who thirst for knowledge and perfection, who look forward eagerly to a future that will be more totally true. There is plenty of room in the world for all the others."[60]

17 July 1960

* * *

"Those who are strongly attached to ordinary life and its agitation should not come here, for they are out of their element and create disorder.

But it is difficult to know this before they come, for most of them are very young, and their character is not yet well formed.

But as soon as they are caught in the frenzy of the world, it would be better, for themselves and for others, that they return to their parents and their habits.

Blessings."[61]

14 November 1969

* * *

"*Sweet Mother,*

How far do you consider it the duty of a teacher or an instructor to impose discipline on the students?

To prevent the students from being irregular, rude or negligent is obviously indispensable; unkind and harmful mischief cannot be tolerated.

But as a general and absolute rule, the teachers and especially the physical education instructors must be a constant living example of the qualities demanded from the students; discipline, regularity, good manners, courage, endurance, patience in effort, are taught much more by example than by words. And as an absolute rule: never to do in front of a child what you forbid him to do.

For the rest, each case implies its own solution, and one must act with tact and discernment.

That is why to be a teacher or an instructor is the best of all disciplines, if one knows how to comply with it.

Blessings.

20 November 1969

A child ought to stop being naughty because he learns to be ashamed of being naughty, not because he is afraid of punishment.¤

In the first case, he makes true progress.

In the second, he falls one step down in human consciousness, for fear is a degradation of consciousness."[62]

21 November 1969

6. Answers to a Monitor*

"In a discussion with a friend about our physical education

¤ *Later Mother added: "This is the first step. When he has come so far, he can then make further progress and learn the joy of being good."*

programme and the other innumerable activities we have here, he asked me: 'Can you give me a valid example of at least one person who takes part in so many activities and maintains a fairly high standard – one single person in the whole world?'

Do not forget – all of you who are here – that we want to realise something which does not yet exist on the earth; so it is absurd to seek elsewhere an example of what we want to do.

He told me this also: "Mother says that there is all freedom and all facilities for those who are gifted for a particular subject and want to pursue it to the full. But where is this freedom to become, for instance, a great musician, etc.?" Sweet Mother, can you please say a few words on the subject of this freedom?

The freedom of which I speak is the freedom to follow the soul's will and not that of mental and vital whims and fancies.

The freedom of which I speak is an austere truth which tends to surmount all the weaknesses and desires of the lower, ignorant being.

The freedom of which I speak is the freedom to consecrate oneself entirely and without reserve to one's highest, noblest and most divine aspiration.

Who amongst you follows sincerely that path? It is easy to judge, but it is more difficult to understand and still much more difficult to realise."[63]

18 November 1962

* * *

"When one has decided and accepted to do something, it must be done as well as one can.

Everything can be an occasion to progress in consciousness and self-mastery. And this striving to progress immediately renders the thing, no matter what it is, interesting."[64]

26 September 1963

* * *

"Who can understand Sri Aurobindo? He is as vast as the universe and his teaching is infinite...

The only way to come a little close to him is to love him sincerely and give oneself unreservedly to his work. Thus, each one does his best and contributes as much as he can to that transformation of the world which Sri Aurobindo has predicted.

2 December 1964

Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere that if one surrenders to the Divine Grace, it will do everything for us. Therefore, what value has tapasya?

If you want to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on a given subject, you must at least read all that he has written on that subject. You will then see that he has apparently said the most contradictory things. But when one has read everything, and understood a little, one perceives that all the contradictions complement each other and are organised and unified into an integral synthesis.

Here is another quotation from Sri Aurobindo which will show you that your question is based on ignorance. There are many others which you can read with interest and which will make your intelligence more supple:

'If there is not a complete surrender, then it is not possible

to adopt the baby cat attitude; it becomes mere tamasic passivity calling itself surrender. If a complete surrender is not possible in the beginning, it follows that personal effort is necessary.' "[65]

16 December 1964

7. Conversations*

*(a) 5 April 1967**

"…Here is the beginning of my reply:

'The division between 'ordinary life' and 'spiritual life' is an outdated antiquity.'

Did you read his question? Read it again to me.

'We discussed the future. It seemed to me that nearly all the teachers were eager to do something so that the children could become more conscious of why they are here. At that point I said that in my opinion, to speak to the children of spiritual things often has the opposite result, and that these words lose all their value.'

'Spiritual things' – what does he mean by spiritual things?

Obviously, if the teachers recite them like a story...

Spiritual things... They are taught history *or* spiritual things, they are taught science *or* spiritual things. That is the stupidity. In history, the Spirit is there; in science, the Spirit is there – the Truth is everywhere. And what is needed is not to teach it in a false way, but to teach it in a true way. They cannot get that into their heads.

He adds: "I have suggested that it might be better to meet and listen to Mother's voice, for even if we don't understand

everything, your voice would accomplish its own inner work, which we are not in a position to evaluate. About this, I would like to know what is the best way of bringing the child into relation with you. For all the suggestions, including mine, seemed arbitrary to me and without any real value.

'Mother, wouldn't it be better if the teachers were to concentrate solely on the subjects they are teaching, for you are taking care of the spiritual life?'

I shall give him this reply: There is no "spiritual life"! It is still the old idea, still the old idea of the sage, the sannyasin, the... who represents spiritual life, while all the others represent ordinary life – and it is not true, it is not true, it is not true at all.

If they still need an opposition between two things – for the poor mind doesn't work if you don't give it an opposition – if they need an opposition, let them take the opposition between Truth and Falsehood, it is a little better; I don't say it is perfect, but it is a little better. So, in all things, Falsehood and Truth are mixed everywhere: in the so-called "spiritual life", in sannyasins, in swamis, in those who think they represent the life divine on earth, all that – there also, there is a mixture of Falsehood and Truth.

It would be better not to make any division.

(*Silence*)

For the children, precisely because they are children, it would be best to instil in them the will to conquer the future, the will to always look ahead and to want to move on as swiftly as they can towards... what will be – but they should not drag with them the burden, the millstone of the whole oppressive weight of the past. It is only when we are very high in

consciousness and knowledge that it is good to look behind to find the points where this future begins to show itself. When we can look at the whole picture, when we have a very global vision, it becomes interesting to know that what will be realised later on has already been announced beforehand, in the same way that Sri Aurobindo said that the divine life will manifest on earth, because it is *already* involved in the depths of Matter; from this standpoint it is interesting to look back or to look down below – not to know what happened, or to know what men have known: that is quite useless.

The children should be told: There are wonderful things to be manifested, prepare yourself to receive them. Then if they want something a little more concrete and easier to understand, you can tell them: Sri Aurobindo came to announce these things; when you are able to read him, you will understand. So this awakens the interest, the desire to learn.

I see very clearly the difficulty he is referring to: most people – and in all the things that are written, or in the lectures they give – use inflated speech, without any truth of personal experience, which has no effect, or rather a negative effect. That is what he is referring to.

Yes, that is why they should do as I have said.

Ah! But not so long ago, most of the teachers were saying, "Oh! But we must do this, because it is done everywhere." (*Smiling*) They have already come a little distance. But there is much more to be covered.

But above all, what is most important is to eliminate these divisions. And every one of them, all of them have it in their minds: the division between leading a spiritual life and leading

an ordinary life, having a spiritual consciousness and having an ordinary consciousness – there is only one consciousness.

In most people it is three-quarters asleep and distorted; in many it is still completely distorted. But what is needed, very simply, is not to leap from one consciousness into another, but to open one's consciousness (*upward gesture*) and to fill it with vibrations of Truth, to bring it in harmony with what must be here – there it exists from all eternity – but here, what must be here: the "tomorrow" of the earth. If you weigh yourself down with a whole burden that you have to drag behind you, if you drag behind you everything that you must abandon, you will not be able to advance very fast.

Mind you, to know things from the earth's past can be very interesting and very useful, but it must not be something that binds you or ties you to the past. If it is used as a spring-board, it is all right. But really, it is quite secondary.

(*Silence*)

It would be interesting to formulate or to elaborate a new method of teaching for children, to take them very young. It is easy when they are very young. We need people – oh! we would need remarkable teachers – who have, first, an ample enough documentation of what is known so as to be able to answer every question, and at the same time, at least the knowledge, if not the experience – the experience would be better – of the true intuitive intellectual attitude, and – naturally the capacity would be still more preferable – at least the knowledge that the true way of knowing is mental silence, an attentive silence turned towards the truer Consciousness, and the capacity to receive what comes from there. The best would be to have this capacity; at least, it should be explained that it

is the true thing – a sort of demonstration – and that it works not only from the point of view of what must be learned, of the whole domain of knowledge, but also of the whole domain of what should be done: the capacity to receive the exact indication of *how* to do it; and as you go on, it changes into a very clear perception of what must be done, and a precise indication of when it must be done. At least the children, as soon as they have the capacity to think – it starts at the age of seven, but at about fourteen or fifteen it is very clear – the children should be given little indications at the age of seven, a complete explanation at fourteen, of how to do it, and that it is the only way to be in relation with the deeper truth of things, and that all the rest is a more or less clumsy mental approximation to something that can be known directly.

The conclusion is that the teachers themselves should at least have a sincere beginning of discipline and experience, that it is not a question of accumulating books and retelling them like this. One can't be a teacher in this way; let the outside world be like that if it likes. We are not propagandists, we simply want to show what can be done and try to prove that it *must* be done.

When you take the children very young, it is wonderful. There is so little to do: it is enough to *be*.

Never make a mistake.

Never lose your temper.

Always understand.

And to know and see clearly why there has been this movement, why there has been this impulse, what is the inner

constitution of the child, what is the thing to be strengthened and brought forward – this is the only thing to do; and to leave them, to leave them free to blossom; simply to give them the opportunity to see many things, to touch many things, to do as many things as possible. It is great fun. And above all, not to try to impose on them what you think you know.

Never scold them. Always understand, and if the child is ready, explain; if he is not ready for an explanation – if you are ready yourself – replace the false vibration by a true one. But this... this is to demand from the teachers a perfection which they rarely have.

But it would be very interesting to make a programme for the teachers and the true programme of study, from the very bottom – which is so plastic and which receives impressions so deeply. If they were given a few drops of truth when they are very young, they would blossom quite naturally as the being grows. It would be beautiful work."[66]

(b) 11 November 1967*

"…The student should not arrive half an hour late just because he is free, because this kind of freedom is not freedom, it is simply disorderliness. Each one must have a very strict discipline for himself. But a child is not capable of self-discipline, he must be taught the habit of discipline. So he should get up at the same time, get ready at the same time and go to school at the same time. That is indispensable, otherwise it becomes an impossible muddle."[67]

* * *

"Not Sanskrit from the point of view of scholarship, but Sanskrit, a Sanskrit – how to put it? – that opens the door

to all the languages of India. I think that is indispensable. The ideal would be, in a few years, to have a rejuvenated Sanskrit as the representative language of India, that is, a Sanskrit spoken in such a way that – Sanskrit is behind all the languages of India and it should be that. This was Sri Aurobindo's idea, when we spoke about it. Because now English is the language of the whole country, but that is abnormal. It is very helpful for relations with the rest of the world, but just as each country has its own language, there should... And so here, as soon as one begins to want a national language, everyone starts quarrelling. Each one wants it to be his own, and that is foolish. But no one could object to Sanskrit. It is a more ancient language than the others and it contains the sounds, the root-sounds of many words.

This is something I studied with Sri Aurobindo and it is obviously very interesting. Some of these roots can even be found in all the languages of the world – sounds, root-sounds which are found in all those languages. Well, this, this thing, this is what ought to be learnt and this is what the national language should be. Every child born in India should know it, just as every child born in France has to know French. He does not speak properly, he does not know it thoroughly, but he has to know French a little; and in all the countries of the world it is the same thing. He has to know the national language. And then, when he learns, he learns as many languages as he likes. At the moment, we are still embroiled in quarrels, and this is a very bad atmosphere in which to build anything. But I hope that a day will come when it will be possible.

So I would like to have a simple Sanskrit taught here, as simple as possible, but not "simplified" – simple by going

back to its origin... all these sounds, the sounds that are the roots of the words which were formed afterwards. I don't know whether you have anyone here who could do that. In fact, I don't know whether there is anyone in India who could do it. Sri Aurobindo knew. But someone who knows Sanskrit can...."[68]

* * *

"You see, for those who are sincere, sincere and very – how to put it? – very straight in their aspiration, there is a marvellous help, there is an absolutely living, active consciousness which is ready to... to respond to any attentive silence. You could do six years' work in six months, but there should... there should not be any pretension, there should not be anything which tries to imitate, there should be no wanting to put on airs. There should... you should be truly, absolutely honest, pure, sincere, conscious that... you exist only by what comes from above. Then... then... then you could advance with giant strides. …"[69]

* * *

"You will see, the more you strive to realise, you will discover in the nature – the lower nature, that is, the lower mind, the lower vital, the physical – how much pretension, sham and ambition there is.... One can use any... The desire to put on airs: all that must be eliminated, absolutely, radically, and replaced by a sincere flame of aspiration, of aspiration for the purity which makes us live only for what the Supreme Consciousness demands of us, which makes us able to do only what it wants, which makes us do only what it wants, when it wants. Then we can be entirely different.... It is a little far along the path, but we try to do that, always, this purification of the whole being which...

Then there is no more school, teachers, students, boredom; there is... life trying to transform itself. There: that is the ideal, this is where we have to go."[70]

(c) 14 February 1973*

"**But there is one thing, one thing which is the main difficulty: it is the parents. When the children live with their parents I consider that it is hopeless, because the parents want their child to be educated as they were themselves, and they want them to get good jobs, to earn money – all the things that are contrary to our aspiration.**

The children who are with their parents... really, I don't know what to do. The parents have such a great influence on them that in the end they ask to go away to a school somewhere else.

And that, of all the difficulties – *all* of them – that is the greatest: the influence of the parents. And if we try to counteract that influence the parents will begin to detest us and it will be even worse than before, because they will say unpleasant things about us. There.

That is my experience. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the children have taken a bad turn because of the parents. This seems indispensable to me. We should write a circular letter saying: "Parents who want their children to be educated in the ordinary way and learn in order to get a good job, to earn their living and have brilliant careers, should not send them here." There.

We should... And that is very important.

You see, there are many, many parents who send their children here because it is less expensive than anywhere else. And that is worse than anything, worse than anything. We should... we should... we must absolutely tell them: "If you want your children to be educated in order to have a brilliant career, to earn money, do not send them here." There.

A: Mother, we shall write a circular letter and I shall read you the text. We shall write something with B and the others.

There were some children who were doing very well and were very happy. They went to their parents for the holidays and came back completely changed and spoiled. And then if we tell them that, it will be even worse because their parents will tell them, "Oh, these people are bad, they are turning you against us." So it must be... the parents must know that before they send them.

This has been my experience for so many, so many, so many years, so many years! **The danger is not the children, it is not laziness, it is not even that the children are rebellious: the danger, the great danger is the parents.**

Those who send their children here should do it knowingly, they should do it because it is unlike anywhere else. And there are many who won't come... And those who come only because it is less expensive, well, they will stop sending them.

When the teacher was about to leave, Mother added:

I would like... I would like the attitude of our school to be made known to people before they send their children, because it is a pity when the children are happy and the parents are not; and that creates situations that are ridiculous and

sometimes dangerous. This is very important, very important!"[71]

(d) 14 March 1973*

"…I think that we ought to be *very* quiet, *very* quiet, *very* quiet. I am going to tell you my old mantra; it keeps the outer being very quiet:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE.

These three words. For me they meant:

OM – I implore the Supreme Lord.

NAMO – Obeisance to Him.

BHAGAVATE – Make me divine.

This is a translation of it, I mean... Did you hear?

A: Yes, Mother.

For me that has the power to calm everything."[72]

* * *

III. On Education, Dramas

1. Towards the Future*

"…Do not allow your union to serve as an excuse for the satisfaction of animal appetites or sensual desires. On the contrary, make it a means of mutual support so that you may transcend yourselves in a constant aspiration and an effort for progress towards the growing perfection of your being. May your association be both noble and generous, noble in quality, generous in action. Be an example to the world and show all men of goodwill the true aim of human life.

* * *

…I now know for certain that only one love can satisfy my being: it is the love for the Divine, the divine love, for that alone never fails. Perhaps one day I shall find the favourable conditions and the necessary help for the achievement of the supreme realisation, the transformation and divinisation of the physical being which will change the world into a blessed place full of harmony and light, peace and beauty."[73]

2. The Great Secret*

"**…Nothing but a radical change of consciousness can deliver the world from its present obscurity. Indeed, this transformation of the consciousness, this manifestation of a higher and truer consciousness, is not only possible but certain; it is the very aim of our existence, the purpose of life upon earth. First the consciousness must be transformed, then life, then forms; it is in this order that the new creation will unfold.** All

Nature's activity is in fact a progressive return towards the Supreme Reality which is both the origin and the goal of the universe, in its totality as well as in its smallest element. We must become concretely what we are essentially; we must live integrally the truth, the beauty, the power and the perfection that are hidden in the depths of our being, and then all life will become the expression of the sublime, eternal, divine Joy."[74]

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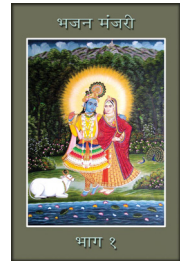
भजन प्रकाशन सूची

भजन मंजरी – १



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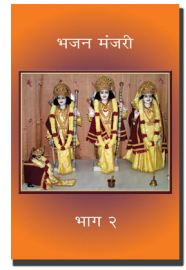

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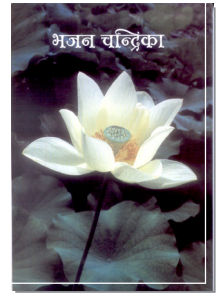
भजन चन्द्रिका *(pp. 128)*



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