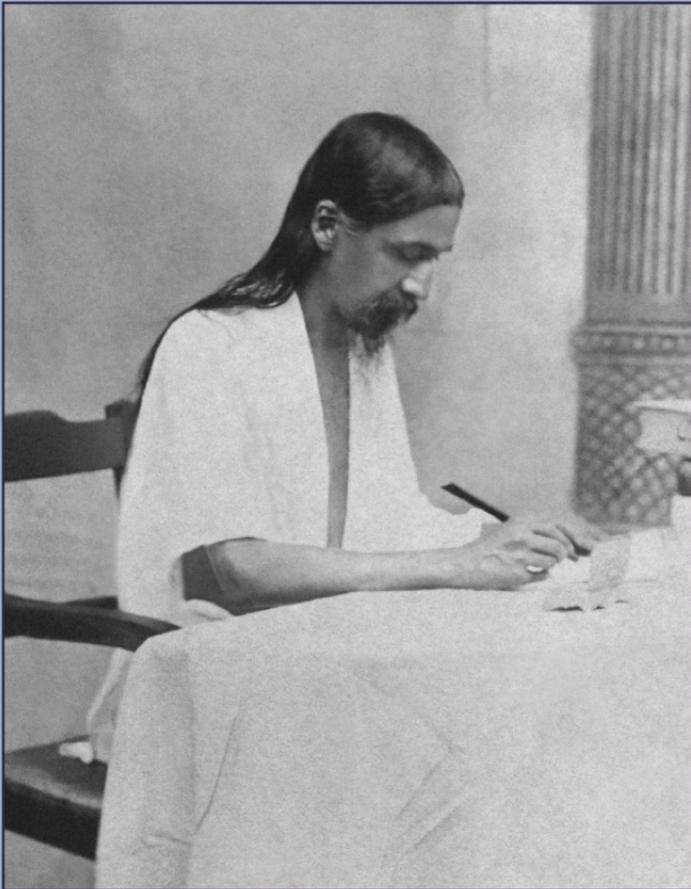


Letters on Yoga

I - IV



Sri Aurobindo

Letters on Yoga — I

Foundations of the Integral Yoga

VOLUME 28

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO

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Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department

Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry

PRINTED IN INDIA

Publisher's Note

Letters on Yoga — I comprises letters written by Sri Aurobindo on the philosophical and psychological foundations of the Integral Yoga. It is the first of four volumes of *Letters on Yoga*, arranged by the editors as follows:

- I. Foundations of the Integral Yoga
- II. Practice of the Integral Yoga
- III. Experiences and Realisations in the Integral Yoga
- IV. Transformation of Human Nature in the Integral Yoga

The letters in these volumes have been selected from the large body of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Other letters from this period are published in *Letters on Poetry and Art* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volumes 27 and 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Letters written before 1927 are reproduced in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS.

During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, relatively few of his letters were published. Three small books of letters on Yoga were brought out in the 1930s. A more substantial collection came out between 1947 and 1951 in a four-volume series entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (including one volume of letters on poetry and literature). In 1958, many more letters were included in the two large tomes of *On Yoga* — II. A further expanded collection in three volumes entitled *Letters on Yoga* was published in 1970 as part of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. The present collection, also entitled *Letters on Yoga*, constitutes volumes 28–31 of THE COMPLETE WORKS. These volumes incorporate previously published letters and contain many new ones as well. About one-third of the letters in the present volume were not published in the Centenary Library.

The present volume is arranged by subject in five parts:

1. The Divine, the Cosmos and the Individual
2. The Parts of the Being and the Planes of Consciousness
3. The Evolutionary Process and the Supermind
4. Problems of Philosophy, Science, Religion and Society
5. Questions of Spiritual and Occult Knowledge

The texts of all letters have been checked against the available manuscripts, typescripts and printed versions.

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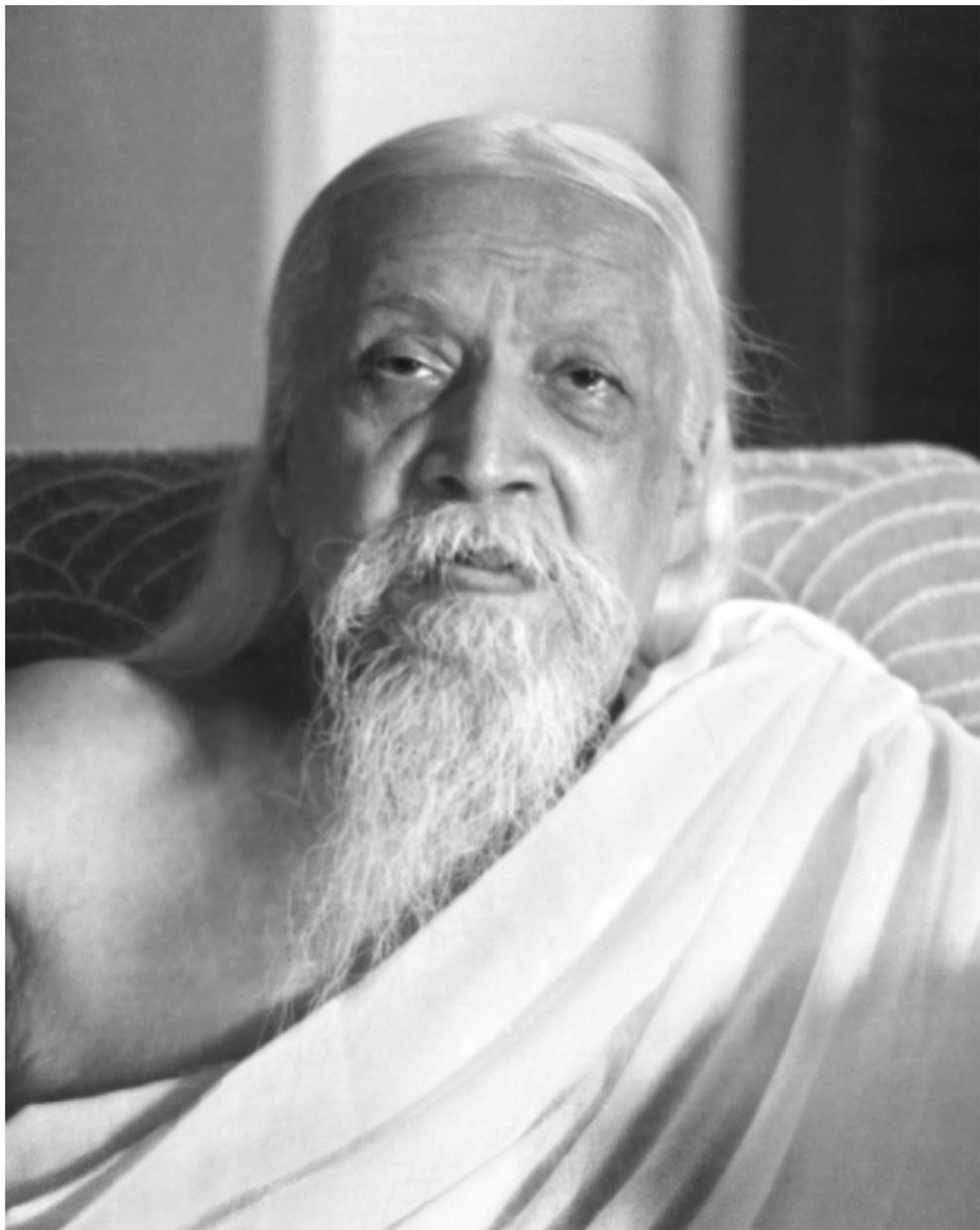
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Sri Aurobindo, 1950

Part One

The Divine, the Cosmos and the Individual

Section One

The Divine, Sachchidananda,
Brahman and Atman

Chapter One

The Divine and Its Aspects

The Divine

The Divine is the Supreme Truth because it is the Supreme Being from whom all have come and in whom all are.

*

The Divine is that from which all comes, in which all lives, and to return to the truth of the Divine now clouded over by Ignorance is the soul's aim in life. In its supreme Truth, the Divine is absolute and infinite peace, consciousness, existence, power and Ananda.

*

The Divine is everywhere on all the planes of consciousness seen by us in different ways and aspects of his being. But there is a Supreme which is above all these planes and ways and aspects and from which they come.

*

The Divine is neither personal nor impersonal, formless nor formed. He is the Divine. You talk of these distinctions as if they separated the Divine into so many separate Divines which have nothing to do with each other.

The Divine Consciousness

By the Divine Consciousness we mean the spiritual consciousness to which the Divine alone exists, because all is the Divine and by which one passes beyond the Ignorance and the lower nature into unity with the Divine and the Divine Nature.

Here in the Ignorance we are not aware of the Divine and we obey the lower nature.

*

All that is true Truth is the direct expression in one way or another of the Divine Consciousness. Life is the dynamic expression of Consciousness-Force when thrown outward to realise itself in concrete harmonies of formation; Love is an intense self-expression of the soul of Ananda, and Light is what always accompanies the Supramental Consciousness and its most essential power.

The Divine: One in All

The Divine is everywhere and in all—but this is a world of Ignorance in which each one is separated from the Divine within him by his ego and he acts according to the ego and not according to the Divine. When he sees the Divine in all, then he begins to have the right consciousness and be free.

*

All things are the Divine because the Divine is there, but hidden not manifest; when the mind goes out to things, it is not with the sense of the Divine in them, but for the appearances only which conceal the Divine. It is necessary therefore for you as a sadhak to turn entirely to the Mother in whom the Divine is manifest and not run after the appearances, the desire of which or the interest in which prevents you from meeting the Divine. Once the being is consecrated, then it can see the Divine everywhere—and then it can include all things in the one consciousness without a separate interest or desire.

*

Wherever the Divine is, everything is—it is only concealed, not non-existent. The Divine is there below in the inconscience itself—mind and life are concealed in Matter, so is Supermind and Sachchidananda. The below is not something outside the Divine Existence. But as mind manifested in Matter only after the descent of Mind opened it into creation, so it is with Supermind.

Aspects of the Divine

The Divine is infinite and a single experience or poise of experience cannot exhaust all the truth of the Divine. The seers have experienced each some aspect or aspects of the Divine Reality. Their mental differences have been illustrated in the apologue of the blind men who all felt the elephant and described it in different figures according to the part they felt. One must go beyond mind altogether, even beyond the spiritualised mind, to have the real complete experience. “Rare”, says Sri Krishna, “are the few among the seekers who know me in my totality in all the truth of my being.” In fact, it is only in the supramental light that all opposition disappears and the aspects are indivisibly united in the Whole. One must go on enlarging knowledge, adding experience to experience till all the limitation disappears.

The Transcendent, Cosmic and Individual Divine

The Divine has three aspects for us:

1. It is the Cosmic Self and Spirit that is in and behind all things and beings, from which and in which all is manifested in the universe — although it is now a manifestation in the Ignorance.

2. It is the Spirit and Master of our own being within us whom we have to serve and learn to express his will in all our movements so that we may grow out of the Ignorance into the Light.

3. The Divine is transcendent Being and Spirit, all bliss and light and divine knowledge and power, and towards that highest divine existence and its Light we have to rise and bring down the reality of it more and more into our consciousness and life.

In the ordinary nature we live in the Ignorance and do not know the Divine. The forces of the ordinary nature are undivine forces because they weave a veil of ego and desire and unconsciousness which conceals the Divine from us. To get into the higher and deeper consciousness which knows and lives consciously in the Divine, we have to get rid of the forces of the

lower nature and open to the action of the Divine Shakti which will transform our consciousness into that of the Divine Nature.

This is the conception of the Divine from which we have to start—the realisation of its truth can only come with the opening of the consciousness and its change.

*

The distinction between the Transcendental, the Cosmic, the Individual Divine is not my invention, nor is it native to India or to Asia—it is on the contrary a recognised European teaching current in the esoteric tradition of the Catholic Church where it is the authorised explanation of the Trinity,—Father, Son and Holy Ghost,—and it is very well-known to European mystic experience. In essence it exists in all spiritual disciplines that recognise the omnipresence of the Divine—in Indian Vedantic experience and in Mahomedan Yoga (not only the Sufi, but other schools also)—the Mahomedans even speak of not two or three but many levels of the Divine until one reaches the Supreme. As for the idea in itself, surely there is a difference between the individual, the cosmos in space and time, and something that exceeds this cosmic formula or any cosmic formula. There is a cosmic consciousness experienced by many which is quite different in its scope and action from the individual consciousness, and if there is a consciousness beyond the cosmic, infinite and essentially eternal, not merely extended in Time, that also must be different from these two. And if the Divine is or manifests Himself in these three, is it not conceivable that in aspect, in His working, He may differentiate Himself so much that we are driven, if we are not to confound all truth of experience, if we are not to limit ourselves to a mere static experience of something indefinable, to speak of a triple aspect of the Divine?

In the practice of Yoga there is a great dynamic difference in one's way of dealing with these three possible realisations. If I realise only the Divine as that, not my personal self, which yet moves secretly all my personal being and which I can bring forward out of the veil, or if I build up the image of that Godhead in my members, it is a realisation but a limited one. If it is the

Cosmic Godhead that I realise, losing in it all personal self, that is a very wide realisation, but I become a mere channel of the universal Power and there is no personal or divinely individual consummation for me. If I shoot up to the transcendental realisation only, I lose both myself and the world in the transcendental Absolute. If on the other hand my aim is none of these things by itself, but to realise and also to manifest the Divine in the world, bringing down for the purpose a yet unmanifested Power, — such as the Supermind, — a harmonisation of all three becomes imperative. I have to bring it down, and from where shall I bring it down — since it is not yet manifested in the cosmic formula — if not from the unmanifest Transcendence, which I must reach and realise? I have to bring it into the cosmic formula and, if so, I must realise the cosmic Divine and become conscious of the cosmic self and the cosmic forces. But I have to embody it here, — otherwise it is left as an influence only and not a thing fixed in the physical world — and it is through the Divine in the individual alone that this can be done.

These are elements in the dynamics of spiritual experience and I am obliged to admit them if a divine work has to be done.

*

The European type of monism is usually pantheistic and weaves the universe and the Divine so intimately together that they can hardly be separated. But what explanation of the evil and misery can there be there? The Indian view is that the Divine is the inmost substance of the Universe, but he is also outside it, transcendent; good and evil, happiness and misery are only phenomena of cosmic experience due to a division and diminution of consciousness in the manifestation, but are not part of the essence or of the undivided whole-consciousness either of the Divine or of our own spiritual being.

*

I know what is your difficulty about the Cosmic Divine. It was not present to my mind because I look at these things from the point of view of facts as they are both to our spiritual and our

outward experience — whereas the point of view on which you lay stress is that they are not what they ought to be or what the mind, ethical feeling and the vital in man feel that they ought to be. That this world is full of queer, ugly and inharmonious things is the very plain and self-evident fact with which we have to start, — wherever we may want or hope to arrive. But the whole question is there, whether there is something behind, something that warrants this hope to arrive at something better. For the spiritual experience there is — and this something behind is to it as undeniable a fact as the very apparent character of this world in its surface aspect as a world of Ignorance, tribulation, suffering, disharmony, disorder, obscure Inconscience. To spiritual experience it is not a speculation but a fact that there is a God-head immanent within behind this flawed and imperfect human nature into some likeness to which this nature can try to grow; there is something behind the cosmic movement with all its disorder which is of the nature of abiding peace, calm, strength, joy and all-embracing universality and to enter into it and abide in it is possible for our consciousness also. It is also a part of spiritual experience that there is something Beyond in which this Divinity — or whatever other name you may give to it — is above the contradiction offered to it by this world of disorder and ignorance; that is the meaning of the Transcendence. Whatever wide differences there may be between different ways of spiritual experience or whatever names may be put on these things, so much is fairly universal. If there were not these certitudes, there could be no assured spiritual life or endeavour.

*

The transcendent [*is the state beyond the universal forces*] — which for the purposes of our universe would mean the Sachchidananda planes and the supramental as a link with the present manifestation.

Of course the absolutely transcendent would be beyond all planes altogether.

Personal and Impersonal Sides of the Divine

There is always the personal and the impersonal side of the Divine and the Truth and it is a mistake to think the impersonal alone true or important — for that leads to a void incompleteness in part of the being while only one side is given satisfaction. Impersonality belongs to the intellectual mind and the static self, personality to the soul and heart and dynamic being. Those who disregard the personal Divine ignore something which is profound and essential.

In X's case there exists a conflict between his ideas of the Truth and his heart. But in following the heart in its purer impulses one follows something that is at least as precious as the mind's loyalty to its own conceptions of what the Truth may be.

*

Many have had communion with the Personal Divine, through the mind and the heart — but that is not the complete or supreme realisation.

*

The usual experience of the Impersonal is that It is everywhere, without form or limitation in any place or time.

*

The impersonal Divine has no abode and cannot have; it is all-pervading. If anybody says the impersonal Divine has its abode in the heart he can be asked what he means by the impersonal Divine.

*

Whatever impersonal Truth or Light there is, you have to find it, use it, do what you can with it. It does not trouble itself to hunt after you. It is the Buddhist idea that you must do everything for yourself, that is the only way.

*

When one follows after the impersonal Self, one is moving

between two opposite principles—the silence and purity of the impersonal inactive Atman and the activity of the ignorant Prakriti. One can pass into the Self, leaving the ignorant Nature or reducing it to silence. Or else, one can live in the peace and freedom of the Self and watch the action of Nature as a witness. Even one may put some sattwic control, by tapasya, over the action of the Prakriti; but the impersonal Self has no power to change or divinise the Nature. For that one has to go beyond the impersonal Self and seek after the Divine who is both personal and impersonal and beyond these two aspects. If, however, you practise living in the impersonal Self and can achieve a certain spiritual impersonality, then you grow in equality, purity, peace, detachment, you get the power of living in an inner freedom not touched by the surface movement or struggle of the mental, vital and physical nature, and this becomes a great help when you have to go beyond the impersonal and to change the troubled nature also into something divine.

The Divine and the Atman

The Divine is more than the Atman. It is Nature also, it contains everything in Itself.

*

It is the individual being that is a portion of the Divine. The universal self or Atman which is the same in all, is not a portion but an aspect of the Divine.

The Divine and the Supermind

One can become one with the Divine on the mental plane. The Supermind is necessary for manifesting the Divine on earth.

*

The Divine can be and is everywhere, masked or half-manifest or beginning to be manifest, in all the planes of consciousness; in the Supramental it begins to be manifest without disguise or veil in its own *svarūpa*.

Chapter Two

Sachchidananda: Existence, Consciousness-Force and Bliss

Sachchidananda

Sachchidananda is the One with a triple aspect. In the Supreme the three are not three but one — existence is consciousness, consciousness is bliss, and they are thus inseparable, not only inseparable but so much each other that they are not distinct at all. In the superior planes of manifestation they become triune — although inseparable, one can be made more prominent and base or lead the others. In the lower planes below they become separable in appearance, though not in their secret reality, and one can exist phenomenally without the others so that we become aware of what seems to us an inconscient or a painful existence or a consciousness without Ananda. Indeed without this separation of them in experience pain and ignorance and falsehood and death and what we call inconscience could not have manifested themselves — there could not have been this evolution of a limited and suffering consciousness out of the universal nescience of Matter.

*

The Sachchidananda is not in itself an active consciousness, it is simply pure existence, consciousness and bliss. By a Truth Consciousness is meant a knowledge consciousness which is immediately, inherently and directly aware of Truth in manifestation and has not to seek for it like Mind. Sachchidananda is everywhere behind the manifestation and supporting it as well as above it and can be experienced below the supermind — even in mind and vital it can be experienced.

*

The original substance of the spirit is pure existence carrying in it pure self-existent consciousness (or consciousness-force) and pure self-existent Ananda.

*

There is no plane beyond Sachchidananda.

*

People say like that [*the Transcendent is something beyond Sachchidananda*] because the transcendent Absolute is not only what to us is existence but also what to us is non-existence. But there is really no such thing as non-existence. So the Transcendent can be conceived as transcendent Sat, transcendent Chit, transcendent Ananda.

Sat or Pure Existence

You must remember that there are reflections of the higher worlds in the lower planes which can easily be experienced as supreme for that stage of the evolution. But the supreme Sachchidananda is not a world, it is supracosmic. The Sat (Satyaloka) world is the highest of the scale connected with this universe.

*

Substance and being are the same thing. In the creation they can be looked at as two aspects of the Spirit.

*

The Pure Existence is not something abstract, but substantial and concrete. Moreover it is descending into the body, so it is quite natural to feel it materially.

Chit or Consciousness

You seem to want to reduce everything to a catalogue and a scientific analysis. Nobody has ever been able to do that with the working of the consciousness. The elements of a condition of

consciousness cannot be classified like the “elements” of Matter.

*

I had intended to give only a concise answer to your question about consciousness but it began to develop itself at great length and I could not as yet finish it. I send you for the moment a more summary reply.¹

Consciousness is not, to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Nature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions, as there would be no seeing or interpretative action, there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of Yoga, e.g., a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not dependent on the personality but impersonal and universal, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place. The subjective personality itself is only a formation of consciousness which is a power inherent, not in the activity of the temporary manifested personality, but in the being, the Self or Purusha.

Consciousness is a reality inherent in existence. It is there even when it is not active on the surface, but silent and immobile; it is there even when it is invisible on the surface, not reacting on outward things or sensible to them, but withdrawn and either active or inactive within; it is there even when it seems to us to be quite absent and the being to our view unconscious and inanimate.

Consciousness is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has also a dynamic and creative energy. It can determine its own reactions or abstain from reactions; it can not only answer to forces, but create or put out from itself forces. Consciousness is Chit but also Chit Shakti.

¹ Sri Aurobindo's incomplete draft reply, which “began to develop itself at great length”, is reproduced immediately after the present letter. — Ed.

Consciousness is usually identified with mind, but mental consciousness is only the human range which no more exhausts all the possible ranges of consciousness than human sight exhausts all the gradations of colour or human hearing all the gradations of sound — for there is much above or below that is to man invisible and inaudible. So there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human range, with which the normal human has no contact and they seem to it unconscious, — supramental or overmental and submental ranges.

When Yajnavalkya says there is no consciousness in the Brahman state, he is speaking of consciousness as the human being knows it. The Brahman state is that of a supreme existence supremely aware of itself, *svayamīprakāśa*, — it is Sachchidananda, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Even if it be spoken of as beyond that, *parātparam*, it does not mean that it is a state of Non-existence or Non-consciousness, but beyond even the highest spiritual substratum (the “foundation above” in the luminous paradox of the Rig Veda) of cosmic existence and consciousness. As it is evident from the description of Chinese Tao and the Buddhist Shunya that that is a Nothingness in which all is, so with the negation of consciousness here. Superconscient and subconscient are only relative terms; as we rise into the superconscient we see that it is a consciousness greater than the highest we yet have and therefore in our normal state inaccessible to us and, if we can go down into the subconscious, we find there a consciousness other than our own at its lowest mental limit and therefore ordinarily inaccessible to us. The Inconscient itself is only an involved state of consciousness which like the Tao or Shunya, though in a different way, contains all things suppressed within it so that under a pressure from above or within all can evolve out of it — “an inert Soul with a somnambulist Force”.

The gradations of consciousness are universal states not dependent on the outlook of the subjective personality; rather the outlook of the subjective personality is determined by the grade of consciousness in which it is organised according to its typical nature or its evolutionary stage.

It will be evident that by consciousness is meant something which is essentially the same throughout but variable in status, condition and operation, in which in some grades or conditions the activities we call consciousness can exist either in a suppressed or an unorganised or a differently organised state; while in other states some other activities may manifest which in us are suppressed, unorganised or latent or else are less perfectly manifested, less intensive, extended and powerful than in those higher grades above our highest mental limit.

*

If your definition is correct, consciousness cannot be a self-existent reality; it is a result, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of something — you say a personality, but what is a personality apart from consciousness? — to the universal forces of Nature. We can take a purely external view and say that consciousness is the result of a mass of reactions to the impact of outward physical things on the brain and nerves of a physical being. In this case consciousness is a sort of effective hallucination — there is no real and permanent consciousness but only a subjective impression created by a constant activity of reactions. As a number of dancing fires may create a glow in the sky, so consciousness is created by these reactions and is suspended or disappears when they halt or cease. In your definition you add a real (?) subjective personality and supplement the reactions of physical outward things by reactions of inner things or things from above or below. But still the consciousness is only a seeing or interpretation of reactions, — it is a result of them, a phenomenon. If there are no more reactions, consciousness ceases to exist — for what other basis has it or standing place than the impermanent reaction to forces? Unless it is something intrinsic and inherent in the “subjective personality”; but then it is not a result of the reactions or a seeing and interpretation of them, but rather the reactions are the result of a pre-existent consciousness and the seeing or interpretation is merely an activity, perhaps only a very partial and surface activity, of the consciousness already and always inherent in the “personality”. Even if there

were no impact of forces and no reactions, the consciousness would still be there, but static and inactive. But again this activity of consciousness might not be limited to an interpretation or a passive reaction to forces; it might also, if it chose, be the creator or determinant of its reactions — as for instance to a blow on the body or the vital it might refuse the natural reactions of pain or anger and remain still and immobile or it might return an unusual reaction of love or pleasure. Also this consciousness might not be only a recipient and seer of forces, but a creator or putter out of forces — it might be not only a knower, but an energy, a dynamis. In this view, your definition becomes totally inadequate. Farther, the word personality is misleading; for what we usually know as personality is itself only a formation of consciousness. Behind it we are aware of a Person or Purusha who puts forward the mutable surface formation we call personality and who may even have many personalities at a time or different personalities at different times. This Purusha would be then a being and consciousness, would be not a result or an activity, but a constant reality, an intrinsic power of awareness and action inherent in the being, — as the being is self-existent, so the consciousness self-existent in the being, the Purusha. This is the realisation we have of it in Yogic experience, eternal reality of consciousness inherent in the eternal reality of existence, as in the concept and experience of Sachchidananda.

This is the crucial point in the question, what is consciousness, whether it is a temporary phenomenon of Nature or a reality in itself fundamental to existence. The first is the conclusion that is drawn, and must be drawn, from normal experience on the surface. The other is at best a metaphysical speculation or an instinctive feeling in humanity unless we go beyond the normal experience, deepen and widen the range of our present consciousness and test its inner depths and inferior abysses and supernormal heights, until we can touch its fundamental or its ultimate or its total reality as is done in Yoga. To judge from only normal and superficial experience as the ordinary mind does with phenomena is to miss the truth of things — we have to go behind the surface phenomenon to find the reality of what a

thing is. There are no gradations of consciousness if the ordinary phenomenon of consciousness is taken, unless perhaps we distinguish two gradations, the animal and the human; the differences created by the variations of subjective personality amount only to degrees of power of the same human-animal consciousness, a better or worse, cruder or more complex organisation of the instruments by which it receives or reacts to the contacts of Nature. If, on the contrary, consciousness is an inherent power of existence present even when it is not apparent to us or active on the surface, then we can conceive of it arranging its own manifestation in gradations which rise or fall between what seem to us now the subconscious depths and superconscious summits of existence.

The ordinary view of consciousness is based on normal superficial experience plus science. For physical science consciousness is a temporary phenomenon in an unconscious world, something evolved in an animate organisation that somehow develops in an originally inanimate and unconscious Matter. It is not inherent in life, for the plant has it not, it is rather a growing flicker that, once established, lasts intermittently through sleep and waking while life lasts and disappears with the dissolution of life. The ordinary mind identifies consciousness with human waking consciousness possibly shared by the animal — though that is not certain, for many refuse consciousness to the animal. A man is conscious while he lives, when he is dead consciousness disappears, when he is asleep, stunned, drugged, anaesthetised, in trance, then his consciousness is suspended; he is temporarily unconscious. How far is this scientific-superficial view correct or maintainable? For it raises two fundamental questions — is the waking surface consciousness the only form of consciousness possible? and again, is the consciousness synonymous with mind, is all consciousness mental or are other forms of it, supramental or submental, possible?

Outer Consciousness and Inner Consciousness

Consciousness is inherent in Being, though it is here involved and

concealed in things so that it has to emerge out of an apparent unconsciousness and organise itself in individual life. But this is only on the surface which is all of which we are aware because we live on the surface of ourselves. This surface (the ordinary waking mind of man) is what we think to be ourselves, the whole of us, because living awake on the surface we are conscious of that only. But within, with a sort of wall of obscurity or oblivion between it and the outer being, there is an inner being, an inner mind, vital, physical and an inmost or psychic being of which we are not aware. We are only aware of what comes up from there to the surface and do not know its source or how it comes. By Yoga the wall is slowly broken down and we become aware of this inner and inmost being — by doing so we build up a new, a Yogic, consciousness which is able to communicate direct with the universal consciousness around and the higher spiritual above.

As the individual has a consciousness of his own, so too there is a universal consciousness, a cosmic Being, a universal Mind, a universal Life, a universal physical conscious Nature. We are unaware of it because we are shut up in our outer physical selves. By the inner awakening and the opening above we become aware of this cosmic consciousness, cosmic Nature and cosmic Self and its movements; our consciousness can widen and become one with it. The forces of universal Nature are always working on us without our knowing how they act or being able to get any general control over their action on us. By becoming conscious of the universal we are able to detect this working and control it.

*

It all depends upon where the consciousness places itself and centralises itself. If the consciousness places or associates itself within the ego, you are identified with the ego — if in the mind, it is identified with the mind and its activities and so on. If the consciousness puts its stress outside, it is said to live in the external being and becomes oblivious of its inner mind and vital and inmost psychic; if it goes inside, puts its centralising stress there, then it knows itself as the inner being or, still deeper, as the

psychic being; if it ascends out of the body to the planes where self is naturally conscious of its wideness and freedom, it knows itself as the self and not the mind, life or body. It is this stress of consciousness that makes all the difference. That is why one has to concentrate the consciousness in heart or mind in order to go within or go above. It is the disposition of the consciousness that determines everything, makes one predominantly mental, vital, physical or psychic, bound or free, separate in the Purusha or involved in the Prakriti.

*

Good heavens! what a magnificent muddle [*in the correspondent's response to the preceding letter*]! The Jivatman is on the supramental plane and the Jiva is the psychic? It is the consciousness with a clear individual "I" that disposes variously the centralising stress on one part or another of the being and yet the quality of this "I" is determined by the part with which it identifies itself—therefore it must be a pure conscious I? All that has no basis whatever and does not hang together. I never said that the Jivatman belongs to the supramental plane or is situated there. The word Jiva in its ordinary sense is the living creature, but in its philosophic sense it is often used as a short way of speaking of the Jivatman, the individual being. Neither can it be said that the psychic being is the Jiva. Nor is it the fact that it is the consciousness with a clear individual "I" that disposes variously the centralising stress on one part or another of the being. Consciousness has no need of a clear individual "I" to dispose the stress,—it can do that of itself; wherever the stress is put the "I" attaches itself to that, so that one thinks of oneself as a mental being or physical being or whatever it may be. The consciousness in me can be utterly free of any sense of an individual "I" and yet dispose its stress in this way or the other way—it may go down into the physical and work there in the physical nature keeping all the rest behind or above for the time or it may go up into the overhead level and stand above mind, life and body seeing them as instrumental lower forms of itself; or it may not see them at all but rather immerse

in the free undifferentiated Self; or it may throw itself into an active dynamic cosmic consciousness and identify with that or do any number of other things without resorting to the help of this much overrated and meddlesome fly on the wheel which you call the clear individual “I”. The real “I” — if you want to use that word — is not a “clear individual”, that is, a clear-cut limited separative ego, — it is as wide as the universe and wider, and can contain the universe in itself; it is not the *ahankāra*, it is the Atman.

Consciousness is a fundamental thing, it is the fundamental thing in existence — it is the energy, the action, the movement of consciousness that creates the universe and all that is in it — not only the macrocosm, but the microcosm is nothing but consciousness arranging itself. For instance when consciousness in its movement, or rather a certain stress of movement, forgets itself in the action it becomes an apparently “unconscious” energy; when it forgets itself in the form it becomes the electron, the atom, the material object. In reality it is still consciousness that works in the energy and determines the form and the evolution of form. When it wants to liberate itself, slowly, evolutionarily, out of matter, but still in the form, it emerges as life, as the animal, as man and it can go on evolving itself still farther out of its involution and become something more than mere man. If you can grasp that, then it ought not to be difficult to see farther that it can subjectively formulate itself as a physical, a vital, a mental, a psychic consciousness — all these are present in man, but as they are all mixed up together in our external being and their real status is hidden behind in our inner secret nature one can only become fully aware of them by releasing the original limiting stress of the consciousness which makes us live in our external selves and becoming awake and centred within in the inner being. As the consciousness in us, by its external concentration or stress, has put all these things behind — behind a wall or veil — it has to break down the wall or veil and get back in its stress into these inner parts of existence — that is what we call living within; then our external being seems to us something small and superficial, we are or can become aware of

the large and rich and inexhaustible kingdoms within. So also consciousness in us has drawn a lid or covering or whatever one likes to call it between the lower planes of mind, life, body supported by the psychic and the higher planes which contain the spiritual kingdoms where the self is always free and limitless, — and it can break or open the lid or covering and ascend there and become the Self free and wide and luminous or else bring down the influence, reflection, finally even the presence and power of the higher consciousness into the lower nature.

Now that is what consciousness is — it is not composed of parts, it is fundamental to being and itself formulates any parts it chooses to manifest — developing them from above downward by a progressive coming down from spiritual levels towards the evolution in matter or formulating them in an upward working in the front by this process that we call evolution. If it chooses to work in you through the sense of ego, you think that it is the clear-cut individual I that does everything; if it begins to release itself from that limited working, then you too either begin to expand your sense of I till it bursts into infinity and no longer exists or to shed it and flower into spiritual wideness. Of course this is not what is spoken of in modern materialistic thought as consciousness, because that thought is governed by science. Science sees consciousness only as a phenomenon which emerges out of inconscient Matter and consists of certain reactions of the system to outward things. But that is phenomenon of consciousness, it is not consciousness itself, it is even only a very small part of the possible phenomena of consciousness and can give no clue to the true nature of Consciousness, the spiritual Reality which is of the very essence of existence.

That is all at present. You will have to fix yourself in that — for it is fundamental — before it can be useful to go any farther.

*

Certainly, the mind and the inner being are consciousness. For human beings who have not got deeper into themselves mind and consciousness are synonymous. Only when one becomes more aware of oneself by a growing consciousness, then one

can see different degrees, kinds, powers of consciousness, mental, vital, physical, psychic, spiritual. The Divine has been described as Being-Consciousness-Ananda, even as a Consciousness (Chaitanya), as putting out a force or energy, Shakti, that creates worlds. The mind is a modified consciousness that puts forth a mental energy. But the Divine can stand back from his energy and observe it at its work, it can be the Witness Purusha watching the works of Prakriti. Even the mind can do that — a man can stand back in his mind-consciousness and watch the mental energy doing things, thinking, planning, etc.; all introspection is based upon that fact that one can so divide oneself into a consciousness that observes and an energy that acts. These are quite elementary things supposed to be known to everybody. Anybody can do that merely by a little practice; anybody who observes his own thoughts, feelings, actions has begun doing it already. In Yoga we make the division complete, that is all.

Consciousness and Force or Energy

Consciousness is made up of two elements, awareness of self and things and forces and conscious power. Awareness is the first thing necessary, you have to be aware of things in the right consciousness, in the right way, seeing them in their truth; but awareness by itself is not enough. There must be a Will and a Force that make the consciousness effective. Somebody may have the full consciousness of what has to be changed, what has to go and what has to come in its place, but may be helpless to make the change. Another may have the will-force, but for want of a right awareness may be unable to apply it in the right way at the right place. The advantage of being in the psychic consciousness is that you have the right awareness and its will being in harmony with the Mother's will, you can call in the Mother's Force to make the change. Those who live in the mind and the vital are not so well able to do this; they are obliged to use mostly their personal effort and as the awareness and will and force of the mind and vital are divided and imperfect, the work done is imperfect and not definitive. It is only

in the supermind that Awareness, Will, Force are always one movement and automatically effective.

*

If consciousness and energy are the same thing, there would be no use in having two different words for them. In that case instead of saying, “I am conscious of my defects”, one can say, “I am energetic of my defects.” If a man is running fast, you can say of him, “He is running with great energy.” Do you think it would mean the same if you said, “He is running with great consciousness”? Consciousness is that which is aware of things — energy is a force put in action which does things. Consciousness may have energy and keep it in or put it out, but that does not mean that it is only another word for energy and that it has to go out when the energy goes out and that it cannot stand back and observe the energy in action. You have plenty of inertia in you but that does not mean that you and inertia are the same and when inertia rises and swamps you it is you who rise and swamp yourself.

Force, Energy, Power, Shakti

There is a force behind each action acting in a manner appropriate to that action. It takes all these many forms for the necessity of the working, but it is one Force.

*

I have never classified the different forms [*of Force*] — they can be hundreds or thousands in number. Force varies its form according to the work it has to do.

*

A passive Force has no meaning — Force is always dynamic. Only a Force can act on a basis of calm passivity just as in the material world the Force acts on the basis of inertia.

*

Static and dynamic in reality always go together — it is in appearance that anything seems only dynamic or only static.

*

In each atom of the being there is an Energy, a Shakti — just as there is in every material atom a great material energy. When you see like that, you become aware of these energies. They are neither good nor bad — it depends on how they are used or how they act.

*

Power means strength and force, Shakti, which enables one to face all that can happen and to stand and overcome, also to carry out what the Divine Will proposes. It can include many things, power over men, events, circumstances, means etc. But all this not of the mental or vital kind, but by an action through unity of consciousness with the Divine and with all things and beings. It is not an individual strength depending on certain personal capacities, but the Divine Power using the individual as an instrument. It has no special relation to occult siddhis.

*

Force is the essential Shakti; Energy is the working drive of the Force, its active dynamism; Power is the capacity born of the Force; Strength is energy consolidated and stored in the Adhar.

*

The Divine Force can act on any plane — it is not limited to the Supramental Force. The Supramental is only one aspect of the power of the Divine.

*

The Supreme cannot create through the Transcendent because the Transcendent is the Supreme. It is through the Cosmic Shakti that the Divine creates.

Ananda

Ananda is a thing to be felt — it cannot be defined except negatively that it is not mere joy, but something much more deep and essential.

*

It is the statement of the Upanishad that there is an ether of Ananda in which all breathe and live; if it were not there, none could breathe or live.

*

It is fundamentally true for most people that the pleasure of life, of existence in itself, predominates over the troubles of life; otherwise most people would want to die whereas the fact is that everybody wants to live — and if you proposed to them an easy means of eternal extinction they would decline without thanks. That is what X is saying and it is undeniable. It is also true that this comes from the Ananda of existence which is behind everything and is reflected in the instinctive pleasure of existence. Naturally, this instinctive essential pleasure is not the Ananda, — it is only a pale and dim reflection of it in an inferior life-consciousness — but it is enough for its purpose. I have said that myself somewhere and I do not see anything absurd or excessive in the statement.

*

Why should the joy of creation be unyogic? Every creator feels the joy of creation — including the Divine Creator.

Chapter Three

Brahman

The Impersonal Brahman

You speak of the Impersonal as if it were a Person. The Impersonal is not He, it is It. How can an It guide or help? The Impersonal Brahman is inactive, aloof, indifferent, not concerned with what happens in the universe. Buddha's Permanent is the same.

*

There is no thought in the pure Impersonal, it is silent — but it is true that divine Truth can manifest in the background of the silence. This is of course the truth of things up to the Overmind.

The Inactive Brahman and the Active Brahman

The inactive Brahman and the active personal Brahman are two aspects of the Divine. In the Supreme these are fused into each other, not separate.

*

There are two aspects of the Divine — the static Peace and the dynamic Force. In the end they unite.

*

It is in the inactive Brahman that one merges if one seeks laya or Moksha. One can dwell in the Personal Divine but does not merge in Him. As for the Supreme, He holds in Himself the world-existence and it is in His Consciousness that it moves; so by entering into the Supreme one rises above subjection to Nature, but one does not disappear from all consciousness of world-existence.

*

The immutable Brahman is only a base for the transcendent action which comes down into its peace and silence and fills it with power also and Ananda and the light of knowledge.

Spirit and Life

In the sphere of the Spirit are only the eternal truths — all is eternally itself there, there is no development, nothing unrealised or striving to be fulfilled. There are no such things as possibilities therefore.

In life on the other hand all is a play of possibilities — nothing is realised, all is seeking to be realised — or if not yet seeking, then waiting behind the veil for that. Nothing is realised in its highest form, in its truth or completeness, but all is possible. All these possibilities are derived from the truths above — e.g., the possibility of knowledge, the possibility of love, the possibility of joy etc.

Intellect, will etc. are intermediaries which try to catch something of the hidden higher truths and bring them into life or else raise life to them — so that the possibilities of life here may become the complete realities that are already there above.

Chapter Four

The Self or Atman

The Self

It [*the self*] is being, not a being. By self is meant the conscious essential existence, one in all.

*

The self is the Divine itself in an essential aspect; it is not a portion. There is no meaning in the phrase “not even a portion” or “only an aspect”. An aspect is not something inferior to a portion.

*

Do you not know what “essential” means? There is a difference between the essence of a thing which is always the same and its formations and developments which vary. There is, for instance, the essence of gold and there are the many forms which gold can take.

*

Essence can never be defined — it simply is.

*

Everything acts in the self. The whole play of Nature takes place in the self, in the Divine. The self contains the universe.

The Cosmic Spirit or Self

The Cosmic Spirit or Self contains everything in the cosmos — it upholds cosmic Mind, universal Life, universal Matter as well as the Overmind. The Self is more than all these things which are its formulations in Nature.

*

It [*the Cosmic Spirit*] uses Truth and Falsehood, Knowledge and Ignorance and all the other dualities as elements in the manifestation and works out what has to be worked out till all is ready for a higher working.

*

The Cosmic Spirit contains the Supermind, but it keeps it above and works for the present between the Overmind and the physical. It is only when the Ignorance is removed that the Supramental becomes directly a dynamic part of the workings of cosmic Nature here. Till then there are only reflections of it.

*

The Self is essentially universal; the individualised self is only the universal experienced from an individual centre. If what you have realised is not felt to be one in all, then it is not the “Atman”; possibly it is the central being not yet revealing its universal aspect as Atman.

*

The Self is felt as either universal, one in all, or a universalised individual the same in essence as others, extended everywhere from each being but centred here. Of course centre is a way of speaking, because no physical centre is usually felt—only all the action takes place around the individual.

*

All is in the self; when identified with the universal self, all is in you.

Also, the microcosm reproduces the macrocosm — so all is present in each, though all is not expressed (and cannot be) in the surface consciousness.

The Atman, the Soul and the Psychic Being

The Atman is one in all, is not born, does not evolve or change.

The soul is something that comes from the Divine into the evolution and as the psychic being it evolves and assumes

different personalities from life to life.

*

To live in the consciousness of the Atman is to live in the calm, unity and peace that is above things and separate from the world even when pervading it. But for the psychic consciousness there are two things, the world and itself acting in the world. The Jivatman has not come down into the world, it stands above, always the same — supporting the different beings, mental etc. which act here. The psychic is what has come down here — its function is to offer all things to the Divine for transformation.

The Self and Nature or Prakriti

The Self or Atman is inactive, Nature (Prakriti) or Shakti acts. When the Self is realised it is first an infinite existence, wideness, silence, freedom, peace that is felt — that is called Atman or Self. When action takes place, it is according to the realisation either felt as forces of Nature working in that wideness, as the Divine Shakti working or as the cosmic Divine or various powers of him working. It is not felt that the Self is acting.

*

One may be aware of the silent static self without relation to the play of the cosmos. Again, one may be aware of the universal static self omnipresent in everything without being supra-sensuously awake to the movement of the dynamic *viśva-prakṛti*. The first realisation of the Self or Brahman is often a realisation of something that separates itself from all form, name, action, movement, exists in itself only, regarding the cosmos as only a mass of cinematographic shapes unsubstantial and empty of reality. That was my own first complete realisation of the Nirvana in the Self. That does not mean a wall between Self and Brahman, but a scission between the essential self-existence and the manifested world.

*

In the experience of Yoga the self or being is in essence one with the Divine or at the least it is a portion of the Divine and has all the divine potentialities. But in manifestation it takes two aspects, the Purusha and Prakriti, conscious being and Nature. In Nature here the Divine is veiled, and the individual being is subjected to Nature which acts here as the lower Prakriti, a force of Ignorance, Avidya. The Purusha in itself is divine, but exteriorised in the ignorance of Nature it is as the individual apparent being imperfect with her imperfection. Thus the soul or psychic essence, which is the Purusha entering into the evolution and supporting it, carries in itself all the divine potentialities, but the individual psychic being which it puts forth as its representative assumes the imperfection of Nature and evolves in it till it has recovered its full psychic essence and united itself with the Self above of which the soul is the individual projection in the evolution. This duality in the being on all its planes, for it is true in different ways not only of the Self and the psychic but of the mental, vital and physical Purushas, has to be grasped and accepted before the experiences of the Yoga can be fully understood.

The Being is one throughout, but on each plane of Nature, it is represented by a form of itself which is proper to that plane, the mental Purusha in the mental plane, the vital Purusha in the vital, the physical Purusha in the physical. The Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of two other planes of the being, the Knowledge or Truth plane and the Ananda plane, each with its Purusha, but although influences may come down from them these are superconscious to the human mind and their nature is not yet organised here.

Section Two

The Cosmos: Terms from Indian Systems

Chapter One

The Upanishadic and Puranic Systems

Virat

Virat is the outer manifestation and if we take all that as Brahman without knowing what is behind the manifestation we shall fall into the intellectual error of Pantheism, not realising that the Divine is more than this outer manifestation and cannot be known by it alone. In the vital we may fall into the error of accepting what is dark and imperfect on the same terms as that which makes for the light and divine perfection. There may be many other consequent errors also.

Visva or Virat, Hiranyagarbha or Taijasa, Prajna or Ishwara

These two sets of three names each mean the same things. Visva or Virat = the Spirit of the external universe, Hiranyagarbha or Taijasa (the Luminous) = the Spirit in the inner planes, Prajna or Ishwara = the Superconscious Spirit, Master of all things and the highest Self on which all depends. The Mental cannot be Ishwara.

*

It is the external consciousness, the inner consciousness, the superconscious that are meant [*by vaiśvānara, taijasa and prājña in the Mandukya Upanishad*]. The terms waking, dream, sleep are applied because in the ordinary consciousness of man the external only is awake, the inner being is mostly subliminal and acts directly only in a state of sleep when its movements are felt like things of dream and vision; while the superconscious (supermind, overmind, etc.) is beyond even that range and is to the mind like a deep sleep.

Vaisvanara, Taijasa, Prajna, Kutastha

But why do you want to connect these things with the soul? These four names [*vaiśvānara*, *taijasa*, *prājña*, *kūṭastha*] are given to four conditions of transcendent and universal Brahman or Self,—they are merely conditions of Being and Consciousness—the Self that supports the Waking State or *sthūla* consciousness, the Self that supports the Dream State or subtle consciousness, the Self that supports the Deep Sleep State or Causal consciousness, *kāraṇa*, and the Self in the supracosmic consciousness. The individual of course participates, but these are conditions of the Self, not the Self and soul. The meaning of these expressions is fixed in the Mandukya Upanishad.

Karana, Hiranyagarbha, Virat

Three planes —

(1) Karana (2) Hiranyagarbha (3) Virat

The parallel between Vijnana or Karana Jagat of the Upanishad presided over by Prajna and equated with Sushupti, as the Hiranyagarbha world with Swapna and things subtle, does not altogether equate with my account of the Supermind. But it might be said that to the normal mind approaching or entering the Supramental plane it becomes a state of Sushupti. If the writer had put the superconscious sleep of Supermind—for so the supramental state appears to the untransformed mind when it touches or apprehends it, for it falls inevitably into such a superconscious sleep—then the difference would be cured.

The Seven Worlds

1. Bhu — Physical¹
2. Bhuvah — Vital
3. Swar — Mental

¹ The correspondent asked for the terms in Sri Aurobindo's yoga system corresponding to the planes mentioned in the ancient yoga systems of India. — Ed.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 4. Mahat — Vijnana (supramental) | } | Sachchidananda worlds |
| 5. Jana — Ananda world | | |
| 6. Tapah — World of Chit-tapas | | |
| 7. Satya — World of Sat | | |

The Worlds of the Lower Hemisphere

The *bhuvanloka* is not part of the material universe — it is the vital world that goes by that name. *Dyuloka* = mind world, *bhuvanloka* = vital world, *bhūrloka* = material world. *Svarloka* is the highest region of the *dyuloka*, but it came to be regarded as identical with it.

Tapoloka and the Worlds of Tapas

That is the original Tapoloka in which the principle is Chit and its power of Tapas, but there are other worlds of Tapas on the other planes below. There is one in the mental, another in the vital range. It is one of these Tapas worlds from which the being you saw must have come.

Chapter Two

The Sankhya-Yoga System

Purusha

Purusha is the conscious Being who supports all the action of Nature. There is no fixed place, but as the central being he usually stands above the adhar — he becomes also the mental, vital, physical, psychic being.

*

The word being is used with all kinds of significances — it is a very imprecise word and can embrace everything. Purusha has a precise significance. It is the Soul or Spirit side of the being as opposed to the Nature side.

*

There is one Purusha — its action is according to the position and need of the consciousness at the time.

It is the nature of the action above the ordinary mind or in the cosmic consciousness which is many-sided.

*

The Purusha is one thing and the ordinary mental will and force are another. The latter may be unsuccessful in their action. When you are in the Purusha consciousness, that of itself implies a state of concentration and receptivity.

*

By development of the inner will it [*the Purusha*] can become active.

*

The Purusha in men is normally passive not active. It is the Prakriti that is active.

Purusha and Prakriti

There is a Purusha or essential being for each plane of the consciousness — just as each has its prakriti (nature, especial force of action and movement), so each has its Purusha, a part of the being which supports and observes and experiences and can also control the movements of Prakriti.

*

It is Prakriti (Nature) that sends these impulses [*to act*] — Nature sends all kinds of forces and experiences to each. It is for you as a conscious being (Purusha) to choose whether you shall do or not do — you should reject what you see to be wrong, accept only what is true and right. In Nature there is the higher and the lower, the true and the false. What the Divine wants of you is that you should grow in the Truth and the higher Nature, reject the false and the lower Nature.

*

As you have indulged the Prakriti for the last ten thousand lives or so, it has been accustomed to impose its own way on the Purusha. To be separate is only the first step. Also I fancy the Purusha in you is still very mental in its will.

*

In order to get the dynamic realisation it is not enough to rescue the Purusha from subjection to Prakriti; we must transfer the allegiance of the Purusha from the lower Prakriti with its play of ignorant Forces to the Supreme Divine Shakti, the Mother.

It is a mistake to identify the Mother with the lower Prakriti and its mechanism of forces. Prakriti here is a mechanism only which has been put forth for the working of the evolutionary Ignorance. As the ignorant mental, vital or physical being is not itself the Divine, although it comes from the Divine — so the mechanism of Prakriti is not the Divine Mother. No doubt something of her is there in and behind this mechanism maintaining it for its evolutionary purpose — but what she is in herself is not

a Shakti of Avidya, but the Divine Consciousness, Power, Light, Para Prakriti to whom we turn for the release and the divine fulfilment.

The realisation of the Purusha Consciousness calm, free, observing the play of forces but not attached or involved in them is a means of liberation. The calm, the detachment, a peaceful strength and joy (*ātmarati*) must be brought down into the vital and physical as well as into the mind. If this is established, one is no longer a prey to the turmoil of the vital forces. But this calm, peace, silent strength and joy is only the first descent of the Power of the Mother into the Adhar. Beyond that is a Knowledge, an executive Power, a dynamic Ananda which is not that of the ordinary Prakriti even at its best and most sattwic, but divine in its nature.

First, however, the calm, the peace, the liberation is needed. To try to bring down the dynamic side too soon is not advisable — for then it would be a descent into a troubled and impure nature unable to assimilate it and serious perturbations might be the consequence.

*

There is a constant movement (Prakriti) and a constant silence (Purusha).

*

It is the Purusha and Prakriti sides of the nature — one leading to pure conscious existence, static, the other to pure conscious force, dynamic. The past darkness they have come out of is that of ignorance, the future darkness that is felt above is superconscience. But of course the superconscience is really luminous — only its light is not seen. The three forms of consciousness are the three sides of Nature represented by the three gunas — force of subconscious *tamas*, Inertia, which is the law of Matter, force of half-conscious desire, *Kinesis*, which is *rajas*, which is the law of Life, force of *sattwic* *Prakasha*, which is the law of Intelligence.

Prakriti

Prakriti is a name given to the Force that works out everything in the person and in the world; it takes the form of mental, vital, psychic, physical and other forces, of all sorts of powers and qualities, movements, forms, thoughts, sensations, feelings, actions — all that is the result of Prakriti. It is as when a machine is moved by forces of electricity or steam or gas — so the world may be regarded as a huge and complicated machine worked by the forces of Prakriti. It is what is called in English “Nature”, and they say everything in the world is the work of Nature.

*

It is Prakriti or Nature that acts; the Divine does not compel people to do anything. Nothing can happen without the presence and support of the Divine, for Nature or Prakriti is the Divine Force and it is this that works out things, but it works them out according to the nature and through or with the will of each man which is full of ignorance — that goes on until men turn to the Divine and become conscious of Him and united with Him. Then only can it be said that all begins to be done in them by the direct Will of the Divine.

*

The lower Prakriti is the ordinary consciousness of man with its ignorance, desires and bondage. I suppose you know that one has to transcend this ordinary consciousness of the lower Nature and arrive at a higher divine consciousness, if one wants to be free?

*

By Prakriti [*in a passage in Bases of Yoga*] is meant universal Prakriti. Universal Prakriti entering into the vital being creates desires which appear by its habitual response as an individual nature; but if the habitual desires she throws in are rejected and exiled, the being remains but the old individual prakriti of vital desire is no longer there, — a new nature is formed responding

to the Truth above and not to the lower Nature.

*

Universal Prakriti determined it [*the habit of response to vital movements*] and the soul or Purusha accepted it. In the acceptance lies the responsibility. The Purusha is that which sanctions or refuses. The vital being responds to the ordinary life waves in the animal; man responds to them but has the power of mental control. He has also as the mental Purusha is awake in him the power to choose whether he shall have desire or train his being to surmount it. Finally, there is the possibility of bringing down a higher nature which will not be subject to desire but act on another vital principle.

Prakriti and Shakti or Chit-Shakti

What is meant by Prakriti or Nature is the outer or executive side of the Shakti or Conscious Force which forms and moves the worlds. This outer side appears here to be mechanical, a play of the forces, gunas etc. Behind it is the living Consciousness and Force of the Divine, the divine Shakti. The Prakriti itself is divided into the lower and higher, — the lower is the Prakriti of the Ignorance, the Prakriti of mind, life and matter separated in consciousness from the Divine; the higher is the Divine Prakriti of Sachchidananda with its manifesting power of Supermind, always aware of the Divine and free from Ignorance and its consequences. Man so long as he is in the ignorance is subject to the lower Prakriti, but by spiritual evolution he becomes aware of the higher Nature and seeks to come into contact with it. He can ascend into it and it can descend into him — such an ascent and descent can transform the lower nature of mind, life and matter.

*

Prakriti is only the executive or working force — the Power behind Prakriti is Shakti. It is the Chit-Shakti in manifestation: that is the spiritual consciousness.

*

All energies derive from the Chit-Shakti; but they differentiate from it as they descend.

This much is true that Life is characteristically Force — the Physical is characteristically substance; but the dynamism of both derives from Chit — mind dynamism also, all dynamism.

Purusha, Prakriti and Action

It is more difficult for the Prakriti [*to separate itself from outer action than for the Purusha*] as its ordinary play is that of the surface being. It has to divide itself into two to separate from that. The Purusha on the contrary is in its nature silent and separate — so it has only to go back to its original nature.

*

It [*Prakriti*] divides itself into an inner Force that is free from its action (free from rajas, tamas etc.) and the outer Prakriti which it is using and changing.

*

If ego and desire are different things from the gunas, then there can be an action of the gunas without ego and desire and therefore without attachment. That is the nature of the action of the gunas in the unattached liberated Yogi. If it were not possible, then it would be nonsense to talk of the Yogis being unattached, for there would remain still attachment in part of their being. To say that they are unattached in the Purusha, but attached in the Prakriti, therefore they are unattached, is to talk nonsense. Attachment is attachment in whatever part of the being it may be. In order to be unattached one must be unattached everywhere, in the mental, vital, physical action and not only in the silent soul somewhere inside.

*

You seem to think that action and Prakriti are the same thing and where there is no action there can be no Prakriti! Purusha and Prakriti are separate powers of the being. It is not that Purusha

= quiescence and Prakriti = action, so that when all is quiescent, there is no Prakriti and when all is active there is no Purusha. When all is active, there is still the Purusha behind the active Nature and when all is quiescent there is still the Prakriti, but the Prakriti at rest.

*

The outer being is also detached [*when a Yogi engages in detached action*] — the whole being is without desire or attachment and still action is possible. Action without desire is possible, action without attachment is possible, action without ego is possible.

It is not the inner Purusha only that remains detached then — the inner Purusha is always detached, only one is not conscious of it in the ordinary state. It is the Prakriti also that is not disturbed by the action of the gunas or attached to it — the mind, the vital, the physical (which are Prakriti) begin to get the same quietude, unperturbed peace and detachment as the Purusha, but it is a quietude, not a cessation of all action, it is quietude in action itself. If it were not so, my statement in the *Arya* that there can be a desireless or liberated action on which I found the possibility of a free (*mukta*) action would be false. The whole being, Purusha-Prakriti, becomes detached (having no desire or attachment) even in the action of the gunas.

*

Prakriti is the Force that acts. A Force may be in action or in quiescence, but when it rests, it is as much a Force as when it acts. The gunas are an action of the Force, they are in the Force itself. The sea is there and the waves are there, but the waves are not the sea and when there are no waves and the sea is still, it does not stop being the sea.

The Gunas or Qualities of Nature

Prakriti and Nature are the same thing — the gunas are modes or processes of Nature (Prakriti).

*

If the gunas are quiescent, then Prakriti ceases to act — unless the gunas are transformed into their divine equivalents, — then Prakriti becomes the higher or divine Nature.

*

I don't think it¹ is correct myself. It is supposed that when the three qualities are not in an equalised condition, when there is a diversity and movement of variation, then creation is active — otherwise all becomes quiescent original Prakriti. It is doubtful if it is actually so.

*

Transcendence of the three gunas is a state of liberation in which one is not affected by the action of the gunas; but even before that is attained there can be a complete and living faith in the Divine.

Transformation of the Gunas

The three gunas become purified and refined and changed into their divine equivalents: sattwa becomes *jyotiḥ*, the authentic spiritual light; rajas becomes *tapas*, the tranquilly intense divine force; tamas becomes *śama*, the divine quiet, rest, peace.

*

You cannot drive out rajas and tamas, you can only convert them and give the predominance to sattwa. Tamas and rajas disappear only when the higher consciousness not only comes down but controls everything down to the cells of the body. They then change into the divine rest and peace and the divine energy or Tapas; finally sattwa also changes into the divine Light. As for remaining quiet when tamas is there, there can also be a tamasic quiet.

*

¹ The correspondent asked for an explanation of an aphorism in the Sankhya Sutra (1.61): *sattvarajastamasām sāmāyāvasthā prakṛtiḥ*. — Ed.

The Prakriti can be psychicised and spiritualised and the gunas yet remain, but with the sattwa dominant and the rajas and tamas enlightened by the sattwa. As the transformation increases, the gunas change more and more towards their divine equivalents, but it is only when the supramental comes that there is the full change.

*

The transformation of the gunas is necessary for the *perfection* of the nature, not for liberation. Liberation comes by loss of ego and desire.

Sattwa and Liberation

When the consciousness as well as the action is free from ego and desire, there is always a fundamental calm. This calm remains whether sattwa predominates or not. Sattwa need not always predominate, because to become sattwic is not the object of sadhana. To need to be always sattwic would be a limitation. Whatever guna predominates in the action, to be free, desireless, calm behind all actions, is the condition of the liberated man.

*

The sattwa predominates [*when action is done without desire and ego*], the rajas acts as a kinetic movement under the control of sattwa until the tamas imposes the need of rest. That is the usual thing. But even if the tamas predominates and the action is weak or the rajas predominates and the action is excessive, neither the Purusha nor the Prakriti get disturbed, there is a fundamental calm in the whole being and the action is no more than a ripple or an eddy on the surface.

Transformation of Rajas and Tamas

It is possible that the fatigue or lethargy comes as the wrong condition which has to be replaced by the peace. As rajas, kinetic passion, has to be replaced by *tapas*, the spiritual force, so tamas,

the obscure inertia, has to be replaced by *śama*, the luminous quietude and peace.

*

The peace (*śama*) is the pure form, *tamas* is its degraded or perverted form — just as *rajas* is the degraded or perverse form of *Tapas*. When there is the transformation, *tamas* can be got rid of — but till then there is always a possibility of its mixing with the peace or stillness so long as that is not perfect and all-pervading.

*

A dynamic descent brings *tapas* not *śama*. It is a greater and greater descent of peace that brings *śama* — the dynamic descent helps it by dispersing the element of rajasic disturbance and changing *rajas* into *tapas*.

Transformation of *Tamas* into *Śama*

The *tamas* is part of the general physical Nature and so long as that is not fully changed and illumined, something of it remains; but one has only to go on opening oneself to the Mother's consciousness and in time the *tamas* too will change into the inner divine rest and peace.

*

All undesirable things are a mistranslation in the Ignorance of something that on a higher plane is or might be desirable. Inertia, *tamas*, is the mistranslation of the divine *śama*, rest, quietude, peace; pain is a mistranslation of *Ananda*, lust of love etc. It is only when the lower perversions are got rid of that the higher things in their truth can reign.

*

It is the tendency of the physical to substitute its own inertia for the emptiness. The true emptiness is the beginning of what I call in the *Arya śama* — the rest, calm, peace of the eternal Self —

which has finally to replace *tamas*, the physical inertia. *Tamas* is the degradation of *śama*, as *rajas* is the degradation of *Tapas*, the Divine Force. The physical consciousness is always trying to substitute its own inertia for the calm, peace or rest of the true consciousness, just as the vital is always trying to substitute its *rajas* for the true action of the Force.

*

It [*sleepiness*] is the physical *tamas* trying to push itself into the place of the calm. Part of the transformation consists in replacing the element of *tamas* in the nature by the *śama* or true calm, peace, rest, of which *tamas* or inertia is the degradation or perversion in the lower nature (for each of the three *gunas* has its divine counterpart in the higher nature). But *tamas* being the settled habit of the inferior nature tries to persist and keep or get back its place. That is the reason why this kind of alternation takes place between the two.

*

Inert *śama* is *śama* still mixed with *tamas* — a quietude that has no force of action (*tapas*) in it, no positive principle of happy ease, no positive light of knowledge — but is still calm, repose, release from all disturbance.

*

It [*tamas*] has to be transformed into *śama*, the peace and rest of the higher *Prakriti*, and then filled with *tapas* and *jyotiḥ*. But this can only be done completely in the physical when the physical is finally transformed by the supramental Power.

Mahat

Mahat is, I suppose, the essential and original matrix of consciousness (involved, not evolved) in *Prakriti* out of which individuality and formation come.

Tanmatra

Tanmatra is only the basis of matter. In the Sankhya the basis is Pradhana (of Prakriti) out of which come Buddhi and everything else. In the Vedanta it is spiritual substance out of which all comes.

Section Three

The Jivatman and the Psychic Being

Chapter One

The Jivatman in the Integral Yoga

The Jivatman or Individual Self

By Jivatma we mean the individual self. Essentially it is one self with all others, but in the multiplicity of the Divine it is the individual self, an individual centre of the universe — and it sees everything in itself or itself in everything or both together according to its state of consciousness and point of view.

*

The self, Atman, is in its nature either transcendent or universal (Paramatma, Atma); when it individualises and becomes a central being, it is then the Jivatman. The Jivatman feels his oneness with the universal but at the same time his central separateness as a portion of the Divine.

*

The individual Self is usually described as a portion of the Transcendent and cosmic Self — in the higher and subtler ranges of the consciousness it knows itself as that, but in the lower where the consciousness is more and more clouded it identifies itself with surface forms of personality, creations of Prakriti, and becomes unaware of its divine origin. Self, when one becomes aware of it, is felt as something self-existent and eternal which is not identified with forms of mental, vital and physical personality, — these are only small expressions of its potentialities in Nature. What people call themselves now is only the ego or the mind or the life-force or the body, but that is because they think in the terms of the formations of Prakriti and do not see behind them.

*

For the most part the Supreme acts through the Jiva and its

nature and the Jiva and the nature act through the ego and the ego acts through the outer instruments — that is the play of the Ignorance.

*

Essentially one Jiva has the same nature as all — but in manifestation each puts forth its own line of Swabhava.

*

The Jivatma is above all planes. It has no fixed form or colour, though it may represent itself in a form.

*

The Jivatma has always calm and peace — it is the nature (prakriti) that is not quiet.

The Jivatman, the Psychic Being and Prakriti

The Spirit is the Atman, Brahman, Essential Divine.

When the one Divine manifests its ever inherent multiplicity, this essential Self or Atman becomes for that manifestation the Jivatman, the central being who presides from above over the evolution of its personalities and terrestrial lives here, but is itself an eternal portion of the Divine and prior to the terrestrial manifestation — *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*.

In this lower manifestation, *aparā prakṛti*, this eternal portion of the Divine appears as the soul, a spark of the Divine Fire, supporting the individual evolution, supporting the mental, vital and physical being. The psychic being is the spark growing into a Fire, evolving with the growth of the consciousness. The psychic being is therefore evolutionary, not like the Jivatman, prior to the evolution.

But man is not aware of the self or Jivatman, he is aware only of his ego, or he is aware of the mental being which controls the life and the body. But more deeply he becomes aware of his soul or psychic being as his true centre, the Purusha in the heart; the psychic is the central being in the evolution, it proceeds from and represents the Jivatman, the eternal portion of the

Divine. When there is the full consciousness, the Jivatman and the psychic being join together.

The ego is a formation of Nature; but it is not a formation of physical nature alone, therefore it does not cease with the body. There is a mental and vital ego also.

The base of the material consciousness here is not only the Ignorance, but the Inconscience — that is, the consciousness is involved in form of matter and energy of matter. It is not only the material consciousness but the vital and the mental too that are separated from the Truth by the Ignorance.

*

The body is not the individual Self — it is the basis of the external personality or of the physical self, if you like so to express it; but that is not the individual Self. The individual Self is the central being (Jivatma) manifesting in the lower nature as the psychic being — it is directly a portion of the Divine.

*

The soul, representative of the central being, is a spark of the Divine supporting all individual existence in Nature; the psychic being is a conscious form of that soul growing in the evolution — in the persistent process that develops first life in matter, mind in life, until finally mind can develop into overmind and overmind into the supramental Truth. The soul supports the nature in its evolution through these grades, but is itself not any of these things.

The lower Nature, *Apara Prakriti*, is this external objective and superficial subjective apparent Nature which manifests all these minds, lives and bodies. The supreme Nature, *Para Prakriti*, concealed behind it is the very nature of the Divine — a supreme Consciousness-Force which manifests the multiple Divine as the Many. These Many are in themselves eternal selves of the Supreme in his supreme Nature, *Para Prakriti*. Here in relation to this world they appear as the Jivatmas supporting the evolution of the natural existences, *sarvabhūtāni*, in the mutable Becoming which is the life of the Kshara (mobile or mutable)

Purusha. The Jiva (= Jivatma) and the creatures, *sarvabhūtāni*, are not the same thing. The Jivatmas really stand above the creation even though in it, the natural existences, *sarvabhūtāni*, are the creatures of Nature. Man, bird, beast, reptile are natural existences, but the individual self in them is not even for a moment characteristically man, bird, beast or reptile; in its evolution it is the same through all these changes, a spiritual being that consents to the play of Nature.

What is original and eternal for ever in the Divine is the Being, what is developed in consciousness, conditions, forces, forms, etc., by the Divine Power is the Becoming. The eternal Divine is the Being, the universe in Time and all that is apparent in it is a Becoming. The eternal Being in its superior nature, Para Prakriti, is at once One and Many; but the eternal Multiplicity of the Divine when it stands behind the created existences, *sarvabhūtāni*, appears as (or as we say, becomes) the Jiva. That is the meaning of the *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*. In the psychic on the other hand there are two aspects, the psychic existence or soul behind and in front the form of individuality it takes in its evolution in Nature.

The soul or psychic is immutable only in the sense that it contains all the possibility of the Divine within it, but this it has to evolve and in its evolution it assumes the form of a developing psychic individual evolving in the manifestation the individual Prakriti and taking part in the evolution. It is the spark of the Divine Fire that grows behind the mind, vital and physical by means of the psychic being until it is able to transform the Prakriti of Ignorance into a Prakriti of Knowledge. This evolving psychic being is not therefore at any time all that the soul or essential psychic existence bears within it; it temporalises and individualises what is eternal in potentiality, transcendent in essence in this projection of the spirit.

The central being is the being which presides over the different births one after the other but is itself unborn, for it does not descend into the being but is above it — it holds together the mental, vital and physical being and all the various parts of the personality and it controls the life either through the mental

being and the mental thought and will or through the psychic, whichever may happen to be most in front or most powerful in action. If it does not exercise its control, then the consciousness is in great disorder and every part of the personality acts for itself so that there is no coherence in the thought, feelings or action.

The psychic is not above, but behind — its seat is behind the heart; its power is not knowledge but an essential or spiritual feeling — it has the clearest sense of the truth and a sort of inherent perception of it which is of the nature of soul-feeling. It is our inmost being and supports all the others, mental, vital, physical, but it is also much veiled by them and has to act upon them as an influence rather than by its sovereign right of direct action; its direct action becomes normal and preponderant only at a high stage of development or by Yoga. It is not the psychic being which, you feel, gives you the intuitions of things to be or warns you against the results of certain actions; that is some part of the inner being, sometimes the inner mental, sometimes the inner vital, sometimes, it may be, the inner or subtle physical Purusha. The inner being — inner mind, inner vital, inner or subtle physical — knows much that is unknown to the outer mind, the outer vital, the outer physical, for it is in a more direct contact with the secret forces of Nature. The psychic is the inmost being of all; a perception of truth which is inherent in the deepest substance of the consciousness, a sense of the good, true, beautiful, the Divine, is its privilege.

The central being — the Jivatman which is not born nor evolves, but presides over the individual birth and evolution — puts forward a representative of himself on each plane of the consciousness. On the mental plane it is the true mental being, *manomaya puruṣa*, on the vital plane the true vital being, *prāṇamaya puruṣa*, on the physical plane the true physical being, *annamaya puruṣa*. Each being therefore is, so long as the Ignorance lasts, centred round his mental, vital or physical Purusha, according to the plane on which he predominantly lives, and that is to him his central being. But the true representative all the time is concealed behind the mind, vital and physical — it is the psychic, our inmost being.

When the inmost knowledge begins to come, we become aware of the psychic being within us and it comes forward and leads the sadhana. We become aware also of the Jivatman, the individual Self or Spirit above the manifestation of which the psychic is the representative here.

The Central Being and the Psychic Being

The central being is above the Adhara — most people are not aware of their central being (Jivatma) — they are aware only of the ego.

The psychic is the soul — it is a portion of the Divine that supports the mind, life and body in the evolution. The psychic gets the Divine's help directly from the Divine.

*

The central being is that which is not born, does not evolve, but presides over all the individual manifestation. The psychic is its projection here — for the psychic being is in the evolution and from within supports our whole evolution; it receives the essence of all experience and by that develops the personality Godward.

The Self is at once one in all and many — one in its essence, it manifests also as the individual self which may be described as in Nature an eternal portion of the Divine; in spirit a centre of the manifestation, individual but extending into universality and rising into transcendence.

*

It is the central being above the evolution (always the same) that we call the Jivatma — the psychic being is the same in the evolution, it is the spark of the Divine there growing into its full divinity as a portion of the Divine.

*

The central being and the soul are both in different ways portions of the Divine. They are in fact two aspects of the same entity,

but one is unevolving above Nature, the other evolves a psychic being in Nature.

*

The phrase “central being” in our Yoga is usually applied to the portion of the Divine in us which supports all the rest and survives through death and birth. This central being has two forms — above, it is the Jivatman, our true being, of which we become aware when the higher self-knowledge comes, — below, it is the psychic being which stands behind mind, body and life. The Jivatman is above the manifestation in life and presides over it; the psychic being stands behind the manifestation in life and supports it.

The natural attitude of the psychic being is to feel itself as the child, the son of God, the Bhakta; it is a portion of the Divine, one in essence, but in the dynamics of the manifestation there is always even in identity a difference. The Jivatman, on the contrary, lives in the essence and can merge itself in identity with the Divine; but it too, the moment it presides over the dynamics of the manifestation, knows itself as one centre of the multiple Divine, not as the Parameshwara. It is important to remember this distinction; for, otherwise, if there is the least vital egoism, one may begin to think of oneself as an Avatara or lose balance like Hriday with Ramakrishna.

The Surrender of the Central Being

The central being is that on which all the others depend. If it makes its surrender, that is, renounces its separate fulfilment in order to be an instrument of the Divine, then it is easier for the mental, vital and physical to surrender.

*

It [*the central being's surrender to the Divine*] has nothing to do with suitable circumstances. If the will of the central being turns towards union with the Divine, then it renounces its separate fulfilment.

The Central Being after Liberation

What will remain [*after liberation*] is the central being — not the ego. The central being will live in the consciousness of the Divine everywhere and in all other beings also; so it will not have the consciousness of a separate ego but of one centre among many of the Divine Multiplicity.

*

On the higher spiritual planes there is no ego, because the oneness of the Divine is felt, but there may be the sense of one's true person or individual being — not ego, but a portion of the Divine.

The Karana Purusha

The Karana Purusha is what is called the central being by us, the Jiva. It stands above the play, supporting it always.

The Jivatman and the *Caitya Puruṣa*

Jivatma is not psychic being — we have fixed on *caitya puruṣa* as the equivalent in Sanskrit of the psychic being. Jivatma is the individual Self — the central being.

*

Caitya puruṣa means rather the Purusha in the *cit*, the fundamental (inner) consciousness.

Jiva is the fundamental, or as we call it, the central being. But the fundamental being is not *combined* of the mental, vital, psychic etc., these are only expressions of the Jivatman; the Jivatman itself is self-existent in the Divine; *essential* in its being, it cannot be regarded as a combination of things.

The Jivatman and the Mental Purusha

When the Atman is individualised — i.e. supporting from above the play of individual being, it is called the Purusha or sometimes

the Jivatman. It is the central being. Usually however it is the mental Purusha one first becomes aware of and through that the nature is led. To become aware of the psychic being or the central Purusha is more difficult.

*

The mental being within watches, observes and passes judgment on all that happens in you. The psychic does not watch and observe in this way like a witness, but it feels and knows spontaneously in a much more direct and luminous way by the very purity of its own nature and the divine instinct within it, and so, whenever it comes to the front it reveals at once what are the right and what the wrong movements in your nature.

The being of man is composed of these elements — the psychic behind supporting all, the inner mental, vital and physical, and the outer, quite external nature of mind, life and body which is their instrument of expression. But above all is the central being (Jivatman) which uses them all for its manifestation; it is a portion of the Divine Self, but this reality of himself is hidden from the external man who replaces this inmost self and soul of him by the mental and vital ego. It is only those who have begun to know themselves that become aware of their true central being; but still it is always there standing behind the action of mind, life and body and is most directly represented by the psychic which is itself a spark of the Divine. It is by the growth of the psychic element in one's own nature that one begins to come into conscious touch with one's central being above. When that happens and the central being uses a conscious will to control and organise the movements of the nature, it is then that one has a real, a spiritual as opposed to a partial and merely mental or moral self-mastery.

*

I don't think the Jivatma is concentrated anywhere, — except in this sense that in the waking state it is the mental Purusha that leads and the seat of the mental Purusha is in the head, behind the centre between the eyebrows. In the dream state what

remains active in the body is the externalising consciousness (or something of it) and the centre of that is in the neck (throat). In the *suṣupti*, if it is real *suṣupti*, not merely unconscious of dreams, but absence of dreams, the consciousness is deep within in the heart centre or behind it — for that is the veiled centre of the innermost being.

The Jivatman, Spark-Soul and Psychic Being

The Jivatman, spark-soul and psychic being are three different forms of the same reality and they must not be mixed up together, as that confuses the clearness of the inner experience.

The Jivatman or spirit is self-existent above the manifested or instrumental being — it is superior to birth and death, always the same; it is the individual self or Atman, the eternal true being of the individual.

The soul is a spark of the Divine in the heart of the living creatures of Nature. It is not seated above the manifested being; it enters into the manifestation of the self, consents to be a part of its natural phenomenal becoming, supports its evolution in the world of material Nature. It carries with it at first an undifferentiated power of the divine consciousness, containing all possibilities, but at first unevolved possibilities, which have not yet taken form but to which it is the function of evolution to give form. This spark of Divinity is there in all terrestrial living beings from the earth's highest to its lowest creatures.

The psychic being is a spiritual personality put forward by the soul in its evolution; its growth marks the stage which the spiritual evolution of the individual has reached and its immediate possibilities for the future. It stands behind the mental, the vital, the physical nature, grows by their experiences, carries the consciousness from life to life. It is the psychic Person, *caitya puruṣa*. At first it is veiled by the mental, vital and physical parts, limited by them in its self-expression by their limitations, bound to the reactions of Nature, but, as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body. In the ordinary man it still depends on them for expression and is not

able to take them up and freely use them. The life of the being is animal and human, not divine. When the psychic being can by sadhana become dominant and freely use its instruments, then the impulse towards the Divine becomes complete and the transformation of mind, vital and body, not merely their liberation, becomes possible.

As the Self or Atman is free and superior to birth and death, the experience of the Jivatman and its unity with the supreme or universal Self is sufficient to bring the sense of liberation; but for the transformation of the life and nature the full awareness and awakening of our psychic being also is indispensable.

The psychic being realises at this stage its oneness with the true being, the Self, but it does not disappear or change into it; it remains as its instrument for psychic and spiritual self-expression, a divine manifestation in Nature.

The *bindu* seen by you above may be a symbolic way of seeing the Jivatman, the individual self as a drop of the Sea, an individual portion of the universal Divine; the aspiration on that level would naturally be for the opening of the higher consciousness so that the being may dwell there and not in the ignorance. The Jivatman is already one with the Divine in reality, but its spiritual demand may be for the rest of the consciousness also to realise it.

The aspiration of the psychic being would then translate this demand entirely for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for its presence and power within the heart, for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into this instrumental being and nature.

Both aspirations are necessary for the fullness of this Yoga, the demand of the self on the nature from above, the psychic aspiration of the nature from below. When the psychic imposes its aspiration on the mind, vital and body, then they too aspire and this is what was felt by you as the aspiration from the level of the lower being. The aspiration felt above is that of the Jivatman for the higher consciousness with its realisation of the One to manifest in all the being. Both aspirations help

and are necessary to each other. But the seeking of the lower being is at first intermittent and oppressed by the obscurity and limitations of the ordinary consciousness. It has by sadhana to become clear, constant, strong and enduring; it then compels realisation, makes it inevitable.

The sense of peace, purity and calm felt by you is brought about by a union or strong contact of the lower with the higher consciousness; it cannot be permanent at first, but it can become so by an increased frequency and durability of the calm and peace and finally by the full descent of the eternal peace and calm and silence of the higher consciousness into the lower nature.

The Jivatman in a Supramental Creation

I have used the words Jiva and Jivatman in these and all the passages¹ in exactly the same sense — it never occurred to me that there could be a difference. If I had so intended it, I would have drawn the distinction — the two words being similar — very clearly and not left it to be gathered by inference.

In the passage from the chapter [*in The Life Divine*] on the triple status of the Supermind I was describing how the Supermind working as a force of the highest self-determination of the Divine manifested it in three poises and what was the consciousness of the Jivatman in a supramental creation. There is no statement that the place of the Jivatman is in the supramental plane alone — if that were so, man could have no knowledge of his individual Self or Spirit before he rose to the supramental plane; he could not have any experience of the Self, though he may have the sense of the dissolution of his ego in something Universal. But he can become aware of his unborn non-evolving Self, a centre of the Divine Consciousness, long before that; the Self cosmic or individual is experienced long before rising to Supermind. If it were not so, spiritual experience of that high

¹ *The correspondent cited passages from two of Sri Aurobindo's works: The Life Divine, volume 21 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 157, and Essays on the Gita, volume 19, p. 445 and p. 542.*

kind would be impossible to mental man, liberation would be impossible; he would first have to become a supramental being. As for the Purusha it is there on all planes; there is a mental Purusha, *manomaya*, leader of the life and body, as the Upanishad puts it, a vital, a physical Purusha; there is the psychic being or Chaitya Purusha which supports and carries all these as it were. One may say that these are projections of the Jivatman put there to uphold Prakriti on the various levels of the being. The Upanishad speaks also of a supramental and a Bliss Purusha, and if the supramental and the Bliss Nature were organised in the evolution on earth we could become aware of them upholding the movements here.

As for the psychic being it enters into the evolution, enters into the body at birth and goes out of it at death; but the Jivatman, as I know it, is unborn and eternal although upholding the manifested personality from above. The psychic being can be described as the Jivatman entering into birth, if you like, but if the distinction is not made, then the nature of the Atman is blurred and a confusion arises. This is a necessary distinction for metaphysical knowledge and for something that is very important in spiritual experience. The word "Atman" like "spirit" in English is popularly used in all kinds of senses, but both for spiritual and philosophical knowledge it is necessary to be clear and precise in one's use of terms so as to avoid confusion of thought and vision by confusion in the words we use to express them.

If I had meant that it is an individual consciousness that determines all this working, as you tell me, then I should be in contradiction with my own teaching of the Divine as the Master of all and the need of surrender — for an individual who can do everything himself, can carry out his own salvation — he has no need of surrender.

Chapter Two

The Jivatman in Other Indian Systems

The Jivatman in Other Schools

The word Jiva has two meanings in the Sanskritic tongues — “living creature”¹ and the spirit individualised and upholding the living being in its evolution from birth to birth. In the latter sense the full term is Jivatma — the Atman, spirit or eternal self of the living being. It is spoken of figuratively by the Gita as “an eternal portion of the Divine” — but the word fragmentation (used by you) is too strong, it could be applicable to the forms, but not to the spirit in them. Moreover the multiple Divine is an eternal reality antecedent to the creation here. An elaborate description of the Jivatma would be: “the multiple Divine manifested here as the individualised self or spirit of the created being”. The Jivatma in its essence does not change or evolve, its essence stands above the personal evolution; within the evolution itself it is represented by the evolving psychic being which supports all the rest of the nature.

The Adwaita Vedanta (Monism) declares that the Jiva has no real existence, as the Divine is indivisible. Another school attributes a real but not an independent existence to the Jiva — it is, they say, one in essence, different in manifestation, and as the manifestation is real, eternal and not an illusion, it cannot be called unreal. The dualistic schools affirm the Jiva as an independent category or stand on the triplicity of God, soul and Nature.

The Jivatman and the Pure “I” of the Adwaita

Well, it is a little difficult to explain. Perhaps the best thing is to

¹ In Bengal when one is about to kill a small animal, people often protest saying, “Don’t kill — it is Krishna’s Jiva (his living creature).”

break up my answer into a number of separate statements, for the whole thing has got too complicated to do otherwise.

(1) It is impossible to equate my conception or experience of the Jivatman with the pure “I” of the Adwaita, by which you mean, I suppose, something which says, “I am He” and by that perception merges itself into the Brahman. According to the Adwaita of the Mayavadins this Jivatman, like the Ishwara himself, is simply an appearance of the Brahman in illusory Maya. There is no Ishwara, Lord of the world, because there is no world — except in Maya; so too there is no Jivatman, only the Paramatman illusorily perceived as an individual self by the lower (illusory) consciousness in Maya. Those, on the other hand, who wish to unite with the Ishwara, regard or experience the Jiva either as a separate being dependent on the Ishwara or as something one in essence with him, yet different, but this difference like the essential oneness is eternal — and there are also other ideas of the Jivatman and its relation to the Divine or Supreme. So this pure “I”, if that is how it is to be described, presents itself differently, in different aspects, one may say, to different people. The Overmind presents the truth of things in all sorts of aspects and mind, even the spiritual mind, fastens on one or the other as the very truth, the one real truth of the matter. It is the mind that makes these differences, but that does not matter, because, through its own way of seeing and experiencing the soul or individualised consciousness or whatever you may like to call it, the mental being goes where it has to go. I hope this much is clear as the first step in the matter.

(2) I do not dispute at all the fact that one can realise the Self, the Brahman or the Ishwara without going into the overhead regions, the dynamic spiritual planes, or stationing oneself permanently above the body as happens in this Yoga. Even if it is done through the Sahasrara, well, the Sahasrara extends to the spiritualised mind and can be felt on the top of the head, so any ascent above is not indispensable. But, apart from that, one can very well, as you say, realise the Atman if one stands back from the mind and heart, detaches oneself from the parts of Prakriti, ceases to identify oneself with mind, life and body, falls

into an inner silence. One need not even explore the kingdoms of the inner mind or inner vital, still less is it compulsory to spread one's wings in ranges above. The Self is everywhere and by entering into full detachment and silence, or even by either detachment or silence, one can get anywhere some glimpse, some reflection, perhaps even a full reflection, or a sense of the Self's presence or of one's own immergence in that which is free, wide, silent, eternal, infinite. Obviously if it is a pure "I", of whatever nature, which gets the experience, it must be looked on by the consciousness that has the realisation as the individual self of the Being, Jivatman.

(3) One can also have the experience of oneself as not the mind but the thinker, not the heart but the self or "I" which supports the feelings, not the life but that which supports life, not the body but that which assumes a body. This self can be obviously dynamic as well as silent; or else you may say that, even though still and immobile, from its silence it originates the dynamism of Nature. One can also feel this to be the Spirit one in all as well as the true "I" in oneself. All depends on the experience. Very usually, it is the experience of the Purusha, often felt first as the Witness silent, upholding all the nature; but the Purusha can also be experienced as the Knower and the Ishwara. Sometimes it is as or through the mental Purusha in one centre or another, sometimes as or through the vital Purusha that one can become aware of one's self or spirit. It is also possible to become aware of the secret psychic being within by itself as the true individual; or one can be aware of the psychic being as the pure "I" with these others standing in mind or vital as representatives in these domains or on these levels. According to one's experience one may speak of any of these as the Jiva or pure "I" (this last is a very dubious phrase) or the true Person or true Individual who knows himself as one with or a portion of or wholly dependent on the universal or transcendent Being and seeks to merge himself in that or ascend to that and be it or live in oneness with it. All these things are quite possible without any need of the overhead experience or of the stable overhead Permanence.

(4) One may ask, first, why not then say that the Jivatman which can be realised in this way is the pure “I” of which the lower self has the experience and through which it gets its salvation; and, secondly, what need is there of going into the overhead planes at all? Well, in the first place, this pure “I” does not seem to be absolutely necessary as an intermediary of the liberation whether into the impersonal Self or Brahman or into whatever is eternal. The Buddhists do not admit any soul or self or any experience of the pure “I”; they proceed by dissolving the consciousness into a bundle of *sanskaras*, getting rid of the *sanskaras* and so are liberated into some Permanent which they refuse to describe or some *Shunya*. So the experience of a pure “I” or Jivatman is not binding on everyone who wants liberation into the Eternal but is content to get it without rising beyond the spiritualised mind into a higher Light above. I myself had my experience of Nirvana and silence in the Brahman, etc. long before there was any knowledge of the overhead spiritual planes; it came first simply by an absolute stillness and blotting out as it were of all mental, emotional and other inner activities — the body continued indeed to see, walk, speak and do its other business but as an empty automatic machine and nothing more. I did not become aware of any pure “I” — nor even of any self, impersonal or other, — there was only an awareness of That as the sole Reality, all else being quite unsubstantial, void, non-real. As to what realised that Reality, it was a nameless consciousness which was not other than That;² one could perhaps say this, though hardly even so much as this, since there was no mental concept of it, but no more. Neither was I aware of any lower soul or outer self called by such and such a personal name that was performing this feat of arriving at the consciousness of Nirvana. Well then, what becomes of your pure “I” and lower “I” in all that? Consciousness (not this or that part of consciousness or an “I” of any kind) suddenly emptied itself of all inner contents and remained aware only of unreal surroundings and of Something

² Mark that I did not think these things, there were no thoughts or concepts nor did they present themselves like that to any Me; it simply just was so or was self-apparently so.

real but ineffable. You may say that there must have been a consciousness aware of some perceiving existence, if not of a pure “I”, but, if so, it was something for which these names seem inadequate.

(5) I have said the overhead ascension is not indispensable for the usual spiritual purposes, — but it is indispensable for the purposes of this Yoga. For its aim is to become aware of and liberate and transform and unite all the being in the light of a Truth-consciousness which is above and cannot be reached if there is no entirely inward-going and no transcending and upward-going movement. Hence all the complexity of my psychological statements as a whole, not new in essence — for much of it occurs in the Upanishads and elsewhere, but new in its fullness of collective statement and its developments directed towards an integral Yoga. It is not necessary for anyone to accept it unless he concurs in the aim; for other aims it is unnecessary and may very well be excessive.

(6) But when one *has* made the inner exploration and the ascension, when one’s consciousness is located above, one cannot be expected to see things precisely as they are seen from below. The Jivatman is for me the Unborn who presides over the individual being and its developments, associated with it but above it and them and who by the very nature of his existence knows himself as universal and transcendent no less than individual and feels the Divine to be his origin, the truth of his being, the master of his nature, the very stuff of his existence. He is plunged in the Divine and one with the Eternal for ever, aware of his own expression and instrumental dynamism which is the Divine’s, dependent in love and delight, with adoration, on That with which yet through that love and delight he is one, capable of relation in oneness, harmonic in this many-sidedness without contradiction, because this is another consciousness and existence than that of the mind, even of the spiritualised mind; it is an intrinsic consciousness of the Infinite, infinite not only in essence but in capacity, which can be to its own self-awareness all things and yet for ever the same and one. This triune realisation, therefore, full of difficulties for the mind, is quite natural, easy,

indisputable to the supramental consciousness or, generally, to the consciousness of the upper hemisphere. It can be seen and felt as knowledge in all the spiritual planes, but the completely indivisible knowledge, the full dynamics of it can only be realised through the supramental consciousness itself on its own plane or by its descent here.

(7) The description of a pure “I” is quite insufficient to describe the realisation of the Jivatman — it is rather describable as the true Person or Divine Individual, though that too is not adequate. The word “I” always comes with an undersuggestion of ego, of separativeness; but there is no separativeness in this self-vision, for the individual here is a spiritual living centre of action for the One and feels no separation from all that is the One.

(8) The Jivatman has its representative power in the individual nature here; this power is the Purusha upholding the Prakriti — centrally in the psychic, more instrumentally in the mind, vital and physical being and nature. It is therefore possible to regard these or any of them as if they were the Jiva here. All the same I am obliged to make a distinction not only for clear thinking but because of the necessity of experience and integral dynamic self-knowledge without which it is difficult to carry through this Yoga. It is not indispensable to formulate mentally to oneself all this, one can have the experience and, if one sees clearly with an inner perception, it is sufficient for progress towards the goal. Nevertheless if the mind is clarified without falling into mental rigidity and error, things are easier for the sadhak of the Yoga. But plasticity must be preserved, for loss of plasticity is the danger of a systematic intellectual formulation; one must look into the thing itself and not get tied up in the idea. Nothing of all this can be really grasped except by the actual spiritual experience.

Part Two

The Parts of the Being and the Planes of Consciousness

Section One

The Organisation of the Being

Chapter One

The Parts of the Being

Men Do Not Know Themselves

Men do not know themselves and have not learned to distinguish the different parts of their being; for these are usually lumped together by them as mind, because it is through a mentalised perception and understanding that they know or feel them; therefore they do not understand their own states and actions, or, if at all, then only on the surface. It is part of the foundation of Yoga to become conscious of the great complexity of our nature, see the different forces that move it and get over it a control of directing knowledge. We are composed of many parts each of which contributes something to the total movement of our consciousness, our thought, will, sensation, feeling, action, but we do not see the origination or the course of these impulses; we are aware only of their confused pell-mell results on the surface upon which we can at best impose nothing better than a precarious shifting order.

The remedy can only come from the parts of the being that are already turned towards the Light. To call in the light of the Divine Consciousness from above, to bring the psychic being to the front and kindle a flame of aspiration which will awaken spiritually the outer mind and set on fire the vital being, is the way out.

*

What you see and know at present is not the whole of what exists. You do not see your mind and you know only a little part of it — yet your mind exists and is part of your being. There are other parts of your being which you don't know at all — the subconscious for instance. Your sexual impulse or feeling comes out of this subconscious and yet you don't know how or from where it comes in spite of your own will — yet that too is part of

your being. But it is possible to know and control. Only a man must give up the pride of his ignorance and have faith in what he does not yet know — then it is possible for him to have the experience.

Many Parts, Many Personalities

The being is made up of many parts. One part may know, the other may not care for the knowledge or act according to it. The whole being has to be made one in the light so that all parts may act harmoniously according to the Truth.

*

The consciousness has in it many parts and many movements and in different conditions and different activities it changes position and arranges its activities in a different way so as to suit what it is doing — but most people are not aware of this because they live only on the surface and do not look into themselves. By sadhana you have become conscious and so you notice these differences.

*

Everybody is an amalgamation not of two but of many personalities. It is a part of the Yogic perfection in this Yoga to accord and transmute them so as to “integrate” the personality.

*

The “tragi-ridiculous” inconsistency you speak of comes from the fact that man is not made up of one piece but of many pieces and each part of him has a personality of its own. That is a thing which people yet have not sufficiently realised — the psychologists have begun to glimpse it, but recognise only when there is a marked case of double or multiple personality. But all men are like that, in reality. The aim should be in Yoga to develop (if one has it not already) a strong central being and harmonise under it all the rest, changing what has to be changed. If this central being is the psychic, there is no great difficulty. If it is the mental being,

manomayah puruṣaḥ prāṇa-śarīra-netā, then it is more difficult — unless the mental being can learn to be always in contact with and aided by the greater Will and Power of the Divine.

*

Each part of the being has its own nature or even different natures contained in the same part.

*

Each part [*of the being*] has to be kept clear from the other and do its own work and each has to get the truth in it from the psychic or above. The Truth descending from above will more and more harmonise their action, though the perfect harmony can come only when there is the supramental fulfilment.

Chapter Two

Classification of the Parts of the Being

Different Categories in Different Systems

1. The soul and the psychic being are practically the same, except that even in things which have not developed a psychic being, there is still a spark of the Divine which can be called the soul. The psychic being is called in Sanskrit the Purusha in the heart or the Chaitya Purusha. (The psychic being is the soul developing in the evolution.)

2. The distinction between Purusha and Prakriti is according to the Sankhya System — the Purusha is the silent witness consciousness which observes the actions of Prakriti — Prakriti is the force of Nature which one feels as doing all the actions, when one gets rid of the sense of the ego as doer. Then there is the realisation of these two entities. This is quite different from the psychic being. It is felt in the mind, vital, physical — most easily in the mind where the mental being (Purusha) is seated and controls the others (*manomayah puruṣaḥ prāṇa-śarīra-netā*).

3. Prajna, Taijasa etc. are a different classification and have to do, not with the different parts of the being, but with three different states (waking, dream, sleep — gross, subtle, causal).

I think one ought not to try to relate these different things to each other — as that may lead to confusion. They belong to different categories — and to a different order of experiences.

The Concentric and Vertical Systems

I do not think exact correlations can always be traced between one system of spiritual and occult knowledge and another. All deal with the same material, but there are differences of standpoint, differences of view-range, a divergence in the mental idea

of what is seen and experienced, disparate pragmatic purposes and therefore a difference in the paths surveyed, cut out or followed; the systems vary, each constructs its own schema and technique.

In the ancient Indian system there is only one triune supernal, Sachchidananda. Or if you speak of the upper hemisphere as the supernal, there are three, Sat plane, Chit plane and Ananda plane. The Supermind could be added as a fourth, as it draws upon the other three and belongs to the upper hemisphere. The Indian systems did not distinguish between two quite different powers and levels of consciousness, one which we can call Overmind and the other the true Supermind or Divine Gnosis. That is the reason why they got confused about Maya (Overmind-Force or Vidya-Avidya) and took it for the supreme creative power. In so stopping short at what was still a half-light they lost the secret of transformation — even though the Vaishnava and Tantra Yogas groped to find it again and were sometimes on the verge of success. For the rest, this, I think, has been the stumbling-block of all attempts at the discovery of the dynamic divine Truth; I know of none that has not imagined, as soon as it felt the Overmind lustres descending, that this was the true illumination, the gnosis, — with the result that they either stopped short there and could get no farther, or else concluded that this too was only Maya or Lila and that the one thing to do was to get beyond it into some immovable and inactive Silence of the Supreme.

Perhaps, what may be meant by supernals [*in a text submitted by the correspondent*] is rather the three *fundamentals* of the present manifestation. In the Indian system, these are Ishwara, Shakti and Jiva, or else Sachchidananda, Maya and Jiva. But in our system which seeks to go beyond the present manifestation, these could very well be taken for granted and, looked at from the point of view of the planes of consciousness, the three highest — Ananda (with Sat and Chit resting upon it), Supermind and Overmind — might be called the three Supernals. Overmind stands at the top of the lower hemisphere, and you have to pass through and beyond Overmind if you would reach

Supermind, while still above and beyond Supermind are the worlds of Sachchidananda.

You speak of the gulf below the Overmind. But is there a gulf — or any other gulf than human unconsciousness? In all the series of the planes or grades of consciousness there is nowhere any real gulf, always there are connecting gradations and one can ascend from step to step. Between the Overmind and the human mind there are a number of more and more luminous gradations; but, as these are superconscious to human mind (except one or two of the lowest of which it gets some direct touches), it is apt to regard them as a superior Inconscience. So one of the Upanishads speaks of the Ishwara consciousness as *susupta*, deep Sleep, because it is only in Samadhi that man usually enters into it, so long as he does not try to turn his waking consciousness into a higher state.

There are in fact two systems simultaneously active in the organisation of the being and its parts; — one is concentric, a series of rings or sheaths with the psychic at the centre; another is vertical, an ascension and descent, like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes with the Supermind-Overmind as the crucial nodus of the transition beyond the human into the Divine. For this transition, if it is to be at the same time a transformation, there is only one way, one path. First, there must be a conversion inwards, a going within to find the inmost psychic being and bring it out to the front, disclosing at the same time the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical parts of the nature. Next, there must be an ascension, a series of conversions upwards and a turning down to convert the lower parts. When one has made the inward conversion, one psychicises the whole lower nature so as to make it ready for the divine change. Going upwards, one passes beyond the human mind and at each stage of the ascent there is a conversion into a new consciousness and an infusion of this new consciousness into the whole of the nature. Thus rising beyond intellect through illuminated higher mind to the intuitive consciousness, we begin to look at everything not from the intellect range or through intellect as an instrument, but from a greater intuitive height and through an intuitivised

will, feeling, emotion, sensation and physical contact. So, proceeding from intuition to a greater overmind height, there is a new conversion and we look at and experience everything from the overmind consciousness and through a mind, heart, vital and body surcharged with the overmind thought, sight, will, feeling, sensation, play of force and contact. But the last conversion is the supramental, for once there, once the nature is supramentalised, we are beyond the Ignorance and conversion of consciousness is no longer needed, though a farther divine progression, even an infinite development is still possible.

*

The inner consciousness means the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical and behind them the psychic which is their inmost being. But the inner mind is not the higher mind; it is more in touch with the universal forces and more open to the higher consciousness and capable of an immensely deeper and larger range of action than the outer or surface mind — but it is of the same essential nature. The higher consciousness is that above the ordinary mind and different from it in its workings; it ranges from higher mind through illumined mind, intuition and overmind up to the border line of the supramental.

If the psychic were liberated, free to act in its own way, there would not be all this stumbling in the Ignorance. But the psychic is covered up by the ignorant mind, vital and physical and compelled to act through them according to the law of the Ignorance. If it is liberated from this covering, then it can act according to its own nature with a free aspiration, a direct contact with the higher consciousness and a power to change the ignorant nature.

*

Higher Mind is one of the planes of the spiritual mind, the first and lowest of them; it is above the normal mental level. Inner mind is that which lies behind the surface mind (our ordinary mentality) and can only be directly experienced (apart from its vrittis in the surface mind such as philosophy, poetry, idealism

etc.) by sadhana, by breaking down the habit of being on the surface and by going deeper within.

Larger mind is a general term to cover the realms of mind which become our field whether by going within or widening into the cosmic consciousness.

The true mental being is not the same as the inner mental — true mental, true vital, true physical being means the Purusha of that level freed from the error and ignorant thought and will of the lower Prakriti and directly open to the knowledge and guidance from above.

Higher vital usually refers to the vital mind and emotive being as opposed to the middle vital which has its seat in the navel and is dynamic, sensational and passionate and the lower which is made up of the smaller movements of human life-desire and life-reactions.

Section Two

The Concentric System: Outer to Inner

Chapter One

The Outer Being and the Inner Being

The Outer and the Inner Being and Consciousness

There are always two different consciousnesses in the human being, one outward in which he ordinarily lives, the other inward and concealed of which he knows nothing. When one does sadhana, the inner consciousness begins to open and one is able to go inside and have all kinds of experiences there. As the sadhana progresses, one begins to live more and more in this inner being and the outer becomes more and more superficial. At first the inner consciousness seems to be the dream and the outer the waking reality. Afterwards the inner consciousness becomes the reality and the outer is felt by many as a dream or delusion, or else as something superficial and external. The inner consciousness begins to be a place of deep peace, light, happiness, love, closeness to the Divine or the presence of the Divine, the Mother. One is then aware of two consciousnesses, this inner one and the outer which has to be changed into its counterpart and instrument—that also must become full of peace, light, union with the Divine. At present you are moving between the two and in this period all the feelings you have are quite natural. You need not be at all anxious about that, but wait for the full development of the inner consciousness in which you will be able to live.

*

There is always a double nature in human beings, the inner (psychic and spiritual) which is in touch with the Divine; the outer, mental, vital and physical, which has been brought up in the Ignorance and is full of defects, imperfections and impurities. It is for this reason that in sadhana things cannot be changed in a

moment. The inner experience grows and extends and fills more and more of the nature, but till all is filled, the imperfections remain somewhere.

*

It is a usual experience — to live within in one consciousness while the external being (mind, life, body) goes on of itself under the impulsion of the cosmic Force, doing quietly whatever is necessary to do. This is part of the Yogic consciousness and to have it means a very real and considerable advance on the path of Yoga.

*

You have been accustomed to feel your outer consciousness as if it were yourself and so, when you are in your inner realisation, you feel as if you were not in this old accustomed self. As you grow in the sadhana, you must learn to live in this inner being and to feel the outer as something a little outside and this inner being as your real self.

*

The inner parts in everybody remain vulgar or become high according as they are turned to the outward forces of the Ignorance or towards the higher forces from above and the inner impulsion of the psychic. All forces can play there. It is the outer being that is fixed in a certain character, certain tendencies, certain movements.

*

The outer consciousness is shut up in the body limitation and in the little bit of personal mind and sense dependent on the body — it sees only the outward, sees only things. But the inner consciousness can see behind the thing, it is aware of the play of forces, personal or universal — for it is in conscious touch with the universal action.

*

The outer consciousness is that which usually expresses itself in ordinary life. It is the external mental, vital, physical. It is not connected very much with the inner being except in a few — until one connects them together in the course of the sadhana.

*

The exterior being is the physical which is connected in an ignorant way with the physical universe. It is this physical being which has developed an external mind and vital. The inner mind and vital are on the contrary in direct contact with the universal mental and vital and their forces; the inner subtle physical can also be in direct touch with the cosmic forces of the physical universe. But the exterior being is not in direct touch with the universal or cosmic — only through the outer mind and senses.

*

It is the outer nature that is obscure and when it is at ease, feels no necessity of remembering the Mother — when the difficulty comes, then it feels the necessity and remembers. But the inner being is not like that.

*

The inner being is not usually unquiet but it can be quiet or unquiet like the outer.

The Inner, the Outer and the Process of Yoga

It is only by virtue of the inner consciousness that the outer can awaken to the Divine Influence at all — it receives the inner urge even when it is not aware whence it comes.

*

They [*the inner mind and vital*] exercise an influence and send out their powers or suggestions which the outer sometimes carries out as best it can, sometimes does not follow. How much they work on the outer depends on how far the individual has an inner life. E.g. the poet, musician, artist, thinker, live much from

within — men of genius and those who try to live according to an ideal also. But there are plenty of people who have very little inner life and are governed entirely by the forces of Nature.

*

As one gathers experience from life to life, mental or vital, the inner mind and vital also develop according to the use made of our experiences and the extent to which they are utilised for the growth of the being.

*

You are mistaken in thinking that your external being alone is like that. Hardly anybody has the external being of a Yogi — it is the inner being that has the Yogic turn — the external has to be converted and transformed.

*

If the inner being does not manifest or act, the outer being will never get transformed.

*

If the inner being is safe, then there is no longer any struggle or overpowering [*of the outer being*] by inertia or depression or other fundamental difficulties. The rest can be done progressively and quietly, including the coming down of the Force. The outer being becomes merely a machinery or an instrumentation to be set right. It is not so easy to be entirely *mukta* in the inner being.

*

When the inner being once thoroughly establishes its separateness, even oceans of inertia cannot prevent it from keeping it. It is the first thing to be done in order to have a secure basis in the Yoga, to establish thoroughly this separateness. It comes most usually when the peace is thoroughly fixed in all inner parts, that the separateness also becomes fixed and permanent.

The Inner Being

The inner being is the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical with the psychic behind them. The [*term*] higher being is used to denote the conscious self on planes higher than the ordinary human consciousness.

*

Do you not know that the inner being means the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical with the psychic behind as the inmost? How can there be one centre for all that?

*

The inner being cannot be “located” above, it can only join with the above, penetrate it and be penetrated by it. If it were located above, then there would be no inner being.

*

The inner being has its own time which is sometimes slower, sometimes faster than the physical.

The Inner Being, the Antaratma and the Atman

The word Antaratma is very vaguely used like the word soul in English — so used, it covers all the inner being, inner mind, inner vital, inner physical even, as well as the inmost being, the psychic.

*

Our inner being is in touch with the universal mind, life, matter, a part of all that, but by that very fact it cannot be in possession of liberation and peace. You are thinking probably of the Atman and confusing it with the inner being.

The Inner Being and the Psychic Being

I did not mean by the inner being the psychic or inmost being. It is the psychic being that feels love, bhakti and union with the

Mother. I was speaking of the inner mental, inner vital, inner physical; in order to reach the hidden seat of the psychic one has first to pass through these things. When one leaves the outer consciousness and goes inside, it is here that one enters — some or most entering into the inner vital first, others into the inner mental or inner physical; the emotional vital is the most direct road, for the seat of the psychic is just behind the emotional in the heart centre. It is absolutely necessary for our purpose that one should become conscious in these inner regions, for if they are not awake, then the psychic being has no proper and sufficient instrumentation for its activities; it has then only the outer mind, outer vital and body for its means and these are too small and narrow and obscure. You as yet have been able only to enter the outskirts of the inner vital and are still insufficiently conscious there. By becoming more conscious there and going deeper one can reach the psychic — the safe refuge, *nirāpad sthāna*, of which you speak, and you will not be disturbed by the confused visions and experiences of the inner vital outskirts.

*

The psychic stands behind the inner mind, inner vital and inner physical and supports them all — they are the inner, this the inmost being.

*

I do not know what you mean by its [*the inner being's*] being “around” the psychic. It is obviously nearer to the psychic than the outer mind, vital or physical, but that does not ensure its being open to the psychic only and not to other universal forces.

*

The psychic can have peace behind it — but the inner mind, vital and physical are not necessarily silent — they are full of movements. It is the higher consciousness that has a basis of peace.

*

The psychic being is described in the Upanishads as no bigger than the size of one's thumb! That of course is a symbolic image. For usually when one sees anybody's psychic being in a form, it is bigger than that. As for the inner being, one feels it big because the true mental or the true vital or even the true physical being is much wider in consciousness than the external consciousness which is limited by the body. If the external parts seem to occupy the whole consciousness, it is when one comes down into the physical and feels all the activities of Nature playing in it—even the mental and vital movements are then felt through the physical and not as things of a separate plane. But when one lives in the inner being then one is aware of a consciousness which begins to spread into the universal and the external is only a surface movement thrown up by the universal forces.

The Outer Being and Consciousness

The outer being is a means of expression only, not one's self. One must not identify with it, for what it expresses is a personality formed by the old ignorant Nature. If not identified, one can change it so as to express the true inner personality of the Light.

*

They [*the outer mind, vital and body*] are small, but not unimportant in spite of their apparent insignificance—because they are a necessary passage of transmission between the soul and the outer world.

*

You take the outer waking consciousness as if it were the real person or being and conclude that if it is not this but something else that has the realisation or abides in the realisation, then no one has it—for there is no one here except this waking consciousness. That is the very error by which the ignorance lasts and cannot be got rid of. The very first step in getting out of the ignorance is to accept the fact that this outer consciousness is not one's soul, not oneself, not the real person, but only a temporary

formation on the surface for the purposes of the surface play. The soul, the person is within, not on the surface — the outer personality is the person only in the first sense of the Latin word *persona* which meant originally a mask.

Chapter Two

The True Being and the True Consciousness

The True Being

The true being may be realised in one or both of two aspects — the Self or Atman and the soul or *antarātman*, psychic being or *caitya puruṣa*. The difference is that one is felt as universal, the other as individual supporting the mind, life and body. When one first realises the Atman one feels it separate from all things, existing in itself and detached, and it is to this realisation that the image of the dry coconut fruit may apply. When one realises the psychic being, it is not like that; for this brings the sense of union with the Divine and dependence upon it and sole consecration to the Divine alone and the power to change the nature and discover the true mental, the true vital, the true physical being in oneself. Both realisations are necessary for this Yoga.

The “I” or the little ego is constituted by Nature and is at once a mental, vital and physical formation meant to aid in centralising and individualising the outer consciousness and action. When the true being is discovered, the utility of the ego is over and this formation has to disappear — the true being is felt in its place.

*

The psychic is the true being here — the ego is simply a mental, vital, physical formation of the mobile consciousness in Nature which is wrongly taken for our true being so long as the psychic is veiled and the consciousness is in the Ignorance.

*

As to the change of nature, the first step is to become conscious

and separate from the old surface nature. For this rajasic vital nature is a surface creation of Prakriti, it is not the true being; however persistent it seems, it is only a temporary combination of vital movements. Behind is the true mental and vital being supported by the psychic — this true being is calm, wide, peaceful. By drawing back and becoming separate one creates the possibility of living in the peace of this inner Purusha no longer identified with the surface Prakriti. Afterwards it will be much easier to change, by the force of the psychic perception and the Peace and Power and Light from above, the surface being.

*

The outward disturbances cannot touch the true being. If one is in the true being, they are not felt as belonging to oneself, but as outside or surface movements which leave one unmoved and unidentified with them.

*

The true inner being — the true mental, the true vital, the true physical represent each on its plane and answer to the central being, but the whole of the nature and especially the outer nature does not nor the ordinary mental, vital or physical personality. The psychic being is the central being for the purposes of the evolution — it grows and develops; but there is a central being above of which the mind is not aware which presides unseen over the existence and of which the psychic being is the representative in the manifested nature. It is what is called the Jivatman.

*

The true being mental, vital or subtle physical has always the greater qualities of its plane — it is the Purusha and like the psychic, though in another way, the projection of the Divine, therefore in connection with the Higher Consciousness and reflects something of it, though it is not altogether that — it is also in tune with the cosmic Truth.

The True Consciousness

The condition you describe¹ is the true consciousness, psychic and spiritual, which will become the base of the sadhana. If it is only for a brief time that it comes, it is always so at the beginning of its coming, but afterwards it fixes and becomes a pervading basis. It is a sign of the psychic opening and when the psychic fully opens and inspires the mind and heart, the love you wish to have will undoubtedly be there. Aspire and persevere and all will come with the growing consciousness.

*

The consciousness that is aware of the Divine and the Truth and does not look at things from the ego [*is the true consciousness*] — it is wide and calm and strong and aspires to union and surrender — it is many things besides, but this is the essential.

*

It [*an experience reported by the correspondent*] is the true Yogic consciousness in which one feels the oneness and lives in it, not touched by the outer being and its inferior movements, but looking on them with a smile at their ignorance and smallness. It will become much more possible to deal with these outer things if that separateness is maintained always.

*

Living in the true consciousness is living in a consciousness in which one is spiritually in union with the Divine in one way or another. But it does not follow that by so living one will have the complete, exact and infallible truth about all ideas, all things and all persons.

*

It is the true consciousness growing within that gives the power [*to be free from the vital forces*]. As it grows, these vital forces

¹ *The correspondent's letter is not available. — Ed.*

get more and more externalised and foreign to the nature. It is only by the power of past habit that they rise.

*

This [*vast consciousness above the head*] was the true consciousness that must establish itself, but before it can establish itself it must come down below the head and take full possession of the navel and two lower centres and pervade the body down to the feet and even below. Once established, it holds the ego-forces outside or, even if they come, whether in rajasic or tamasic obstructive form, keeps the inner being totally detached and unmoved all the time by their environmental presence.

*

The consciousness of the mind, life, body in each person is ordinarily shut up in itself; it is narrow, not wide, sees itself as the centre of everything, judges all things according to its own impressions — it does not know anything as it really is. But when by Yoga one begins to open to the true consciousness, then this barrier begins to break down. One feels the mind grow wider, even in the end the physical consciousness grows wider and wider, until you feel all things in yourself, yourself one with all things. You then become one with the Mother's universal Consciousness. That is why you feel the mind becoming wide. But also there is much above the human mind and it is this which you feel like a world above your head. All these are the ordinary experiences of our Yoga. It is only a beginning. But in order that it may go on developing, you must become more and more quiet, more and more able to hold whatever comes without getting too eager and excited. Peace and calmness are the first thing, and with it wideness — in the peace you can bear whatever love or Ananda comes, whatever strength comes or whatever knowledge.

*

To feel quietude, peace, the force working *is* to be conscious; the unconscious condition comes only by confusion and admitting

wrong suggestions and restlessness; if you reject these things, the true consciousness will grow in you. Naturally, the consciousness you have now is nothing to what you will have hereafter when it has grown; but it has to begin in this way and increase by quietude. You cannot have the full complete consciousness now and it is no use repining and doubting because it is not complete or fully established as yet; that fretting only delays and hinders. Open yourself; remain quiet; let it grow.

*

There is no insincerity in asking me again and again for the right condition — the feeling of connection and the true consciousness and the psychic state. It is most important that you should have them and become able to keep them. It is indeed the one thing needful for you.

Chapter Three

The Psychic Being

The Psychic and the Divine

They [*the psychic being and the Divine Presence in the heart*] are quite different things. The psychic being is one's own individual soul-being. It is not the Divine, though it has come from the Divine and develops towards the Divine.

*

It [*the psychic*] is constantly in contact with the immanent Divine — the Divine secret in the individual.

*

It is the psychic that is in direct relation with the transcendent Divine and leads the nature upwards towards the Supreme.

*

The Divine is always in the inner heart and does not leave it.

*

The psychic is not, by definition,¹ that part [*of the being*] which is in direct touch with the supramental plane, — although, once

¹ Someone had asked what the psychic being was, whether it could be defined as that part of the being which is always in direct touch with the supramental. I replied that it could not be so defined. For the psychic being in animals or in most human beings is not in direct touch with the supramental — therefore it cannot be so described, *by definition*.

But once the connection between the supramental and the human consciousness is made, it is the psychic being that gives *the readiest response* — more ready than the mind, the vital or the physical. It may be added that it is also a purer response; the mind, vital and physical can allow other things to mix with their reception of the supramental influence and spoil its truth. The psychic is pure in its response and allows no such mixture.

The supramental change can take place only if the psychic is awake and is made the chief support of the descending supramental power.

the connection with the supramental is made, it gives to it the readiest response. The psychic part of us is something that comes direct from the Divine and is in touch with the Divine. In its origin it is the nucleus pregnant with divine possibilities that supports this lower triple manifestation of mind, life and body. There is this divine element in all living beings, but it stands hidden behind the ordinary consciousness, is not at first developed and, even when developed, is not always or often in the front; it expresses itself, so far as the imperfection of the instruments allows, by their means and under their limitations. It grows in the consciousness by Godward experience, gaining strength every time there is a higher movement in us, and, finally, by the accumulation of these deeper and higher movements there is developed a psychic individuality, — that which we call usually the psychic being. It is always this psychic being that is the real, though often the secret cause of man's turning to the spiritual life and his greatest help in it. It is therefore that which we have to bring from behind to the front in the Yoga.

The word "soul", as also the word "psychic", is used very vaguely and in many different senses in the English language. More often than not in ordinary parlance no clear distinction is made between mind and soul and often there is an even more serious confusion, for the vital being of desire — the false soul or desire-soul — is intended by the words "soul" and "psychic" and not the true soul, the psychic being. The psychic being is quite different from the mind or vital; it stands behind them where they meet in the heart. Its central place is there, but behind the heart rather than in the heart; for what men call usually the heart is the seat of emotion, and human emotions are mental-vital impulses, not ordinarily psychic in their nature. This mostly secret power behind, other than the mind and the life-force, is the true soul, the psychic being in us. The power of the psychic, however, can act upon the mind and vital and body, purifying thought and perception and emotion (which then becomes psychic feeling) and sensation and action and everything else in us and preparing them to be divine movements.

The psychic being may be described in Indian language as the Purusha in the heart or the *caitya puruṣa*;² but the inner or secret heart must be understood, *hṛdaye guhāyām*, not the outer vital-emotional centre. It is the true psychic entity (distinguished from the vital desire-mind) — the psyche — spoken of on the page of the *Arya* to which you make reference.

*

The psychic is the soul, the divine spark animating matter and life and mind and as it grows it takes form and expresses itself through these three touching them to beauty and fineness — it works even before humanity in the lower creation leading it up towards the human, in humanity it works more freely though still under a mass of ignorance and weakness and coarseness and hardness leading it up towards the Divine. In Yoga it becomes conscious of its aim and turns inward to the Divine. It sees behind and above it — that is the difference.

*

The psychic is the spark of the Divine involved here in the individual existence. It grows and evolves in the form of the psychic being — so obviously it cannot have already the powers of the Divine. Only its presence makes it possible for the individual to open to the Divine and grow towards the Divine Consciousness and when it acts it is always in the sense of the Light and the Truth and with the push towards the Divine.

² The chitta and the psychic part are not in the least the same. Chitta is a term in a quite different category, something from which are thrown up to be combined and set in action the main movements of our external consciousness, and to know it we need not go deep behind our surface or external nature. Category means here another class of psychological factors, *tattva-vibhāga*. The psychic belongs to one class or category — supermind, mind, life, psychic, physical — which covers both the inner and the outer nature. Chitta belongs to quite another class or category — buddhi, manas, chitta, prana etc. — which is the classification made by ordinary Indian psychology; it covers only the psychology of the external being. In this category it is the main functions of our external consciousness only that are coordinated and put in their place by the Indian thinkers; chitta is one of these main functions of the external consciousness and, therefore, to know it we need not go behind the external nature.

The Self or Spirit and the Psychic or Soul

The Spirit is the consciousness above mind, the Atman or self, which is always in oneness with the Divine — a spiritual consciousness is one which is always in unity or at least in contact with the Divine.

The psychic is a spark come from the Divine which is there in all things and as the individual evolves it grows in him and manifests as the psychic being, the soul seeking always for the Divine and the Truth and answering to the Divine and the Truth whenever and wherever it meets it.

*

All contact with the Divine through the essential substance of the consciousness is spiritual and it is that consciousness in the essential substance — what is called self — that is the spiritual consciousness. The soul or psychic being is a spark of the Divine that grows and evolves through successive lives and leads the rest towards the Divine. The spirit or self is the same always.

*

The self feels always its unity with the Divine and is always the same. The soul is a portion of the Divine that comes down into the evolution and evolves a psychic being more and more developed through experiences of successive lives until it is ready for the divine realisation here.

*

There is no distinction between the Self and the spirit. The psychic is the soul that develops in the evolution — the spirit is the Self that is not affected by the evolution, it is above it — only it is covered or concealed by the activity of mind, vital and body. The removal of this covering is the release of the spirit — and it is removed when there is a full and wide spiritual silence.

*

The soul in evolution is only a power for the evolution, it

contains everything in potentiality; but that can only be worked out by the psychic being. It is quite different from the condition of the self.

*

There is a difference between the psychic and the self. The self is the Atman above which is one in all, remains always wide, free, pure, untouched by the action of life in its ignorance. Its nature is peace, freedom, light, wideness, Ananda. The psychic (*antarātmā*) is the individual being which comes down into life and travels from birth to birth and feels the experiences and grows by them till it is able to join itself with the free Atman above.

*

The psychic being is concealed in the depths behind the heart-centre.

The Self has no separate place — it is everywhere. Your self and the self of all beings is the same.

*

Love, joy and happiness come from the psychic. The Self gives peace or a universal Ananda.

The Atman, the Jivatman and the Psychic

The Jiva is realised as the individual Self, Atman, the central being above the Nature, calm, untouched by the movements of Nature but supporting their evolution though not involved in it. Through this realisation silence, freedom, wideness, mastery, purity, a sense of universality in the individual as one centre of this divine universality become the normal experience. The psychic is realised as the Purusha behind the heart. It is not universalised like the Jivatman, but is the individual soul supporting from its place behind the heart-centre the mental, vital, physical, psychic evolution of the being in Nature. Its realisation brings Bhakti, self-giving, surrender, turning of all the movements Godward, discrimination and choice of all that belongs

to the Divine Truth, Good, Beauty, rejection of all that is false, evil, ugly, discordant, union through love and sympathy with all existence, openness to the Truth of the Self and the Divine.

*

The psychic is a spark of the Divine — but I do not know that it can be called a portion of the Jivatma — it is the same put forward in a different way.

*

The *bindu* of which you speak is not the psychic being, but the soul or spark of the Divine which supports each existence; the psychic being is usually seen in form as a Purusha. The psychic being is the soul or spark of the Divine developing a form of itself in the evolution which travels from life to life. The Jivatma and the soul are the same, but in two different statuses. The Jivatma is the Ansha of the Divine standing above the consciousness as the individual self and unchanged by the evolution — the soul is the same descended into the evolution and developing its consciousness from life to life until in the opening of knowledge the psychic being realises its oneness with the self above.

The ego is quite different — it is a creation of Prakriti and part of Prakriti, which centralises the thoughts, desires, passions etc. of the nature and is involved in them entirely. The ego is not a real and eternal existence, but only a formation of Nature. It has to disappear by the coming of knowledge and be replaced by the true psychic and spiritual self.

*

The psychic is the soul in evolution; the Atman is the self above the evolution.

*

There is always a part of the mind, of the vital, of the body which is or can be influenced by the psychic; they can be called the psychic-mental, the psychic-vital, the psychic-physical. According to the personality or the degree of evolution of each person,

this part can be small or large, weak or strong, covered up and inactive or prominent and in action. When it acts the movements of the mind, vital or physical accept the psychic motives or aims, partake of the nature of the psychic or follow its aims but with a modification in the manner which belongs to the mind, vital or physical. The psychic-vital seeks after the Divine, but it has a demand in its self-giving, desire, vital eagerness the psychic has not, for the psychic has instead pure self-giving, aspiration, intensity of psychic fire. The psychic-vital is subject to pain and suffering, which there is not in the psychic.

Atma is not the same as psychic — Atma is the self which is one in all, calm, wide, ever at peace, always free. The psychic being is the soul within that experiences life and develops with evolving mind and life and body. The psychic does not suffer like the vital or body, it has not pain or anguish or despair; but it has a psychic sorrow which is different from these things. It has a kind of quiet sweet sadness of yearning which it feels when things go against the Divine, when the obscurity and obstacles are too heavy, when the mind, vital and physical follow after other things, when evil and falsehood and darkness seem to be too strong for the Light. It does not despair, but feels that these things ought not to be and the psychic yearning for it to be otherwise becomes so intense that it is felt as if something akin to sadness.

As for the psychic not being in front, that cannot be brought about all at once; the other parts of the being must be prepared for the change and the veil between must become thinner and thinner. It is for that experiences come and there is the working on the inner mind and vital and physical as well as on the outer nature.

*

What do you mean by a personal vital? What people call personality is a formation. There is no unchangeable vital personality. There is a Presence called the Purusha, something projected by the Self or Atman, which supports on each plane the formation of the personalities on that plane, but the Purusha is not a

personality and it has no name or form. But it is best for you not to speculate too much about these subtle things at present; you have not sufficient experience to grasp correctly the complexity of the truth. The one thing you are concerned with is that you have a soul, a psychic being, which stands for your centre of existence, a part of the Divine. Become aware of that and put all your mental, vital and physical nature in relation to it, in order that they may become purified, harmonised, divinised, and the supramental being and nature may descend and be manifested in you — for until this is done, this conscious linking and relation with the psychic centre, there can be no supramental descent.

The Words “Soul” and “Psychic”

The European mind, for the most part, has never been able to go beyond the formula of soul + body — usually including mind in soul and everything except body in mind. Some occultists make a distinction between spirit, soul and body. At the same time there must be some vague feeling that soul and mind are not quite the same thing, for there is the phrase “This man has no soul”, or “he is a soul” meaning he has something in him beyond a mere mind and body. But all that is very vague. There is no clear distinction between mind and soul and none between mind and vital and often the vital is taken for the soul.

*

Psychic is ordinarily used in the sense of anything relating to the inner movements of the consciousness or anything phenomenal in the psychology; in this case I have made a special use of it, relating it to the Greek word *psyche* meaning soul; but ordinarily people make no distinction between the soul and the mental-vital consciousness; for them it is all the same.

*

“Psychic” in the sense in which it is used commonly by people has no definite meaning — it is applied to anything non-physical or supraphysical. In the language of our Yoga it refers always to

the inner soul. Therefore the use of the words “psychic significance” is incorrect here. One can say “occult significance” or “symbolic significance” or “inner significance”. “Psychic significance” we can say only of experiences belonging to the psychic as opposed to the mental, vital and physical planes.

The Psychic or Soul and Traditional Indian Systems

It appears the Maharshi at the time supposed that by the psychic being I meant the enlightened ego! But people do not understand what I mean by the psychic being, because the word psychic has been used in English to mean anything of the inner mental, inner vital or inner physical or anything abnormal or occult or even the more subtle movements of the outer being, all in a jumble — also occult phenomena are often called psychic. The distinction between these different parts of the being is unknown. Even in India the old knowledge of the Upanishads in which they are distinguished has been lost. The Jivatman, psychic being (*puruṣo antarātmā*), the *manomaya puruṣa*, the *prāṇamaya puruṣa* are all confused together.

*

The *antarātman* is the soul, the portion of the Divine that is at the inmost basis of the evolving individual and supports the mind and life and body which are the instrumental parts of nature through which it tries to grow from the material Inconscience towards the divine Light and Immortality which are its proper being. The limitations of its instruments impose upon it an acceptance of the lower movements and a compromise between soul and nature which retard this movement even while it gets its means of advance from that interchange. The psychic being is the soul-form or soul-personality developing through this evolution and passing from life to life till all is ready for the higher evolution beyond the Ignorance.

*

The psychic being is the Soul, the Purusha in the secret heart

supporting by its presence the action of the mind, life and body. The vital is the Pranamaya Purusha spoken of in the Taittiriya Upanishad—the being behind the Force of Life; in its outer form in the Ignorance it generates the desire soul which governs most men and which they mistake often for the real soul.

The Atma is the Self or Spirit that remains above, pure and stainless, unaffected by the stains of life, by desire and ego and ignorance. It is realised as the true being of the individual, but also more widely as the *same being* in all and as the Self of the cosmos; it has also a self-existence above the individual and cosmos and it is then called the Paramatma, the supreme Divine Being. This distinction has nothing to do with the distinction between the psychic and the vital; the vital being is not what is known as the Atma.

The vital as the desire-soul and desire-nature controls the consciousness to a large extent in most men because men are governed by desire. But even in the surface human nature the proper ruler of the consciousness is the mental being, the *manomayah puruṣaḥ prāṇa-sārīra-netā* of the Upanishad. The psychic influences the consciousness from behind, but one has to go out of the ordinary consciousness into the inmost being to find it and make it the ruler of the consciousness as it should be. To do that is one of the principal aims of the Yoga. The vital should be an instrument of the consciousness, not its ruler.

The vital being is not the I—the ego is mental, vital, physical. Ego implies the identification of our existence with outer self, the ignorance of our true self above and our psychic being within us.

In a certain sense the various Purushas or beings in us, psychic, mental, vital, physical, are projections of the Atma, but that gets its full truth only when we get into our inner being and know the inner truth of ourselves. On the surface in the Ignorance, it is the mental, vital, physical Prakriti that acts and the Purusha is disfigured, as it were, in the action of Prakriti. It is not our true mental being, our true vital being, our true physical being even that we are aware of; these remain behind,

veiled and silent. It is the mental, vital, physical ego that we take for our being until we get knowledge.

*

The psychic being in the old systems was spoken of as the Purusha in the heart (the secret heart — *hṛdaye guhāyām*) which corresponds very well to what we define as the psychic being behind the heart centre. It was also this that went out from the body at death and persisted — which again corresponds to our teaching that it is this which goes out and returns, linking new life to former life. Also we say that the psychic is the divine portion within us — so too the Purusha in the heart is described as Ishwara of the individual nature in some places.

The word soul is very vaguely used in English — as it often refers to the whole non-physical consciousness including even the vital with all its desires and passions. That is why the word psychic being has to be used so as to distinguish this divine portion from the instrumental parts of the nature.

*

I do not know what is exactly meant by this phrase.³ It is too vague and limited for a description of the psychic. Antahkarana usually means the mind and vital as opposed to the body — the body being the outer instrument and *manah-prāṇa* the inner instrument of the soul. By psychic I mean something different from a purified mind and vital. A purified mind and vital are the result of the action of the awakened and liberated psychic being but it is not itself the psychic.

Again it depends on what is meant by Ahambhava. But the psychic is not a “bhava”; it is a being, a Purusha. Ahambhava is a formation of Prakriti, it is not a being or a Purusha. Ahambhava can disappear and yet the Purusha will be there.

By liberated psychic being, I mean that it is no longer obliged to express itself under the conditions of the obscure and ignorant instruments, from behind a veil, but is able to come forward,

³ The correspondent's letter is not available to identify the phrase. — Ed.

control and change the action of mind and vital and body. Purified and perfected are not epithets that can properly be applied to the psychic — the psychic is always pure and has no positive imperfection. The thing that has to be perfected is its control over the instruments. If it is perhaps sometimes spoken of as purified or perfected, what must be meant is the psychic action in the mind, vital and physical instruments. A purified inner being does not mean a purified psychic, but a purified inner mental, vital and physical. The epithets I used for the psychic were “awakened and liberated”.

Spiritual individuality is rather a vague term and might be variously interpreted. I have written about the psychic being that the psychic is the soul or spark of the Divine Fire supporting the individual evolution on the earth and the psychic being is the soul-consciousness developing itself or rather its manifestation from life to life with the mind, vital and body as its instruments until all is ready for the union with the Divine. I don't know that I can add anything to that.

*

The mental being spoken of by the Upanishad is not part of the mental nervous physical composite — it is the *manomayah puruṣah prāṇa-sarīra-netā*, the mental being leader of the life and body. It could not be so described if it were part of the composite. Nor can the composite or part of it be the Puruṣa, — for the composite is composed of Prakriti. It is described as *manomaya* by the Upanishad because the psychic being is behind the veil and man being the mental being in the life and body lives in his mind and not in his psychic, so to him the *manomaya puruṣa* is the leader of the life and body, — of the psychic behind supporting the whole he is not aware or dimly aware in his best moments. The psychic is represented in man by the Prime Minister, the *manomaya*, itself being a mild constitutional king; it is the *manomaya* to whom Prakriti refers for assent to her actions. But still the statement of the Upanishad gives only the apparent truth of the matter, valid for man and the human stage only — for in the animal it would be rather the

prāṇamaya puruṣa that is the *netā*, leader of mind and body.

*

Purusha Prakriti is the Kshara Purusha — standing back from it is the Akshara Purusha.

Ego-sense and Purusha are two quite different things — ego-sense is a mechanism of Prakriti, Purusha is the conscious being.

The psychic being evolves, so it is not the immutable.

The psychic being is especially the soul of the individual evolving in the manifestation the individual Prakriti and taking part in the evolution. It is that spark of the Divine Fire that grows behind the mind, vital and physical as the psychic being until it is able to transform the Prakriti of Ignorance into a Prakriti of Knowledge. These things are not in the Gita, but we cannot limit our knowledge by the points in the Gita.

The Soul and the Psychic Being

A distinction⁴ has to be made between the soul in its essence and the psychic being. Behind each and all there is the soul which is the spark of the Divine — none could exist without that. But it is quite possible to have a vital and physical being supported by such a soul essence but without a clearly evolved psychic being behind it.

There is indeed an inner being composed of the inner mental, inner vital, inner physical, — but that is not the psychic being. The psychic is the inmost being of all and quite distinct from these. The word psychic is indeed used in English to indicate anything that is other or deeper than the external mind, life and body or it indicates sometimes anything occult or supraphysical; but that is a use which brings confusion and error and we have almost entirely to discard it.

⁴ *The original text of this letter was revised by Sri Aurobindo on two different occasions. As the two revised versions differ considerably at places, both of them are published here, one after the other. — Ed.*

The psychic being is veiled by the surface movements and expresses itself as best it can through the three outer instruments which are more governed by the outer forces than by the inner being or the psychic entity. But that does not mean that they are entirely isolated from the soul. The soul is in the body in the same way as the mind or vital — but the body is not this gross physical body only, but the subtle body also. When the gross body falls away, the vital and mental sheaths of the body still remain as the soul's vehicle till these too dissolve.

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

The “ghost” of a man is of course not his soul. It is either the man appearing in his vital body or it is a fragment of his vital structure that is seized on by some force or being of the vital world for its own purpose. For normally the vital being with its personality exists after the dissolution of the physical body for some time only; afterwards it passes away into the vital plane where it remains till the vital sheath dissolves. Next one passes in the mental sheath, to some mental world; but finally the soul leaves its mental sheath also and goes to its place of rest. If the mental is strongly developed, then the mental being can remain and so also can the strongly developed vital, provided they are organised by and centred around the true psychic being — they then share the immortality of the psychic. But ordinarily this does not happen; there is a dissolution of the mental and vital as well as the physical parts and the soul in rebirth assumes a

new mind, life and body and not, as is often supposed, a replica of its old nature-self. Such a repetition would be meaningless and useless and would defeat the purpose of rebirth which is a progression of the nature by experience, an evolutionary growth of the soul in nature towards its self-finding. At the same time the soul preserves the impression of what was essential in its past lives and personalities and the new birth and personality are a balance between this past and the soul's need for its future.⁵

*

A distinction has to be made between the soul in its essence and the psychic being. Behind each and all there is the soul which is the spark of the Divine — none could exist without that. But it is quite possible to have a vital and physical being without a clearly evolved psychic being behind it. Still, one cannot make general statements that no aboriginal has a soul or there is no display of soul anywhere.

The inner being is composed of the inner mental, inner vital, inner physical, — but that is not the psychic being. The psychic is the inmost being and quite distinct from these. The word psychic is indeed used in English to indicate anything that is other or deeper than the external mind, life and body, anything occult or supraphysical, but that is a use which brings confusion and error and we entirely discard it when we speak or write about Yoga. In ordinary parlance we may sometimes use the word psychic in the looser popular sense or in poetry, which is not bound to intellectual accuracy, we may speak of the soul sometimes in the ordinary and more external sense or in the sense of the true psyche.

The psychic being is veiled by the surface movements and expresses itself as best it can through these outer instruments which are more governed by the outer forces than by the inner influences of the psychic. But that does not mean that they are

⁵ There are cases in which there is a rapid rebirth of the exterior being with a continuation of the old personality and even the memory of its past life, but this is exceptional and happens usually when there is a frustration by premature death and a strong will in the vital to continue its unfinished experience.

entirely isolated from the soul. The soul is in the body in the same way as the mind or vital — but the body it occupies is not this gross physical frame only, but the subtle body also. When the gross sheath falls away, the vital and mental sheaths of the body still remain as the soul's vehicle till these too dissolve.

The soul of a plant or an animal is not altogether dormant — only its means of expression are less developed than those of a human being. There is much that is psychic in the plant, much that is psychic in the animal. The plant has only the vital-physical evolved in its form, so it cannot express itself; the animal has a vital mind and can, but its consciousness is limited and its experiences are limited, so the psychic essence has a less developed consciousness and experience than is present or at least possible in man. All the same, animals have a soul and can respond very readily to the psychic in man.

The ghost is of course not the soul. It is either the man appearing in his vital body or it is a fragment of his vital that is seized on by some vital force or being. The vital part of us normally exists after the dissolution of the body for some time and passes away into the vital plane where it remains till the vital sheath dissolves. Afterwards it passes, if it is mentally evolved, in the mental sheath to some mental world and finally the psychic leaves its mental sheath also and goes to its place of rest. If the mental is strongly developed, then the mental part of us can remain; so also can the vital, provided they are organised by and centred around the true psychic being — for they then share the immortality of the psychic. Otherwise the psychic draws mind and life into itself and enters into an internatal quiescence.

*

There is the divine spark from the beginning, the soul, in all things, but it takes a long time and a long evolution for it to arrive at a conscious expression and form of manifested being — what we call the psychic being.

*

The soul is described as a spark of the Divine Fire in life and

matter, that is an image. It has not been described as a spark of consciousness.

There is mental, vital, physical consciousness—different from the psychic. The psychic being and consciousness are not identical.

When the soul or “spark of the Divine Fire” begins to develop a psychic individuality, that psychic individuality is called the psychic being.

The soul or spark is there before the development of an organised vital and mind. The soul is something of the Divine that descends into the evolution as a divine Principle within it to support the evolution of the individual out of the Ignorance into the Light. It develops in the course of the evolution a psychic individual or soul individuality which grows from life to life, using the evolving mind, vital and body as its instruments. It is the soul that is immortal while the rest disintegrates; it passes from life to life carrying its experience in essence and the continuity of the evolution of the individual.

It is the whole consciousness, mental, vital, physical also, that has to rise and join the higher consciousness and, once the joining is made, the higher has to descend into them. The psychic is behind all that and supports it.

*

The soul is always pure, but the knowledge and force in it are involved and come out only as the psychic being evolves and grows stronger.

*

The psychic being is the soul evolving in the course of birth and rebirth and the soul is a portion of the Divine—but with the soul there is always the veiled Divine.

*

The psychic being is the developing soul consciousness manifested for the created being as it evolves. At first, the soul is something essential behind the veil, not developed in front. In

front there is only the body, life, mind. In the evolution the soul consciousness develops more and more in the created being until it is so developed that it can come entirely in front and govern mind, life and body.

*

The difference [*between one psychic being and another*] is one of evolution. The psychic being is more developed in some, but the soul-principle is the same in all.

*

The soul and the psychic are the same — only as there is a vital being supported by the vital and expressing itself through it, so there is a growing psychic being supported on the psychic and expressing itself through the soul-nature.

*

But, hang it all, the psychic is part of the human nature or of ordinary nature, — it has been there even before the human began.

The Form of the Psychic Being

Formed souls enter only into formed organisms — in the protoplasm etc. it is only the spark of the Divine that is there, not the formed soul.

*

As there is in us a mind which one does not see in form but is aware of and as there is at the same time a mental being which one can see in form, so there is a soul and a psychic being. The soul is the same always, the psychic being is what it develops in the evolution.

*

The soul is not limited by any form, but the psychic being puts out a form for its expression, just as the mental, vital and subtle physical Purushas do — that is to say, one can see or another person can see one's psychic being in such and such a form. But

this seeing is of two kinds — there is the standing characteristic form taken by this being in this life and there are symbolic forms, such as when one sees the psychic as a newborn child in the lap of the Mother. If the sadhak in question really saw his psychic in the form of a woman it can only have been a constructed appearance expressing some quality or attitude of the psychic.

*

Yes, the psychic being has a form. But that does not appear from the photo [*of a person*]; for the psychic has not always or usually a form closely resembling that of the physical body, it is sometimes even quite different. When looking at the photo [*with Yogic vision*] what is seen is not a form, but something of the consciousness that either is expressed in the body or comes through somehow; one perceives or feels it there through the photo.

The Psychic Being and the Intuitive Consciousness

No, the intuitive self is quite different [*from the psychic*], or rather the intuitive consciousness — that is somewhere above the mind. The psychic stands behind the being — a simple and sincere devotion to the Divine, single-hearted, an immediate sense of what is right and helps towards the Truth and the Divine, an instinctive withdrawal from all that is the opposite are its most visible characteristics.

The Psychic Being and the External Being

What you experience is the first condition of the Yogic consciousness and self-knowledge. The ordinary mind knows itself only as an ego with all the movements of the nature in a jumble and, identifying itself with these movements, thinks “I am doing this, feeling that, thinking, in joy or in sorrow etc.” The first beginning of real self-knowledge is when you feel yourself separate from the nature in you and its movements and then you see that there are many parts of your being, many personalities each acting on its own behalf and in its own way. The two different

beings you feel are — one, the psychic being which draws you towards the Mother, the other the external being mostly vital which draws you outward and downwards towards the play of the lower nature. There is also in you behind the mind the being who observes, the witness Purusha, who can stand detached from the play of the nature, observing it and able to choose. It has to put itself always on the side of the psychic being and assent to and support its movements and to reject the downward and outward movement of the lower nature, which has to be subjected to the psychic and changed by its influence.

The Psychic or Soul and the Lower Nature

All belongs to Nature — the soul itself acts under the conditions and by the agency of Nature.

*

The moral of the condition you describe is not that Yoga should not be done but that you have to go on steadily healing the rift between the two parts of the being. The division is very usual, almost universal in human nature, and the following of the lower impulse in spite of the contrary will in the higher parts happens to almost everybody. It is the phenomenon noted by Arjuna in his question to Krishna, “Why does one do evil, even though one wishes not to do it, as if compelled to it by force?”, and expressed sententiously by Ovid, “*video meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor*”.⁶ By constant effort and aspiration one can arrive at a turning point when the psychic asserts itself and what seems a very slight psychological change or reversal alters the whole balance of the nature.

*

Every soul is not awake and active; nor is every soul turned directly to the Divine before practising Yoga. For a long time

⁶ “I see the better and approve of it, I follow the worse.” *Metamorphoses* 7.20 — Ed.

it seeks the Divine through men and things much more than directly.

*

In the ordinary consciousness in which the mind etc. are *not* awakened, the psychic acts as well as it can through them, but according to the laws of the Ignorance.

*

These things, love, compassion, kindness, bhakti, Ananda are the nature of the psychic being, because the psychic being is formed from the Divine Consciousness, it is the divine part within you. But the lower parts are not yet accustomed to obey or value the influence and control of the psychic for in men the vital and physical are accustomed to act for themselves and do not care for what the soul wants. When they do care and obey the psychic, that is their conversion — they begin to put on themselves the psychic or divine nature.

*

The psychic is the support of the individual evolution; it is connected with the universal both by direct contact and through the mind, vital and body.

*

It may be said of the psychic that it is that [*the luminous part of our being*], because the psychic is in touch with the Divine and a projection of the Divine into the lower nature. But the inner mind, vital and physical are a part of the universal and open to the dualities — only they are wider than the external mind, life and body and can receive more largely and easily the divine influence.

*

The psychic is deep within in the inner heart-centre behind the emotional being. From there it stretches upward to form the psychic mind and below to form the psychic vital and psychic physical, but usually one is aware of these only after the

mind, vital and physical are subjected and put under the psychic influence.

The Psychic Being or Soul and the Vital or Life

The soul and the life are two quite different powers. The soul is a spark of the Divine Spirit which supports the individual nature; mind, life, body are the instruments for the manifestation of the nature. In most men the soul is hidden and covered over by the action of the external nature; they mistake the vital being for the soul, because it is the vital which animates and moves the body. But this vital being is a thing made up of desires and executive forces good and bad; it is the desire-soul, not the true thing. It is when the true soul (psyche) comes forward and begins first to influence and then govern the actions of the instrumental nature that man begins to overcome vital desire and grow towards a greater divine nature.

*

We are concerned with the growth of the soul out of the Ignorance, not its plunge into it. The lower nature is the nature of the Ignorance, what we seek is to grow into the nature of the Truth. How do you make out that when the soul has looked towards the Truth and is moving towards it, a pull-back by the vital and the ego towards the Ignorance is a glorious action of the soul and not a revolt of the lower nature? I suppose you are floundering about in the confusion of the idea that the “desire-soul” in the vital is the true psyche of man. If you like — but that is no part of my explanation of things; I make a clear distinction between the two, so I refuse to sanctify the revolt of the lower nature by calling it the sanction of the soul. If it is the soul that wants to fail, why is there any struggle or sorrow over the business? It would be a perfectly smooth affair.

*

The psychic being is not the fulfiller of desires — it is the spark of the Divine in all things manifested here that grows into the

psychic being and supports the evolution. It is that which survives the dissolution of the vital and physical sheaths and returns to birth again.

*

The two feelings you have are that of two different personalities or parts in the being, one which has the feeling of service is in the vital, the other which has the feeling of the child and of the self-giving is psychic. In the progress of the sadhana these different parts or personalities get developed or transformed and harmonised with each other — all becoming parts of the ultimate perfection of the being in the Mother's consciousness.

The Psychic Being and the Ego

There is individuality in the psychic being but not egoism. Egoism goes when the individual unites himself with the Divine or is entirely surrendered to the Divine.

*

It is the psychic inmost being that replaces the ego. It is through love and surrender to the Divine that the psychic being becomes strong and manifest, so that it can replace the ego.

The Psychic World or Plane

There is a psychic world — a sort of Heaven of peace and beauty and harmony. It is also a place of rest for the soul between two incarnations in which it absorbs its past experiences and becomes ready for another birth.

*

What you describe [*lying calmly in a realm of peace, joy and oneness*] is what we mean by the psychic being in its own plane of existence, for the psychic plane is like that. The psychic stands behind the rest of the being supporting it with its own purity, truth and joy.

Section Three

The Vertical System: Supermind to Subconscious

Chapter One

The Planes or Worlds of Consciousness

The System of Planes or Worlds

What we speak of are planes of consciousness — the physical is the lowest, above it the ordinary vital, above it the emotional (heart), above it the mental, above the mental are other planes. There is a psychic plane behind the emotional which influences all the others.

*

The physical is not the only world; there are others that we become aware of through dream records, through the subtle senses, through influences and contacts, through imagination, intuition and vision. There are worlds of a larger subtler life than ours, vital worlds; worlds in which Mind builds its own forms and figures, mental worlds; psychic worlds which are the soul's home; others above with which we have little contact. In each of us there is a mental plane of consciousness, a psychic, a vital, a subtle physical as well as the gross physical and material plane. The same planes are situated in the consciousness of general Nature. It is when we enter or contact these other planes that we come into connection with the worlds above the physical. In sleep we leave the physical body, only a subconscious residue remaining, and enter all planes and all sorts of worlds. In each we see scenes, meet beings, share in happenings, come across formations, influences, suggestions which belong to these planes. Even when we are awake, part of us moves in these planes, but their activity goes on behind the veil; our waking minds are not aware of it. Dreams are often only incoherent constructions of our subconscious, but others are records (often much mixed and distorted) or transcripts of experiences in these supraphysical

planes. When we do sadhana, this kind of dream becomes very common; then subconscious dreams cease to predominate.

The forces and beings of the vital world have a great influence on human beings. The vital world is on one side a world of beauty, — the poet, artist, musician are in close contact with it; it is also a world of powers and passions, lusts and desires, — our own lusts and desires, and passions and ambitions can put us into connection with the vital worlds and their forces and beings. It is again a world of things dark, dangerous and horrible. Nightmares like X's are contacts with this side of the vital plane. Its influences are also the source of much in men that is demoniac, dirty, cruel and base.

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It is good that you were able to overcome the difficulty and have a good meditation. Your observation that the difficulty is only in the head and throat and mainly in the latter is very significant. These are the mental centres and it is evident therefore that the difficulty comes from the physical mind. The higher part of the mind belongs to the thinking mind proper, the buddhi, that which understands and observes and guides; the throat is the centre of the externalising mind, that which deals with outer and physical things and responds to them. Its activity is always one of the chief difficulties of the sadhana. If it is quiet it is easier, as you have seen, for the whole being to be quiet.

The last of the four experiences, that of the being within arranged in layers one under the other like the steps of a ladder, is also very significant and very true. It is so that inner consciousness is arranged. There are five main divisions of this ladder. At the top above the head are layers (or as we call them planes) of which we are not conscious and which become conscious to us only by sadhana — those above the human mind — that is the higher consciousness. Below from the crown of the head to the throat are the layers (there are many of them) of the mind, the three principal being one at the top of the head communicating with the higher consciousness, another between the eyebrows where is the thought, sight and will, a third in the throat which is

the externalising mind. A second division is from the shoulders to the navel, these are the layers of the higher vital presided over by the heart centre where is the emotional being with the psychic hidden behind it. From the navel downwards is the rest of the vital being containing several layers. From the bottom of the spine downward are the layers of the physical consciousness proper, the material, and below the feet is the subconscious which has also many levels.

The experience of the splitting of the forehead from the middle and the pouring out of light signified the opening of the centre of thought, will and vision there. When this opens, there is the opening of the inner mind consciousness through which the light of the higher can pour out — here it is the Mother's white light that was pouring out through the opening.

The lights you saw were the many lights (powers, forces full of light) of the higher consciousness, the Truth consciousness or divine consciousness. Their pouring down was preceded and made possible by the appearance of the moon, the spiritual light. It is when the spiritual light is there that the presence of the Mother is revealed and her action brings down the powers of the Truth, the Divine and she gives them to the sadhak.

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If we regard the gradation of worlds or planes as a whole, we see them as a great connected complex movement; the higher precipitate their influences on the lower, the lower react to the higher and develop or manifest in themselves within their own formula something that corresponds to the superior power and its action. The material world has evolved life in obedience to a pressure from the vital plane, mind in obedience to a pressure from the mental plane. It is now trying to evolve supermind in obedience to a pressure from the supramental plane. In more detail, particular forces, movements, powers, beings of a higher world can throw themselves on the lower to establish appropriate and corresponding forms which will connect them with the material domain and, as it were, reproduce or project their action here. And each thing created here has, supporting it,

subtler envelopes or forms of itself which make it subsist and connect it with forces acting from above. Man, for instance, has, besides his gross physical body, subtler sheaths or bodies by which he lives behind the veil in direct connection with supra-physical planes of consciousness and can be influenced by their powers, movements and beings. What takes place in life has always behind it preexistent movements and forms in the occult vital planes; what takes place in mind presupposes preexistent movements and forms in the occult mental planes. That is an aspect of things which becomes more and more evident, insistent and important, the more we progress in a dynamic Yoga.

But all this must not be taken in too rigid and mechanical a sense. It is an immense plastic movement full of the play of possibilities and must be seized by a flexible and subtle tact or sense in the seeing consciousness. It cannot be reduced to a too rigorous logical or mathematical formula. Two or three points must be pressed in order that this plasticity may not be lost to our view.

First, each plane, in spite of its connection with others above and below it, is yet a world in itself, with its own movements, forces, beings, types, forms existing as if for its and their own sake, under its own laws, for its own manifestation without apparent regard for other members of the great series. Thus, if we regard the vital or the subtle physical plane, we see great ranges of it (most of it) existing in themselves, without any relation with the material world and with no movement to affect or influence it, still less to precipitate a corresponding manifestation in the physical formula. At most we can say that the existence of anything in the vital, subtle physical or any other plane creates a possibility for a corresponding movement of manifestation in the physical world. But something more is needed to turn that static or latent possibility into a dynamic potentiality or an actual urge towards a material creation. That something may be a call from the material plane, e.g. some force or someone in the physical existence entering into touch with a supraphysical power or world or part of it and moved to bring it down into the earth life. Or it may be an impulse in the vital or other plane itself, e.g. a vital being moved to extend his action

towards the earth and establish there a kingdom for himself or the play of the forces for which he stands in his own domain. Or it may be a pressure from above, let us say some supramental or mental power precipitating its formation from above and developing forms and movements on the vital level as a means of transit to its self-creation in the material world. Or it may be all these things acting together, in which case there is the greatest possibility of an effective creation.

Next, as a consequence, it follows that only a limited part of the action of the vital or other higher planes is concerned with the earth-existence. But even this creates a mass of possibilities which is far greater than the earth can at one time manifest or contain in its own less plastic formulas. All these possibilities do not realise themselves; some fail altogether and leave at the most an idea that comes to nothing; some try seriously and are repelled and defeated and, even if in action for a time, come to nothing. Others effectuate a half manifestation, and this is the most usual result, the more so as these vital or other supraphysical forces come into conflict and have not only to overcome the resistance of the physical consciousness and of matter, but their own internecine resistance to each other. A certain number succeed in precipitating their results in a more complete and successful creation, so that if you compare that creation with its original in the higher plane, there is something like a close resemblance or even an apparently exact reproduction or translation from the supraphysical to the physical formula. And yet even there the exactness is only apparent; the very fact of translation into another substance and another rhythm of manifestation makes a difference. It is something new that has manifested and it is that that makes the creation worth while. What for instance would be the utility of a supramental creation on earth if it were just the same thing as a supramental creation on the supramental plane? It is that, in principle, but yet something else, a triumphant new self-discovery of the Divine in conditions that are not elsewhere.

No doubt, the subtle physical is closest to the physical, and most like it. But yet the conditions are different and the thing too different. For instance, the subtle physical has a freedom,

plasticity, intensity, power, colour, wide and manifold play (there are thousands of things there that are not here) of which as yet we have no possibility on earth. And yet there is something here, a potentiality of the Divine which the other in spite of its greater liberties has not, something which makes creation more difficult, but in the last result justifies the labour.

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Each plane of consciousness contains the others in itself in principle. In the physical consciousness there is a physical mind, a vital force and action which we call the vital physical, and the physical proper or material.

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Mind has its own realms and life has its own realms just as matter has. In the mental realms life and substance are entirely subordinated to Mind and obey its dictates. Here on earth there is the evolution with matter as the starting point, life as the medium, mind emerging from it. There are many grades, realms, combinations in the cosmos — there are even many universes. Ours is only one of many.

The Planes and the Body

The heavenly worlds are above the body. What the parts of the body correspond to are planes — subtle physical, higher, middle and lower vital, mental. Each plane is in communication with various worlds that belong to it.

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The appearance of the being in other planes is not the same necessarily as that of the physical body. Very often the form taken by the vital or psychic or mental being is very different from the physical form. Even when they resemble on the whole, there is always some difference.

Chapter Two

The Supermind or Supramental

Supermind and the Purushottama

Purushottama of the Gita is the supreme being; the supermind is a power of the Supreme — or proceeding from him, if you like.

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Supermind is not *the* Purushottama consciousness, it is *a* Purushottama consciousness, a certain level and power of being which he can share with his “eternal portions”, *amśāḥ sanātanāḥ*, provided they can climb out of the Ignorance. As for embodying it, it is certainly difficult but not impossible.

Supermind and Sachchidananda

Supermind is between the Sachchidananda planes and the lower creation. It contains the self-determining Truth of the Divine Consciousness and is necessary for a Truth creation.

One can of course realise Sachchidananda in relation to the mind, life, body also — but then it is something stable, supporting by its presence the lower Prakriti, but not transforming it. The supermind alone can transform the lower nature.

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In the supramental consciousness, there are no problems — the problem is created by the division set up by the Mind. The Supramental sees the Truth as a single whole and everything falls into its place in that whole. The Supramental is also spiritual, but the old Yogas reach Sachchidananda through the spiritualised mind and depart into the eternally static oneness of Sachchidananda or rather pure Sat (Existence) absolute and eternal or else a pure Non-existence absolute and

eternal. Ours having realised Sachchidananda in the spiritualised mind plane proceeds to realise it in the supramental plane.

The supreme supra-cosmic Sachchidananda is above all. Supermind may be described as its power of self-awareness and world-awareness, the world being known as within itself and not outside. So to live consciously in the supreme Sachchidananda one must pass through the Supermind. If one is in the supra-cosmic apart from the manifestation, there is no place for problems or solutions. If one lives in the transcendence and the cosmic view at the same time, that can only be by the supramental consciousness in the supreme Sachchidananda consciousness — so why should the question arise? Why should there be a difference between the supreme Sachchidananda version of the cosmos and the Supermind's version of it? Your difficulty probably comes from thinking of both in terms of the mind.

The Supermind is an entirely different consciousness not only from the spiritualised Mind, but from the planes above spiritualised Mind which intervene between it and the supramental plane. Once one passes beyond Overmind to Supermind, one enters into a consciousness to which the norms of the other planes do not at all apply and in which the same Truth, e.g. Sachchidananda and truth of this universe, is seen in quite a different way and has a different dynamic consequence. This necessarily results from the fact that Supermind has an indivisible knowledge, while Overmind proceeds by union in division and Mind by division taking division as the first fact, for that is the natural process of its knowledge.

In all planes the essential experience of Sachchidananda, pure Existence, Consciousness, Bliss is the same and Mind is often contented with it as the sole Truth and dismisses all else as part of the grand Illusion, but there is also a dynamic experience of the Divine or of Existence (e.g. as One and Many, Personal and Impersonal, the Infinite and Finite etc.) which is essential for the integral knowledge. The dynamic experience is not the same in the lower planes as in the higher, in the intermediate spiritual planes and in the Supramental. In these the oppositions

can only be put together and harmonised, in the Supermind they fuse together and are inseparably one; that makes an enormous difference.

The universe is dynamism, movement — the essential experience of Sachchidananda apart from the dynamism and movement is static. The full dynamic truth of Sachchidananda and the universe and its consequence cannot be grasped by any other consciousness than the Supermind, because the instrumentation in all other (lower) planes is inferior and there is therefore a disparity between the fullness of the static experience and the incompleteness of the dynamic power, knowledge, result of the inferior light and power of other planes. This is the reason why the consciousness of the other spiritual planes even if it descends can make no radical change in the earth-consciousness, it can only modify or enrich it. The radical transformation needs the descent of a supramental power and nature.

One cannot speak of two classes of Sachchidananda, for Sachchidananda is the same always — but the knowledge of Sachchidananda and the universe differs according to the degree of the consciousness which has the experience.

The personal realisation of the Divine may be sometimes with Form, sometimes without Form. Without Form, it is the Presence of the living Divine Person, felt in everything. With Form, it comes with the image of the One to whom worship is offered. The Divine can always manifest himself in a form to the bhakta or seeker. One sees him in the form in which one worships or seeks him or in a form suitable to the Divine Personality who is the object of the adoration. How it manifests depends on many things and it is too various to be reduced to a single rule. Sometimes it is in the heart that the Presence with the form is seen, sometimes in any of the other centres, sometimes above and guiding from there; sometimes it is seen outside and in front as if an embodied Person. Its advantages are an intimate relation and constant guidance or if felt or seen within, a very strong and concrete realisation of the constant Presence. But one must be very sure of the purity of one's adoration and seeking — for the disadvantage of this kind of embodied relation is that

other Forces can imitate the Form or counterfeit the voice and the guidance and this gets more force if it is associated with a constructed image which is not the true thing. Several have been misled in this way because pride, vanity or desire was strong in them and robbed them of the finer psychic perception that is not mental and can at once turn the Mother's light on such misleadings or errors.

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It is the supramental Power that transforms mind, life and body — not the Sachchidananda consciousness which supports impartially everything. But it is by having experience of the Sachchidananda, pure existence-consciousness-bliss, that the ascent to the supramental and the descent of the supramental become (at a much later stage) possible. For first one must get free from the ordinary limitation by the mental, vital and physical formations, and the experience of the Sachchidananda peace, calm, purity and wideness gives this liberation.

The supermind has nothing to do with passing into a blank. It is the Mind overpassing its own limits and following a negative and quietistic way to do it that reaches the big blank. The Mind, being the Ignorance, has to annul itself in order to enter into the supreme Truth — or, at least, so it thinks. But the supermind being the Truth-Consciousness and the Divine Knowledge has no need to annul itself for the purpose.

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The Will of Sachchidananda can act under different conditions in the Knowledge or the Ignorance. The Supermind is the Truth Consciousness, the Knowledge, and the will there works out spontaneously the unmixed Knowledge — whereas below the Supermind it allows the forces to play in quite another way and supports them or intervenes according to the need of the play in the Ignorance.

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In the supermind, consciousness is existence eternally aware both *that it is* and of what it is and also of what it intends

to do with itself and become for its own Ananda. Consciousness and knowledge there are one.

The Supracosmic, the Supramental, the Overmind and Nirvana

(1) I mean by the supracosmic Reality the supreme Sachchidananda who is above this and all manifestations, not bound by any, yet from whom all manifestation proceeds and all universe.

(2) The supramental and the supracosmic are not the same. If it were so there could be no supramental world and no descent of the supramental principle into the material world — we would be brought back to the idea that the divine Truth and Reality can only exist beyond and the universe, any universe can only be a half-truth or an illusion of ignorance.

(3) I mean by the supramental the Truth-Consciousness whether above or in the universe by which the Divine knows not only his own essence and being but his manifestation also. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity, by that the Self is known, the Divine Sachchidananda is known, but also the truth of the manifestation is known, because this too is That — *sarvam khalvidam brahma, Vāsudevaḥ sarvam* etc. Mind is an instrument of the Ignorance trying to know — Supermind is the Knower possessing knowledge because one with it and the known, therefore seeing all things in the Light of His own Truth, the light of their true Self which is He. It is a dynamic and not only a static Power, not only a Knowledge, but a Will according to Knowledge — there is a supramental Power or Shakti which can manifest directly its world of Light and Truth in which all is luminously based on the harmony and unity of the One, not disturbed by a veil of Ignorance or any disguise. The Supermind therefore does not transcend all manifestation, but it is above the triplicity of mind, life and matter which is our present experience of this manifestation.

(4) The Overmind is a sort of delegation from the Supermind (this is a metaphor only) which supports the present evolutionary universe in which we live here in Matter. If Supermind were

to start here from the beginning as the direct creative Power, a world of the kind we see now would be impossible; it would have been full of the divine Light from the beginning, there would be no involution in the inconscience of Matter, consequently no gradual striving evolution of consciousness in Matter. A line is therefore drawn between the higher half of the universe of consciousness, *parārdha*, and the lower half, *aparārdha*. The higher half is constituted of Sat, Chit, Ananda, Mahas (the supramental) — the lower half of mind, life, Matter. This line is the intermediary Overmind which, though luminous itself, keeps from us the full indivisible supramental Light, depends on it indeed, but in receiving it, divides, distributes, breaks it up into separated aspects, powers, multiplicities of all kinds, each of which it is possible by a further diminution of consciousness such as we reach in Mind to regard as the sole or the chief Truth and all the rest as subordinate or contradictory to it. To this action of the Overmind may be applied the words of the Upanishad, “The face of the Truth is covered by a golden Lid”, or those of the Vedic *ṛtena ṛtam apihitam*. Here there is the working of a sort of *vidyā-avidyāmayī māyā* which makes possible the predominance of *avidyā*. It is by this primitive divisional principle that the Mind is enabled to regard for example the Impersonal as the Truth and the Personal as only a mask or the personal Divine as the greatest Truth and impersonality as only an aspect; it is so too that all the conflicting philosophies and religions arise, each exalting one aspect or potentiality of Truth presented to Mind as the whole sufficient explanation of things or exalting one of the Divine’s Godheads above all others as the true God than whom there can be no other or none so high or higher. This divisionary principle pursues man’s mental knowledge everywhere and even when he thinks he has arrived at the final unity and harmony, it is only a constructed unity based on an Aspect. It is so that the scientist seeks to found the unity of knowledge on some original physical aspect of things, Energy or Matter, Electricity or Ether, or the Mayavadin thinks he has arrived at absolute Adwaita by cutting existence into two and calling the upper side Brahman and the lower side Maya. It

is the reason why mental knowledge can never arrive at a final solution of anything, for the aspects of Existence as distributed by Overmind are numberless and one can go on multiplying philosophies and religions for ever.

In the Overmind itself there is not this confusion, for the Overmind knows the One as the support, essence, fundamental power of all things, but in the dynamic play proper to it it lays emphasis on its divisional power of multiplicity and seeks to give each Power or Aspect its full chance to manifest, relying on the underlying Oneness to prevent disharmony or conflict. Each Godhead, as it were, creates his own world, but without conflict with others; each Aspect, each Idea, each Force of things can be felt in its full separate energy or splendour and work out its values, but this does not create a disharmony because the Overmind has the sense of the Infinite and in the true (not spatial) Infinite many concurring infinities are possible. This peculiar security of Overmind is however not transferable to the lower planes of consciousness which it supports and governs, because as one descends in the scale the stress on division and multiplicity increases and in the Mind the underlying oneness becomes vague, abstract, indeterminate and indeterminable and the only apparent concreteness is that of the phenomenal which is by its nature a form and representation — the self-view of the One has already begun to disappear. Mind acts by representations and constructions, by the separation and weaving together of its constructed data; it can make a synthetic construction and see it as the whole, but when it looks for the reality of things, it takes refuge in abstractions — it has not the concrete vision, experience, contact sought by the mystic and the spiritual seeker. To know Self and Reality directly or truly, it has to be silent and reflect some light of these things or undergo self-exceeding and transformation, and this is only possible either by a higher Light descending into it or by its ascent, the taking up or immergence of it into a higher Light of existence. In Matter, descending below Mind, we arrive at the acme of the principle of fragmentation and division; the One, though secretly there, is lost to knowledge and we get the fullness of the Ignorance,

even a fundamental Inconscience out of which the universe has to evolve consciousness and knowledge.

(5) If we regard Vaikuntha or Goloka each as the world of a Divinity, Vishnu or Krishna, we would be naturally led to seek its place or its origin in the Overmind plane. The Overmind is the plane of the highest worlds of the Gods. But Vaikuntha and Goloka are human conceptions of states of being that are beyond humanity. Goloka is evidently a world of Love, Beauty and Ananda full of spiritual radiances (the cow is the symbol of spiritual light) of which the souls there are the keepers or possessors, Gopas and Gopis. It is not necessary to assign any single plane to this manifestation—in fact there can be a reflection or possession of it or of its conditions on any plane of consciousness—the mental, vital or even the subtle physical plane. The explanation of it which you mention is not therefore excluded, it is quite feasible.

(6) It is not possible to situate Nirvana as a world or plane, for the Nirvana push is to a withdrawal from world and world-values; it is therefore a state of consciousness or rather of super-consciousness without habitation or level. There is more than one kind of Nirvana (extinction or dissolution) possible. Man being a mental being in a body, *manomaya puruṣa*, makes this attempt at retreat from the cosmos through the spiritualised mind, he cannot do otherwise and it is this that gives it the appearance of an extinction or dissolution, *laya, nirvāṇa*; for extinction of the mind and all that depends on it including the separative ego in something Beyond is the natural way, almost the indispensable way for such a withdrawal. In a more affirmative Yoga seeking transcendence but not withdrawal there would not be this indispensability, for there would be the way already alluded to of self-exceeding or transformation of the mental being. But it is possible also to pass to that through a certain experience of Nirvana, an absolute silence of mind and cessation of its activities, constructions, representations which can be so complete that not only to the silent mind but also to the passive senses the whole world is emptied of its solidity and reality and things appear only as unsubstantial forms without

any real habitations or else floating in something that is a nameless Infinite: this Infinite or else something still beyond is That which alone is real; an absolute calm, peace, liberation would be the resulting state. Action would continue, but no initiation or participation in it by the silent liberated consciousness; a nameless Power would do all until there began the descent from above which would transform the consciousness, making its silence and freedom a basis for a luminous knowledge, action, Ananda. But such a passage would be rare; ordinarily a silence of the mind, a liberation of the consciousness, a renunciation of its belief in the final value or truth of the mind's imperfect representations or constructions would be enough for the higher working to be possible.

(7) Now about the cosmic consciousness and Nirvana. Cosmic consciousness is a complex matter. To begin with, there are two sides to it, the experience of the Self free, infinite, silent, inactive, one in all and beyond all and the direct experience of the cosmic Energy and its forces, workings and formations, this latter experience not being complete till one has the sense of being commensurate with the universe or pervading, exceeding and containing it. Till then there may be direct contacts, communications, interchanges with cosmic forces, beings, movements, but not the full unity of mind with the cosmic Mind, of life with the cosmic Life, of body and physical consciousness with the cosmic material Energy and its substance. Again there may be a realisation of the Cosmic Self which is not followed by the realisation of the dynamic universal oneness. Or on the contrary there may be some dynamic universalising of consciousness without the experience of the free static Self omnipresent everywhere, — the preoccupation with and pleasure of the greater energies that one would thus experience would stop the way to that liberation. Also the identification or universalisation may be more on one plane or level of consciousness than on another, predominantly mental or predominantly emotional (through universal sympathy or love) or vital of another kind (experience of the universal life forces) or physical. But in any case, even with the full realisation and experience it should be evident that this

cosmic play would be something that one would finally feel as limited, ignorant, imperfect from its very nature. The free soul might regard it untouched and unmoved by its imperfections and vicissitudes, do some appointed work, try to help all or be an instrument of the Divine, but neither the work nor the instrumentation would have anything like the perfection or even the full light, power, bliss of the Divine. This could only be gained by an ascension into higher planes of cosmic existence or their descent into one's consciousness — and, if this were not envisaged or accepted, the push to Nirvana would still remain as a way of escape. The other way would be the ascent after death into these higher planes, — the heavens of the religions signify after all nothing but such an urge to a greater, luminous, beatific Divine Existence.

But, one might ask, if the higher planes or if the Overmind itself were to manifest their consciousness with all that power, light, freedom and vastness and these things were to descend into an individual consciousness here, would not that make unnecessary both the cosmic negation or the Nirvanic push and the urge towards some Divine Transcendence? But in the result, though one might live in a union with the Divine in a luminous wide free consciousness embracing the universe in itself and be a channel of great energies or creations, spiritual or external, yet this world here would remain fundamentally the same — there would be a gulf of difference between the Spirit within and its medium and stuff on which it acted, between the inner consciousness and the world in which it was working. The achievement inner, subjective, individual might be perfect, but the dynamic outcome insufficient, disparate, a mixture, not a perfect harmony of the inner and the outer, a new integral rhythm of existence here that could be called truly divine. Only a consciousness like the supramental, unconditioned and in perfect unity with its source, a Truth-Consciousness empowered to create its own free determinations would be able to establish some perfect harmony and rhythm of the higher hemisphere in this lowest rung of the lower hemisphere. Whether it is to do so or not depends on the significance of the evolutionary

existence; it depends on whether that existence is something imperfect in its very nature and doomed to frustration — in which case either a negative way of transcendence by some kind of Nirvana or a positive way of transcendence, perhaps by breaking the shining lid of Overmind, *hiraṇmaya pātra*, into what is above it, would be the final end of the soul escaping from this meaningless universe; unless indeed like the Amitabha Buddha one were held by compassion or else the Divine Will within to continue helping and sharing the upward struggle towards the Light of those here still in the darkness of the Ignorance. If on the contrary this world is a Lila of spiritual involution and evolution in which one power after another up to the highest is to appear as Matter, Life and Mind have already appeared out of an apparent indeterminate Inconscience, then another culmination is possible.

The push to Nirvana has two motive forces behind it. One is the sense of the imperfection, sorrow, death, suffering of this world — the original motive force of the Buddha. But for escape from these afflictions Nirvana might not be necessary, if there are higher worlds into which one can ascend where there is no such imperfection, sorrow, death or suffering. But this other possibility of escape is met by the idea that these higher worlds too are transient and part of the Ignorance, that one has to return here always till one overcomes the Ignorance, that the Reality and the cosmic existence are as Truth and Falsehood, opposite, incompatible. This brings in the second motive force, that of the call to Transcendence. If the Transcendent is not only supra-cosmic but an aloof Incommunicable, *avyavahāryam*, which one cannot reach except by a negation of all that is here, then some kind of Nirvana, an absolute Nirvana even is inevitable. If on the other hand the Divine is transcendent but not incommunicable, the call will still be there and the soul will leave the chequered cosmic play for the beatitude of the transcendent existence, but an absolute Nirvana would not be indispensable; a beatific union with the Divine offers itself as the way before the seeker. This is the reason why the Cosmic Consciousness is not sufficient and the push away from it is so strong, — it is only if the golden

lid of the Overmind is overpassed and opened and the dynamic contact with the Supermind and a descent of its Light and Power here is intended that it can be otherwise.

Supermind and Other Planes

The words supermind and supramental were first used by me, but since then people have taken up and are using the word supramental for anything above the mind.

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The highest or true Vijnana is the supramental plane — the plane of the Divine Knowledge — it is only at the end of the sadhana, when there is the full siddhi that one can have free connection with that plane.

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The Supramental is a higher level of consciousness than the mind in which one gets the direct truth of the Supreme and the whole truth. One can meet the One in the mind, but it is an imperfect knowledge and experience.

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It is only the supramental that is all Knowledge. All below that from Overmind to Matter is Ignorance — an Ignorance growing at each level nearer to the full Knowledge. Below Supermind there may be Knowledge but it is not all Knowledge.

*

I have not said that everything is falsehood except the supramental Truth. I said that there was no complete Truth below the supramental. In the Overmind the Truth of supermind which is whole and harmonious enters into a separation into parts, many Truths fronting each other and moved each to fulfil itself, to make a world of its own or else to prevail or take its share in worlds made of a combination of various separated Truths and Truth-forces. Lower down in the scale, the fragmentation

becomes more and more pronounced, so as to admit of positive error, falsehood, ignorance, finally, inconscience like that of Matter. This world here has come out of the Inconscience and developed the Mind which is an instrument of Ignorance trying to reach out to the Truth through much limitation, conflict, confusion and error. To get back to Overmind, if one can do it completely, which is not easy for physical beings, is to stand on the borders of the supramental Truth with the hope of entry there.

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If the supermind were not to give us a greater and completer truth than any of the lower planes, it would not be worth while trying to reach it. Each plane has its own truths. Some of them are no longer true on a higher plane; e.g. desire and ego are truths of the mental, vital and physical Ignorance — a man there without ego or desire would be a tamasic automaton. As we rise higher, ego and desire appear no longer as truths, they are falsehoods disfiguring the true person and the true will. The struggle between the Powers of Light and the Powers of Darkness is a truth here — as we ascend above, it becomes less and less of a truth and in the supermind it has no truth at all. Other truths remain but change their character, importance, place in the whole. The difference or contrast between the Personal and Impersonal is a truth of the Overmind — there is no separate truth of them in the supermind, they are inseparably one. But one who has not mastered and lived the truths of Overmind cannot reach the supramental Truth. The incompetent pride of man's mind makes a sharp distinction and wants to call all else untruth and leap at once to the highest truth whatever it may be — but that is an ambitious and arrogant error. One has to climb the stairs and rest one's feet firmly on each step in order to reach the summit.

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Each plane is true in itself but only in partial truth to the Supermind. When these higher truths come into the physical they try to realise themselves there but can do so only in part and under

the conditions of the material plane. It is only the Supermind that can overcome this difficulty.

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Supermind is not organised in the lower planes as the others are. It is only a veiled influence. Otherwise the supramental realisation would be easy.

Supermind and Overmind

Supermind is not merely a step higher than Overmind — it is beyond the line, that is, a different consciousness and power beyond the mental limit.

*

It is hardly possible to say what the Supermind is in the language of Mind, even spiritualised Mind, for it is a different consciousness altogether and acts in a different way. Whatever may be said of it is likely to be not understood or misunderstood. It is only by growing into it that one can know what it is and this also cannot be done until after a long process by which mind heightening and illuminating becomes pure Intuition (not the mixed thing that ordinarily goes by that name) and Intuition widens and masses itself into Overmind; after that Overmind can be lifted into and suffused with Supermind till it undergoes a transformation.

In the Supermind all is self-known self-luminously, there are no divisions, oppositions or separated aspects as in Mind whose principle is division of Knowledge into parts and setting each part against another. Overmind approaches this at its top and is often mistaken for Supermind, but it cannot reach it — except by uplifting and transformation.

*

By the Supermind is meant the full Truth-consciousness of the Divine Nature in which there can be no place for the principle of division and ignorance; it is always a full light and knowledge superior to all mental substance or mental movement. Between the

Supermind and the human mind are a number of ranges, planes or layers of consciousness — one can regard it in various ways — in which the element or substance of mind and consequently its movements also become more and more illumined and powerful and wide. The Overmind is the highest of these ranges; it is full of lights and powers; but from the point of view of what is above it, it is the line of the soul's turning away from the complete and indivisible knowledge and its descent towards the Ignorance. For although it draws from the Truth, it is here that begins the separation of aspects of the Truth, the forces and their working out as if they were independent truths and this is a process that ends, as one descends to ordinary Mind, Life and Matter, in a complete division, fragmentation, separation from the indivisible Truth above. There is no longer the essential, total, perfectly harmonising and unifying knowledge, or rather knowledge for ever harmonious because for ever one, which is the character of Supermind. In the Supermind mental divisions and oppositions cease, the problems created by our dividing and fragmenting mind disappear and Truth is seen as a luminous whole. In the Overmind there is not yet the actual fall into Ignorance, but the first step is taken which will make the fall inevitable.

*

The Supermind is the One Truth deploying and determining the manifestation of its Powers — all these Powers working as a multiple Oneness, in harmony, without opposition or collision, according to the One Will inherent in all. The Overmind takes these Truths and Powers and sets each working as a force in itself with its necessary consequences — there can be harmony in their action, but the Overmind's harmonies are synthetic and partial rather than inherent, total and inevitable and, as one descends from the highest Overmind, separation, collision and conflict of forces increase, separability dominates, ignorance grows, existence becomes a clash of possibilities, a mixture of conflicting half-truths, an unsolved and apparently unsolvable riddle and puzzle.

*

The Supermind is the Truth-Consciousness; below it there intervenes the Overmind of which the principle is to receive the powers of the Divine and try to work them out separately, each acting in its own right and working to realise a world of its own or, if it has to act with others, enforcing its own principle as much as possible. Souls descending into the Overmind act in the same way. The principle of separated Individuality is from here. At first still aware of its divine origin, it becomes as it descends still more and more separated and oblivious of it, governed by the principle of division and ego. For Mind is farther removed from the Truth than Overmind, Vital Nature is engrossed in the realisation of ignorant forces, while in Matter the whole passes into what seems an original Inconscience. It is the Overmind Maya that governs this world, but in Matter it has deepened into Inconscience out of which consciousness reemerges and climbs again bringing down into Matter life and mind, and opening in mind to the higher reaches— which are still in some direct connection with the Truth (Intuition, Overmind, Supermind).

*

At the time when these chapters [*the last chapters of The Synthesis of Yoga*] were written, the name “overmind” had not been found, so there is no mention of it. What is described in these chapters is the action of the supermind when it descends into the overmind plane and takes up the overmind workings and transforms them.¹ It was intended in later chapters to show how difficult even this was and how many levels there were between human mind and supermind and how even supermind, descending, could get mixed with the lower action and turned into something that was less than the true Truth. But these later chapters were not written.

*

The distinction [*between the Supermind and the Overmind*] has

¹ The highest Supermind or Divine Gnosis existent in itself is something that lies beyond still and quite above.

not been made in the *Arya* because at that time what I now call the Overmind was supposed to be an inferior plane of the Supermind. But that was because I was seeing them from the Mind. The true defect of Overmind, the limitation in it which gave rise to a world of Ignorance, is seen fully only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness, from the result (Ignorance in Matter) to the cause (Overmind division of the Truth). In its own plane Overmind seems to be only a divided, many-sided play of the Truth, so can easily be taken by the Mind as a supramental province. Mind also when flooded by the Overmind lights feels itself living in a surprising revelation of divine Truth. The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more with the physical. Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and to make a sharp distinction between Overmind and Supermind — for it then becomes evident that the Overmind Power (in spite of its lights and splendours) is not sufficient to overcome the Ignorance because it is itself under the law of Division out of which came the Ignorance. One has to pass beyond and supramentalise Overmind so that mind and all the rest may undergo the final change.

*

The Supermind is the total Truth Consciousness; the Overmind draws down the truths separately and gives them a separate activity — e.g. in the Supermind the Divine Peace and Power, Knowledge and Will are one. In the Overmind each of these becomes a separate aspect which can exist or act on its own lines apart from the others. When it comes down to Mind, this turns into an ignorance and incapacity — because Knowledge can come without a Will to support it or Peace can be disturbed by the action of Power etc.

*

Supermind by the way is synthetic only in the lowest spaces of itself where it has to prepare the principles of Overmind — synthesis is necessary only where analysis has taken place; one has dissected everything, put in pieces (analysis) so one has to

piece together. But Supermind is unitarian, has never divided up, so it does not need to add and piece together the parts and fragments. It has always held the conscious Many together as the conscious One.

*

To return to the supramental—the supramental is simply the direct self-existent Truth Consciousness and the direct self-effective Truth Power. There can therefore be no question of jugglery about it. What is not true is not supramental. As for calm and silence, there is no need of the supramental to get that. One can get it even on the level of Higher Mind which is the next above the human intelligence. I got these things in 1908, twenty-seven years ago and I can assure you they were solid enough and marvellous enough without any need of supramentality to make it more so! Again, a calm that “seems like motion” is a phenomenon of which I know nothing. A calm or silence which can support or produce action—that I know and that is what I have had—the proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the *Bande Mataram* for four months and wrote $6\frac{1}{2}$ volumes of the *Arya*, not to speak of all the letters and messages etc. etc. I have written since. If you say that writing is not an action or motion but only something that seems like it, a jugglery of the consciousness,—well, still out of that calm and silence I conducted a pretty strenuous political activity and have also taken my share in keeping up an Asram which has at least an appearance to the physical senses of being solid and material! If you deny that these things are material or solid (which of course metaphysically you can), then you land yourself plump into Shankara’s illusionism, and there I will leave you.

You will say however that it is not the Supramental but at most the Overmind that helped me to these non-nebulous motions. But the Supermind is by definition a greater dynamic activity than mind or Overmind. I have said that what is not true is not supramental; I will add that what is ineffective is not supramental. And finally I will conclude by saying that I have

not told X that I have taken possession of the supramental — I only admit to be very near to it, or at least to its tail. But “very near” is — well, after all a relative phrase like all human phrases.

*

One must have already become intuitively conscious to know about the overmind and the supermind. To give “signs” is useless, for the mind would only make mistakes in trying to judge by the “signs” — one has to become conscious within and know directly.

Knowledge and Will in the Supermind

That [*the division between knowledge and will*] is true of mental knowledge and will, but not of the higher knowledge-will. In the Supermind knowledge and will are one.

*

Knowledge and will have naturally to be one before either can act perfectly.

*

Force and Knowledge are two different things and in the consciousness below supermind may go together or may not.

Chapter Three

The Overmind

Overmind and the Cosmic Consciousness

Overmind is the highest source of the cosmic consciousness available to the embodied being in the Ignorance. It is part of the cosmic consciousness — but the human individual when he opens into the cosmic usually remains in the cosmic Mind-Life-Matter receiving only inspirations and influences from the higher planes of Intuition and Overmind. He receives through the spiritualised higher and illumined mind the fundamental experiences on which spiritual knowledge is based; he can become even full of intuitive mind movements, illuminations, various kinds of powers and illumined light, liberation, Ananda. But to rise fully into the Intuition is rare, to reach the Overmind still rarer — although influences and experiences can come down from there.

*

It is (sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly) by the power of the Overmind releasing the mind from its close partitions that the cosmic consciousness opens in the seeker and he becomes aware of the cosmic spirit and the play of the cosmic forces.

It is from or at least through the overmind plane that the original prearrangement of things in this world is effected; for from it the determining vibrations originally come. But there are corresponding movements on all the planes, the mind, the vital, the physical even, and it is possible in a very clear or illumined condition of the lower consciousness to become aware of these movements and understand the plan of things and be a conscious instrument or even, to a limited extent, a determinant Will or Force. But the stuff of the lower planes always mixes with the overmind forces and diminishes or even falsifies and perverts their truth and power.

It is even possible for the Overmind to transmit to the lower

planes of consciousness something of the supramental Light; but, so long as the Supermind does not directly manifest, its Light is modified in Overmind itself and still further modified in the application by the needs, the demands, the circumscribing possibilities of the individual nature. The success of this diminished and modified Light, e.g. in purifying the physical, cannot be immediate and absolute as the full and direct supramental action would be; it is still relative, conditioned by the individual nature and the balance of the universal forces, resisted by adverse powers, baulked of its perfect result by the unwillingness of the lower workings to cease, limited either in its scope or in its efficacy by the want of a complete consent in the physical nature.

*

Probably what X calls overmind is the first “above-mind” layers of consciousness. Or it may be experiences from the larger Mind or Vital ranges. To the human mind all these are so big that it is easy to take them for overmind or even supermind. One can get indirect overmind touches if one opens into the cosmic consciousness, still more if one enters freely into that consciousness. Direct overmind experience cannot come unless part of the being at least is seated in the wideness and peace.

*

You cannot do it [*recognise the different planes of the Overmind*] at present. Only those who have got fully into the cosmic consciousness can do it and even they cannot do it at first. One must first go fully through the experience of higher mind and illumined mind and intuition before it can be done.

Planes of the Overmind

There are different planes of the Overmind. One is mental, directly creative of all the formations that manifest below in the mental world—that is the mental Overmind. Above is the overmind Intuition. Still above are the planes of overmind that are more and more connected with the supermind and have a

partly supramental character. Highest in the overmind ranges is the supramental Overmind or Overmind gnosis. But these are things you cannot understand until you get a higher experience.

*

It [*the overmind*] can for convenience be divided into four planes — mental overmind and the three you have written [*intuitive overmind, true overmind and supramental overmind*] — but there are many layers in each and each of these can be regarded as a plane in itself.

*

There are many stages in the transition from mental overmind to supramentalised overmind and then from that to supramental overmind and from that to supermind. Do not be in a hurry to say, “This is the last highest overmind.”

*

What you call supramental overmind¹ is still overmind — not a part of the true Supermind. One cannot get into the true Supermind (except in some kind of trance or Samadhi) unless one has first objectivised the overmind Truth in life, speech, action, external knowledge and not only experienced it in meditation and inner experience.

The Overmind, the Intuition and Below

The Overmind receives the Divine Truth and disperses it in various formations and diverse play of forces, building thus different worlds out of this dispersion.

In the Intuition the nature of Knowledge is Truth not global or whole, but coming out in so many points, edges, flashes of a Truth that is behind it and supplies it with its direct perceptions.

*

¹ This expression is a misnomer since overmind cannot be supramental: it can at most receive some light and truth from the higher source.

It is from the Overmind that all these different arrangements of the creative Truth of things originate. Out of the Overmind they come down to the Intuition and are transmitted from it to the Illumined and higher Mind to be arranged there for our intelligence. But they lose more and more of their power and certitude in the transmission as they come down to the lower levels. What energy of directly perceived Truth they have is lost in the human mind; for to the human intellect they present themselves only as speculative ideas, not as realised Truth, not as direct sight, a dynamic vision coupled with a concrete undeniable experience.

The Overmind and the Supermind Descent

The Overmind has to be reached and brought down before the Supermind descent is at all possible — for the Overmind is the passage through which one passes from mind to Supermind.

The Overmind and the *Kāraṇa Deha*

The *kāraṇa deha* may be simply a form answering to the higher consciousness (overmental, intuitive etc.) and I suppose a being could be there working in that consciousness and body. It is not likely to be the supramental being and supramental body — for in that case the whole consciousness, thought, action subjective and objective would begin to be faultlessly true and irresistibly effective. Nobody has reached that stage yet, even the overmind is, for all but the Mother and myself, either unrealised or only an influence mostly subjective.

The Dividing Aspect of the Overmind

There are no Overmind dangers — it is only the lower consciousness misusing overmind or higher consciousness intimations that can make a danger. There are also no Overmind Falsehoods. The Overmind is part of the Ignorance in this sense that it is the highest knowledge to which the Ignorance can attain, but the knowledge is still divided and so can be a knowledge of parts

and aspects of the Truth, not the integral knowledge. As such it can be misused and turned into falsehood by the Mind.

*

What I said was that the scission between the two aspects of the Divine [*Personal and Impersonal*] is a creation of the Overmind which takes various aspects of the Divine and separates them into separate entities. Thus it divides Sat, Chit and Ananda, so that they become three separate aspects different from each other. In fact in the Reality there is no separateness, the three aspects are so fused into each other, so inseparably one that they are a single undivided reality. It is the same with the Personal and Impersonal, the Saguna and Nirguna, the Silent and the Active Brahman. In the Reality they are not contrasted and incompatible aspects; what we call Personality and what we call Impersonality are inseparably fused together in a single Truth. In fact “fused together” even is a wrong phrase, because there they were never separated so that they have to be fused. All the quarrels about either the Impersonal being the only true truth or the Personal being the only highest truth are mind-created quarrels derivative from this dividing aspect of the Overmind. The Overmind does not deny any of the aspects as the Mind does, it admits them all as aspects of the One Truth, but by separating them it originates the quarrel in the more ignorant and more limited and divided Mind, because the Mind cannot see how two opposite things can exist together in one Truth, how the Divine can be *nirguṇo guṇī*; — having no experience of what is behind the two words it takes each in an absolute sense. The Impersonal is Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, not a Person, but a state. The Person is the Existent, the Conscious, the Blissful; consciousness, existence, bliss taken as separate things are only states of his being. But in fact the two (personal being and eternal state) are inseparable and are one reality.

The Overmind and the World

[*How the world appears to one living at the overmind level:*] As

a manifestation of the One Divine with a thousand aspects, a development of all the potentialities in the one existence, a play of Forces and Ideas which you can look at from many centres and points of view, each having its own truth in the whole. In the highest overmind all these prepare to meet and reunite themselves in one central Truth which is the Supramental.

Chapter Four

The Higher Planes of Mind

The Higher Planes and Higher Consciousness

The higher planes are the higher mind, illumined, intuitive, overmind, supermind. The psychic, mind, vital, physical belong to the ordinary manifestation.

*

The planes and the body are not the same. Above the head are seen all the planes from the overmind down to the higher mind, but this is only a correlation in the consciousness — not an actual location in space.

*

The spiritual mind is a mind which, in its fullness, is aware of the Self, reflecting the Divine, seeing and understanding the nature of the Self and its relations with the manifestation, living in that or in contact with it, calm, wide and awake to higher knowledge, not perturbed by the play of the Forces. When it gets its full liberated movement, its central station is very usually felt above the head, though its influence can extend downward through all the being and outward through space.

*

It [*higher consciousness*] means the larger spiritual consciousness which contains all these things [*cosmic consciousness, intuitive consciousness, other planes of consciousness between Intuition and mind*] in possibility and once it is there can develop them in their due place or order.

*

The planes below [*the Supermind, from the Overmind to the Higher Mind*] are of the spiritual consciousness but when there

is a dynamic action from them, it is always a mixed action, not an action of pure knowledge but of knowledge subduing itself to the rule of the Ignorance, the cosmic necessity in a world of Ignorance. If their action was that of the full Knowledge, there would be no need of any supramental descent.

*

The higher consciousness is a concentrated consciousness, concentrated in the Divine Unity and in the working out of the Divine Will, not dispersed and rushing about after this or that mental idea or vital desire or physical need as is the ordinary human consciousness — also not invaded by a hundred haphazard thoughts, feelings and impulses, but master of itself, centred and harmonious.

The Plane of Intuition

Intuition sees the truth of things by a direct inner contact, not like the ordinary mental intelligence by seeking and reaching out for indirect contacts through the senses etc. But the limitation of the Intuition as compared with the Supermind is that it sees things by flashes, point by point, not as a whole. Also in coming into the mind it gets mixed with the mental movement and forms a kind of intuitive-mind activity which is not the pure truth, but something in between the higher Truth and the mental seeking. It can lead the consciousness through a sort of transitional stage and that is practically its function.

*

Intuition is in direct contact with the higher Truth but not in an integral contact. It gets the Truth in flashes and turns these flashes of Truth-perception into intuitions — intuitive ideas. The ideas of the true Intuition are always correct so far as they go — but when intuition is diluted in the ordinary mind stuff, its truth gets mixed with error.

*

Intuitivising [*of the being*] is not sufficient to prevent a drop [*in consciousness*]; if it is complete (and it is not complete until not only the mind, but the vital and physical are intuitivised) it can make you understand and be conscious of all the processes in you and around but it does not necessarily make you entire master of the reactions. For that Knowledge is not enough — a certain Knowledge-Will (knowledge and will fused together) or Consciousness-Power is needed.

*

One can get intuitions — communications from there [*the intuitive plane*] even while the ego exists — but to live in the wideness of the Intuition is not possible with the limitation of the ego.

*

The Intuition is the first plane on which there is a real opening to the full possibility of realisation — it is through it that one goes farther — first to Overmind and then to Supermind.

*

It [*the individual Self*] is not specially related [*to intuition*] — intuition is the highest power the embodied individual can reach without universalising itself; when it universalises itself it is then possible for it to come in contact with overmind. If by the individual Self is meant the Jivatman, it can be on any plane of consciousness.

*

By the intuitive self I meant the intuitive being, that part which belongs to the intuitive plane or is in connection with it. The intuition is one of the higher planes of consciousness between the human thinking mind and the supramental plane.

*

The difference between intuition and thought is very much like that between seeing a thing and badgering one's brains to find out what the thing can possibly be like. Intuition is truth-sight.

The thing seen may not be the truth? Well, in that case it will at least be one of its hundred tails or at least a hair from one of the tails. The very first step in the supramental change is to transform all operations of consciousness from the ordinary mental to the intuitive, only then is there any hope of proceeding farther, — not to, but towards the supramental.

The Plane of Intuition and the Intuitive Mind

Intuition proper is true in itself (when not interpreted or altered by mind), although fragmentary — intuitive mind is mixed with mind and therefore not infallible because the truth intuition gives may be mixed or imperfectly put by mind.

*

There is the Intuition and below it there is the intuitive mind which may have several degrees or layers. Also there is a partial power of intuition in ordinary mind itself, in the vital, in the physical consciousness, in the material itself.

*

To live in the Intuitive it is necessary first to have the opening into the cosmic consciousness and to live first in the higher and the illumined Mind, seeing everything from there. To receive constantly the intuition from above, that is not necessary — it is sufficient to have the sense of the One everywhere and to get into contact with things and people through the inner mind and senses more than with the outer mind and senses — for the latter meet only the surface of things and are not intuitive.

*

The intuitive “mind” does not get the touch *direct* from the supramental. Above it is the Overmind — in which there is a higher and greater intuition and above that are the supermind ranges.

*

The intuitive mind is a level of consciousness which is touched by the light of higher truths and receives them vividly and conveys them to the consciousness below.

*

I do not think it can be said that there are separate strata in the intuitive for purity, strength and beauty. These are separate powers of the Divine, not separate strata. But of course they can be arranged by the Mind in that way for some organised purpose.

Yogic Intuition and Ordinary Intuitions

Some people have a faculty of receiving impressions about others which is not by any means infallible, but often turns out to be right. That is one thing and the Yogic intuition by which one directly knows or feels what is in a man, his capacities, character, temperament, is another. The first may be a help for developing the other, but it is not the same thing. The Yogic faculty has to be and it can be complete only with a great development of the inner consciousness.

*

To have the true intuition one must get rid of the mind's self-will and the vital's also, their preferences, fancies, fantasies, strong insinuations, and eliminate the mental and vital ego's pressure which sets the consciousness to work in the service of its own claims and desires. Otherwise these things will come in with force and claim to be intuitions, inspirations and the rest of it. Or if any intuitions come, they can be twisted and spoiled by the mixture of these forces of the Ignorance.

*

It [*intuition*] is the power of knowing any truth or fact directly without reasoning or sense-proof, by a spontaneous right perception.

*

As for intuition — well! One has to make a distinction — if one can — between a pure intuition and a mixed one. A pure intuition carries in it a truth, even if it is only a fragment or point of truth, and can be trusted. A mixed one carries in it some suggestion of truth which gets coated with mental matter — here one has to use discrimination and separate the true suggestion from the less reliable mental matter. Intuition and discrimination must always go together so long as one mixes in the mental plane — and for some time after.

*

Mental intuitive knowledge catches directly some aspect of a truth but without any completeness or certitude and the intuition is easily mixed with ordinary mental stuff that may be erroneous; in application it may easily be a half truth or be so misinterpreted and misapplied as to become an error. Also, the mind easily imitates the intuition in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish between a true or a false intuition. That is the reason why men of intellect distrust the mental intuition and say that it cannot be accepted or followed unless it is tested and confirmed by the intellect. What comes from the overmind intuition has a light, a certitude, an effective force of Truth in it that the mental intuition at its best even has not.

*

Yes,¹ but it does not *necessarily* come from the original source — the plane of Intuition. There are mental, vital, subtle physical intuitions as well as intuitions from the higher and the illumined Mind.

Powers of the Intuitive Consciousness

Revelation is a part of the intuitive consciousness.

*

¹ The correspondent asked: "Is the knowledge got by the *Samyama* of *Rajayoga* of the same kind as one would get by Intuition? Is the source of the knowledge not the same?" — Ed.

There is a discrimination [*in the intuitive consciousness*] that is not intellectual — a direct perception.

*

No, the world of Knowledge is composed of several planes. It is from one of them that inspiration comes.

The Illumined Mind

Intuition is above illumined Mind — which is simply higher Mind raised to a great luminosity and more open to modified forms of intuition and inspiration.

*

The substance of knowledge is the same [*in the higher mind and the illumined mind*], but the higher mind gives only the substance and form of knowledge in thought and word — in the illumined mind there begins to be a peculiar light and energy and ananda of knowledge which grows as one rises higher in the scale or else as the knowledge comes from a higher and higher source. This light etc. are still rather diluted and diffused in the illumined mind; it becomes more and more intense, clearly defined, dynamic and effective on the higher planes, so much so as to change always the character and power of the knowledge.

The Higher Mind

The higher mind is a thing in itself above the intellect. It is only when something of its power comes down and is modified in the lower mind substance that it acts as part of the intellect.

*

It depends on what is meant by the higher buddhi — whether you use the word to mean the higher part of the intellect or the higher Mind. The higher Mind in itself on its own level knows, but when it is involved in the ordinary human intelligence and works under limitations, it often does not know — or it has the

idea merely that it must be so but has not the consciousness of its separate existence. The intellect can rise above its ordinary movements and feel itself as a separate power no longer working under the limitations of the vital and physical mind and the senses. It then begins to reflect something of the action of the higher mind but without the full freedom and greater light and truth of the higher mind.

Chapter Five

The Lower Nature or Lower Hemisphere

The Higher Nature and the Lower Nature

The lower nature is called lower because it is unenlightened — it can't be enlightened and changed by ignoring it, the higher has to be brought there. So one must speak of both, not of the higher alone.

*

But why do you suppose that you alone are made of the lower nature? Every earthly being is so made. The higher nature is there but behind and above. It has to be brought forward from the inner being or brought down from above constantly and persistently till the lower is changed.

The Three Planes of the Lower Hemisphere and Their Energies

There is a vital plane (self-existent) above the material universe which we see; there is a mental plane (self-existent) above the vital and material. These three together, — mental, vital, physical, — are called the triple universe of the lower hemisphere. They have been established in the earth-consciousness by evolution — but they exist in themselves before the evolution, above the earth-consciousness and the material plane to which the earth belongs.

*

Forces, movements are not really planes but lines of consciousness or force which you may feel in that way one over the other. The planes are planes of consciousness and its powers — in the

mind there is a mind of Knowledge (higher mind), a mind of will (dynamic mind) and a mind of thought (intellect) which are one above the other and it is these you probably mean. They easily get covered when their forces come down into the ordinary mind — covered by the lower consciousness.

*

It is not possible to give a name to all the energies that act in the being. They are put into several classes. First are the mental thought energies (intelligence, dynamic mind, physical perceptive mind); the vital — 1st emotional vital with all the emotional movements in it; 2nd the central vital (the larger desires, passions, ambitions, forces of work, possession, conquest); 3rd the lower vital (all the small egoistic movements of desire, enjoyment, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, vanity etc. etc.); 4th the physical energies concerned with the material life and its functioning, needs, outer action, instrumental fulfilment of the other powers.

*

It cannot be explained accurately in a few words; but roughly thoughts are of the mind, emotions are of the heart, desires are of the vital. On the surface they are all mixed together, but behind they come from separate parts of the being.

The Adhara

The Adhara is that in which the consciousness is now contained — mind-life-body.

*

The Adhar means the mind, life and body as instruments of the expression of the being — the being is the conscious Existence within which uses mind, life and body as its instruments of thought, feeling and action. But sometimes the word being is used to signify the whole — soul and nature together.

Chapter Six

The Mind

Mind in the Integral Yoga and in Other Indian Systems

The “Mind” in the ordinary use of the word covers indiscriminately the whole consciousness, for man is a mental being and mentalises everything; but in the language of this Yoga, the words mind and mental are used to connote specially the part of the nature which has to do with cognition and intelligence, with ideas, with mental or thought perceptions, the reactions of thought to things, with the truly mental movements and formations, mental vision and will etc. that are part of his intelligence. The vital has to be carefully distinguished from mind, even though it has a mind element transfused into it; the vital is the Life nature made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, energies of action, will of desire, reactions of the desire soul in man and of all that play of possessive and other related instincts, anger, fear, greed, lust etc. that belong to this field of the nature. Mind and vital are mixed up on the surface of the consciousness, but they are quite separate forces in themselves and as soon as one gets behind the ordinary surface consciousness one sees them as separate, discovers their distinct action and can with the aid of this knowledge analyse their surface mixtures. It is quite possible and even usual during a time shorter or longer, sometimes very long, for the mind to accept the Divine or the Yogic ideal while the vital is unconvinced and unsundered and goes obstinately on its way of desire, passion and attraction to the ordinary life. Their division or their conflict is the cause of most of the more acute difficulties of the sadhana.

*

I don't use these terms [*Manas, Buddhi etc.*] myself as a rule — they are the psychological phraseology of the old Yoga.

*

The terms Manas etc. belong to the ordinary psychology applied to the surface consciousness. In our Yoga we adopt a different classification based on the Yoga experience. What answers to this movement of the Manas there would be two separate things — a part of the physical mind communicating with the physical vital. It receives from the physical senses and transmits to the Buddhi — i.e. to some part or other of the Thought-Mind; it receives back from the Buddhi and transmits idea and will to the organs of sensation and action. All that is indispensable in the ordinary action of the consciousness. But in the ordinary consciousness everything gets mixed up together and there is no clear order or rule. In the Yoga one becomes aware of the different parts and their proper action, and puts each in its place and to its proper action under the control of the higher consciousness or else under the control of the Divine Power. Afterwards all gets surcharged with the spiritual consciousness and there is an automatic right perception and right action of the different parts because they are controlled entirely from above and do not falsify or resist or confuse its dictates.

Manas and Buddhi

Manas is the sense mind, that which perceives physical objects and happenings through the senses and forms mental percepts about them and mental reactions to them; it also observes the reactions of the Chitta, feelings, emotions, sensations etc. (which belong to what in the system of this Yoga is called the vital). Buddhi is the thinking mind which stands above and behind all these things, reflects, judges, decides what is to be thought or done or not done, what is right or wrong, true or false etc. At least that is what it should do in all independence, but usually it is obscured by the vital movements, desires etc. and its ideas and judgments are not pure.

*

In physical mind there can be an action of intelligent reasoning and coordination which is a delegation from the Buddhi

and would perhaps not be attributed to the Manas by the old psychology. Still the larger part of the action of physical mind corresponds to that of Manas, but it comprises also much of what we would attribute to vital mind and to the nervous being. It is a little difficult to equate this old nomenclature with that of this Yoga, for the former takes the mixed action of the surface and tries to analyse it—while in this Yoga what is mixed together on the surface gets separated and seen in the light of the deeper working behind which is hidden from the surface awareness. So we have to adopt a different classification.

The physical mind has first to open to the higher consciousness—its limitations are then removed and it admits what is supraphysical and begins to see things in harmony with the higher knowledge. It becomes an instrument for externalising that knowledge in the pragmatic perceptions and actions of the physical life. It sees things as they are and deals with them according to the larger Truth with an automatic rightness of perception and will and reaction to impacts.

*

To sense things and react mentally to objects and convey impressions to the Buddhi etc. [*is the function of Manas*].

*

The right activity of the buddhi is always to observe, discern, discriminate, understand rightly and give the right direction to the vital and the body. But it does it imperfectly so long as it is in the Ignorance; by opening to the Mother it begins to get the true light and direction. Afterwards it is transformed into intuition and from intuition to the instrumental action of the overmind or the supermind Consciousness.

Chitta

The Chitta is the general stuff of mental consciousness which supports Manas and everything else—it is an indeterminate consciousness which gets determined into thoughts and

memories and desires and sensations and perceptions and impulses and feelings (*cittavṛtti*).

*

There is no special plane of chitta. Chitta in the language of the old Yogas meant the stuff of consciousness out of which thought, will, memory, emotion, desire, sensation all arise — all these are called chittavritti, movements of the chitta. It was distinguished from Chit, the higher or divine consciousness.

*

Usually the word [*Chitta*] is employed for the general surface consciousness in which thoughts, feelings, desires, emotions, sensations (these being called chittavritti) arise. There is therefore no special location. Its function is to receive the impacts of the world and give back reactions which take the form of thoughts, feelings etc.

*

The Chitta is not near the heart — if you mean the substance of the lower consciousness, it has no particular place. All things of this life are there in this stuff of consciousness, but the memory of past lives is wrapped up and involved elsewhere. The heart is the main centre of this consciousness for most men, so of course you may feel its activities centred on that level.

*

Chitta really means the ordinary consciousness including the mind, vital and physical — but practically it can be taken to mean something central in the consciousness. If that is centred in the Divine, the rest follows more or less quietly as a natural result.

*

The Chitta receives these things [*thoughts, desires, etc.*], gives them for formation to the vital and mind and all is transmitted to the Buddhi, but also it receives thoughts from the Buddhi and

turns these into desires and sensations and impulses.

*

Yes, certainly [*the Chitta must stop catching influences from outside at random*]—but as its whole business is to receive from above or below or around, it cannot stop doing it, it cannot of itself determine what it shall or shall not receive. It has to be assisted by the Buddhi, vital will or some higher power. Afterwards when the higher consciousness descends it begins to be transformed and capable of an automatic rejection of what is not true or right or divine or helpful to the growth of the divine in the being.

*

The Chitta does not receive desires and sensations from the Buddhi. It takes thoughts from the Buddhi and turns them into desires.

*

There is always or generally at least a modifying reaction [*to thoughts, desires etc. from outside*] in the chitta — except when it simply receives and stores without passing them on to the instruments.

*

If the word *vāsanā* is used in the original [*the Yogavasishtha*], it does not mean “desire”. It means usually the idea or mental feeling rising from the chitta, imaginations, impressions, memories etc., impressions of liking and disliking, of pain and pleasure. What Vasishtha wants to say is that while the ideas, impressions, impulsions that lead to action in an ordinary man rise from the chitta, those that rise in the Jivanmukta come straight from the *sattva* — from the essential consciousness of the being — in other words they are not mental but spiritual formations. As one might say, instead of *cittavṛtti* they are *sattvapreṛaṇā*, direct indications from the inner being of what is to be thought, felt or done. When the chitta is no longer active and the mind silent — which

happens when the *mukti* comes and no one can be Jivanmukta without that — then what remains and perceives and does things is felt as an essential consciousness, the consciousness of the true self or true being.

*

There is a subconscious action of the chitta which keeps the past impression of things and sends up forms of them to the consciousness in dream or else keeps the habit of old movements and sends up these whenever it finds an opportunity.

*

The chitta is the consciousness out of which all is formed, but the formation is made by the mind or vital or other force — which are, as it were, the instruments of the chitta for self-expression.

Western Ideas of Mind and Spirit

St. Augustine was a man of God and a great saint, but great saints are not always — or often — great psychologists or great thinkers. The psychology here¹ is that of the most superficial schools, if not that of the man in the street; there are as many errors in it as there are psychological statements — and more, for several are not expressed but involved in what he writes. I am aware that these errors are practically universal, for psychological enquiry in Europe (and without enquiry there can be no sound knowledge) is only beginning and has not gone very far, and what has reigned in men's minds up to now is a superficial statement of the superficial appearances of our consciousness as they look to us at first view and nothing more. But knowledge only begins when we get away from the surface phenomena and look behind them for their true operations and causes. To the superficial view of the outer mind and senses the sun is a little fiery ball circling in mid air round the earth and the stars twinkling little things stuck in the sky for our benefit at night.

¹ In St. Augustine's Confessions 8.9.21. — Ed.

Scientific enquiry comes and knocks this infantile first view to pieces. The sun is a huge affair (millions of miles away from our air) around which the small earth circles and the stars are huge members of huge systems indescribably distant which have nothing apparently to do with the tiny earth and her creatures. All science is like that, a contradiction of the sense view or superficial appearances of things and an assertion of truths which are unguessed by the common sense and the uninstructed reason. The same process has to be followed in psychology if we are really to know what our consciousness is, how it is built and made and what is the secret of its functionings or the way out of its disorders.

There are several capital and common errors here —

- (1) That mind and spirit are the same thing.
- (2) That all consciousness can be spoken of as “mind”.
- (3) That all consciousness therefore is of a spiritual substance.
- (4) That the body is merely matter, not conscious, therefore something quite different from the spiritual part of the nature.

First, the spirit and the mind are two different things and should not be confused together. The mind is an instrumental entity or instrumental consciousness whose function is to think and perceive — the spirit is an essential entity or consciousness which does not need to think or perceive either in the mental or the sensory way, because whatever knowledge it has is direct or essential knowledge, *svayamprakāśa*.

Next, it follows that all consciousness is not necessarily of a spiritual make and it need not be true and is not true that the thing commanding and the thing commanded are the same, are not at all different, are of the same substance and therefore are bound or at least ought to agree together.

Third, it is not even true that it is the mind which is commanding the mind and finds itself disobeyed by itself. First there are many parts of the mind, each a force in itself with its formations, functionings, interests, and they may not agree. One part of the mind may be spiritually influenced and like to think of the Divine and obey the spiritual impulse, another part may be

rational or scientific or literary and prefer to follow the formations, beliefs or doubts, mental preferences and interests which are in conformity with its education and its nature. But quite apart from that, what was commanding in St. Augustine may very well have been the thinking mind or reason while what was commanded was the vital, and mind and vital, whatever anybody may say, are not the same. The thinking mind or buddhi lives, however imperfectly in man, by intelligence and reason, and tries to act or makes the rest act under that law as far as and in the way that it has conceived the law of intelligence and reason. The vital on the other hand is a thing of desires, impulses, force-pushes, emotions, sensations, seekings after life fulfilment, possession and enjoyment; these are its function and its nature; — it is that part of us which seeks after life and its movements for their own sake and it does not want to leave hold of them even if they bring it suffering as well as or more than pleasure; it is even capable of luxuriating in tears and suffering as part of the drama of life. What then is there in common between the thinking intelligence and the vital and why should the latter obey the mind and not follow its own nature? The disobedience is perfectly normal instead of being, as Augustine suggests, unintelligible. Of course man can establish a mental control over his vital and in so far as he does it he is a man, — because the thinking mind is a nobler and more enlightened entity and consciousness than the vital and ought therefore to rule and, if the mental will is strong, can rule. But this rule is precarious, incomplete and established and held only by much self-discipline. For if the mind is more enlightened, the vital is nearer to earth, more intense, vehement, more directly able to touch the body. There is too a vital mind which lives by imagination, thoughts of desire, will to act and enjoy from its own impulse and this is able to seize on the reason itself and make it its auxiliary and its justifying counsel and supplier of pleas and excuses. There is also the sheer force of Desire in man which is the vital's principal support and strong enough to sweep off the reason as the Gita says, “like a boat in stormy waters”, *nāvam ivāmbhasi*.

Finally, the body obeys the mind automatically in those

things in which it is formed or trained to obey it, but the relation of the body to the mind is not in all things that of an automatic perfect instrument. The body also has a consciousness of its own and, though it is a submental instrument or servant consciousness, it can disobey or fail to obey as well. In many things, in matters of health and illness for instance, in all automatic functionings, the body acts on its own and is not a servant of the mind. If it is fatigued, it can offer a passive resistance to the mind's will. It can cloud the mind with *tamas*, inertia, dullness, fumes of the subconscious so that the mind cannot act. The arm lifts itself no doubt when it gets the suggestion, but at first the legs do not obey when they are asked to walk; they have to learn how to leave the crawling attitude and movement and take up the erect and ambulatory habit. When you first ask the hand to draw a straight line or to play music, it can't do it and won't do it. It has to be schooled, trained, taught, and afterwards it does automatically what is required of it. All this proves that there is a body consciousness different from the mind consciousness which can do things at the mind's order but has to be awakened, trained, made a good and conscious instrument. It can even be so trained that a mental will or suggestion can cure the illnesses of the body. But all these things, these relations of mind and body, stand on the same footing in essence as the relation of mind to vital and it is not so easy or primary a matter as Augustine would have it.

This puts the problem on another footing with the causes more clear and, if we are prepared to go far enough, it suggests the way out, the way of Yoga.

P.S. All this is quite apart from the contributing and very important factor of plural personality of which psychological enquiry is just beginning rather obscurely to take account. That is a more complex affair.

*

The non-materialistic European idea [*of the true soul or person*] makes a distinction between soul and body — the body is perishable, the mental-vital consciousness is the immortal soul and

remains always the same (horrible idea!) in heaven as on earth or if there is rebirth it is also the same damned personality that comes back and makes a similar fool of itself.

The Psychic Mind

When the mind is turned towards the Divine and the Truth and feels and responds to that only or mainly, it can be called a psychic mind — it is something formed by the influence of the psychic being on the mental plane.

*

Psychic mind and mental psychic are the same thing practically. When there is a movement of the mind in which the psychic influence predominates, it is called the psychic in the mind or the psychic mind.

The Mind Proper

Above the physical mind and the vital mind is the mental intelligence, the mind proper. Beyond the ordinary thinking mind or intellect is the higher mind; beyond the higher mind is the illumined mind and beyond that is the intuitive mind. Above the intuitive mind are the Intuition and the Overmind.

*

The Mind proper is divided into three parts — thinking Mind, dynamic Mind, externalising Mind — the former concerned with ideas and knowledge in their own right, the second with the putting out of mental forces for realisation of the idea, the third with the expression of them in life (not only by speech, but by any form it can give). The word “physical mind” is rather ambiguous, because it can mean this externalising mind and the mental in the physical taken together.

Vital mind proper is a sort of mediator between vital emotion, desire, impulsion etc. and the mental proper. It expresses the desires, feelings, emotions, passions, ambitions, possessive

and active tendencies of the vital and throws them into mental forms (the pure imaginations or dreams of greatness, happiness etc. in which men indulge are one peculiar form of the vital mind activity). There is a still lower stage of the mental in the vital which merely expresses the vital stuff without subjecting it to any play of intelligence. It is through this mental vital that the vital passions, impulses, desires rise up and get into the Buddhi and either cloud or distort it.

As the vital Mind is limited by the vital view and feeling of things (while the dynamic Intelligence is not, for it acts by the idea and reason), so the mind in the physical or mental physical is limited by the physical view and experience of things, it mentalises the experience brought by the contacts of outward life and things and does not go beyond that (though it can do that much very cleverly), unlike the externalising mind which deals with them more from the reason and its higher intelligence. But in practice these two usually get mixed together. The mechanical mind is a much lower action of the mental physical which, left to itself, would only repeat customary ideas and record the natural reflexes of the physical consciousness to the contacts of outward life and things.

The lower vital as distinguished from the higher is concerned only with the small greeds, small desires, small passions etc. which make up the daily stuff of life for the ordinary sensational man — while the vital physical proper is the nervous being giving vital reflexes to contacts of things with the physical consciousness.

*

It is quite usual for the dynamic and formative part of the mind to be more quick to action than the reflective and discriminative part to control it. It is a question of getting a kind of balance and harmony between them.

The Thinking Mind and the Vital Mind

The thinking mind does not lead men, does not influence them

the most — it is the vital propensities and the vital mind that predominate. The thinking mind with most men is, in matters of life, only an instrument of the vital.

*

Vital thought expresses vital movements, the play of vital forces. It does not think freely and independently of them as the thinking mind can do. The true thinking mind can stand above the vital movements, watch and observe and judge them freely as it would observe and judge outside things. In most men however the thinking mind (reason) is invaded by the vital mind and not free.

The Thinking Mind and the Physical Mind

The true thinking mind does not belong to the physical, it is a separate power. The physical mind is that part of the mind which is concerned with the physical things only — it depends on the sense mind, sees only objects, external actions, draws its ideas from the data given by external things, infers from them only and knows no other Truth — until it is enlightened from above.

*

The physical mind can deal only with outward things. One has to think and decide in other things with the mind itself (*buddhi*), not with the physical part of it.

The Vital Mind

There is a part of the nature which I have called the vital mind; the function of this mind is not to think and reason, to perceive, consider and find out or value things, for that is the function of the thinking mind proper, *buddhi*, — but to plan or dream or imagine what can be done. It makes formations for the future which the will can try to carry out if opportunity and circumstances become favourable or even it can work to make them favourable. In men of action this faculty is prominent and a leader of their nature; great men of action always have it in a very

high measure. But even if one is not a man of action or practical realisation or if circumstances are not favourable or one can do only small and ordinary things, this vital mind is there. It acts in them on a small scale, or if it needs some sense of largeness, what it does very often is to plan in the void knowing that it cannot realise its plans or else to imagine big things, stories, adventures, great doings in which oneself is the hero or the creator. What you describe as happening in you is the rush of this vital mind or imagination making its formations; its action is not peculiar to you but works pretty much in the same way in most people — but in each according to his turn of fancy, interest, favourite ideas or desires. You have to become master of its action and not to allow it to seize your mind and carry it away when and where it wants. In sadhana when the experiences begin to come, it is exceedingly important not to allow this power to do what it likes with you; for it then creates false experiences according to its nature and persuades the sadhak that these experiences are true or it builds unreal formations and persuades him that this is what he has to do. Some have been taken away by this misleading force used by powers of Falsehood who persuaded them through it that they had a great spiritual, political or social work to do in the world and led them away to disappointment and failure. It is rising in you in order that you may understand what it is and reject it. For there are several things you had to get out of the vital plane before the deeper or greater spiritual experiences could safely begin or safely continue.

The descent of the peace is often one of the first major positive experiences of the sadhana. In this state of peace the normal thought-mind (*buddhi*) is apt to fall silent or abate most of its activity and, when it does, very often either this vital mind can rush in, if one is not on one's guard, or else a kind of mechanical physical or random subconscious mind can begin to come up and act; these are the chief disturbers of the silence. Or else the lower vital mind can try to disturb; that brings up the ego and passions and their play. All these are signs of elements that have to be got rid of, because if they remain and other of the higher powers begin to descend, Power and Force, Knowledge, Love or

Ananda, those lower things may come across with the result that either the higher consciousness retires or its descent is covered up and the stimulation it gives is misused for the purposes of the lower nature. This is the reason why many sadhaks after having big experiences fall into the clutch of a magnified ego, upheavals, ambition, exaggerated sex or other vital passions or distortions. It is always well therefore if a complete purification of the vital can either precede or keep pace with the positive experience — at least in natures in which the vital is strongly active.²

The Physical Mind

It [*the true physical mind*] is the instrument of understanding and ordered action on physical things. Only instead of being obscure and ignorant and fumbling as now or else guided only by an external knowledge it has to become conscious of the Divine and to act in accordance with an inner light, will and knowledge putting itself into contact and an understanding unity with the physical world.

*

It [*the true physical mind*] can press upon it [*the physical vital*] the true attitude and feeling, make the incoming of the wrong suggestions and impulses more difficult and give full force to the true movements. This action of the physical mind is indispensable for the change of the whole physical consciousness even to the most material, though for that the enlightening of the subconscious is indispensable.

*

It is the function of the outward physical mind to deal with external things — that is why it wants always to be busy with them. What it has to learn is to be quiet and to act only when the Will wants to use it, when it is really needed — and also to act only

² Other letters on the vital mind have been placed under the heading “The Mental Vital or Vital Mind” on pages 189–92. — Ed.

on what the Will wants to deal with, not run about in a random manner. When it becomes quiet, it can then go inside and come into contact and unity with the inner physical consciousness. The wideness and peace as it grows can do much to quiet the physical mind and give it an inward source of deeper action.

*

In the human physical mind there is always a tendency not to understand or to misunderstand and to interpret according to its own notions. That can only be removed by the Light in the mind and the power everywhere which refuses to accept suggestions of disturbance.

*

It is the physical mind that finds it difficult to believe in the reality of supraphysical things — that is due to its ignorance and its belief that only physical things are real.

*

Yes, it [*the physical mind*] reasons, but on the basis of external data mostly — on things as they appear to the outer mind and senses or the habitual ideas to which it is accustomed or to a purely external knowledge.

*

That part of the being [*the physical mind*] has no reason except its whims, its habits or an inclination to be tamasic.

*

The physical mind is in the habit of observing things with or without use.

The Physical Mental or Physical Mind and the Mental Physical or Mechanical Mind

The physical mental or externalising mind is part of the mental consciousness, not part of the physical consciousness. But it is

closely connected with the mental physical — so that the two usually act together.

*

The automatic or mechanical mind is called by us the mental physical — and distinguished from the physical mind which is that which deals intelligently with physical things. The other simply stores, associates, repeats, gives reflexes and reactions etc.

*

Repetition is the habit of the mental physical — it is not the true thinking mind that behaves like this, it is the mental physical or else the lowest part of the physical mind.

*

But the main error here is in your description of the physical part of the mind — what you have described there is the mechanical mental physical or body-mind which when left to itself simply goes on repeating the past customary thoughts and movements or at the most adds to them such further mechanical reactions to things and reflexes as are in the round of life. The true physical mind is the receiving and externalising intelligence which has two functions — first, to work upon external things and give them a mental order with a way of practically dealing with them and, secondly, to be the channel of materialising and putting into effect whatever the thinking and dynamic mind sends down to it for the purpose.

*

The vital mind is usually energetic and creative even in its more mechanical rounds, so it must be the physical that is turning. It is that and the mechanical that last longest, but these too fall silent when the peace and silence become massive and complete. Afterwards knowledge begins to come from the higher planes — the Higher Mind to begin with, and this creates a new action of thought and perception which replaces the ordinary mental.

It does that first in the thinking mind, but afterwards also in the vital mind and physical mind, so that all these begin to go through a transformation. This kind of thought is not random and restless, but precise and purposeful—it comes only when needed or called for and does not disturb the silence. Moreover the element of what we call thought there is secondary and what might be called a seeing perception (intuition) takes its place. But so long as the mind does not become capable of a complete silence, this higher knowledge, thought, perception either does not come down or, if partially it does, it is liable to get mixed up with or imitated by the lower, and that is a bother and a hindrance. So the silence is necessary.

*

The automatic mind is a part of the lower action, it can only stop by the acquirement of mental silence or the descent of a higher consciousness.

The Mental World of the Individual

As he [*the human being*] lives in a separative consciousness, he makes a mental world of his own out of his experience of the common world in which all here live. It is built in the same way as that of others and he receives into it the thoughts, feelings of others, without knowing it most often, and uses that too as material for his separate world.

Chapter Seven

The Vital Being and Vital Consciousness

The Vital

Mind and vital are two different processes of one consciousness.

*

It [*vital*] means *prāṇa* — it is the life-force and desire-force in a man and the part of the being that responds to desire and is the instrument of the life-forces.

The True Vital Being and Consciousness

There is behind all the vital nature in man his true vital being concealed and immobile which is quite different from the surface vital nature. The surface vital is narrow, ignorant, limited, full of obscure desires, passions, cravings, revolts, pleasures and pains, transient joys and griefs, exultations and depressions. The true vital being on the contrary is wide, vast, calm, strong, without limitations, firm and immovable, capable of all power, all knowledge, all Ananda. It is moreover without ego, for it knows itself to be a projection and instrument of the Divine; it is the divine Warrior, pure and perfect; in it is an instrumental Force for all divine realisations. It is the true vital being that has become awake and come in front within you. In the same way there is too a true mental being, a true physical being. When these are manifest, then you are aware of a double existence in you; that behind is always calm and strong, that on the surface alone is troubled and obscure. But if the true being behind remains stable and you live in it, then the trouble and obscurity remain only on the surface; in this condition the exterior parts can be dealt

with more potently and they also made free and perfect.

*

The true vital is in the inner consciousness, the external is that which is instrumental for the present play of Prakriti in the surface personality. When the change comes, the true vital rejects what is out of tune with its own truth from the external and makes it a true instrument for its expression, a means of expression of its inner will, not a thing of responses to the suggestions of the lower Nature. The strong distinction between the two practically disappears.

*

The higher and lower [*vital*] are divisions of the ordinary vital and equally ignorant. It is the true vital that is in contact with the Divine.

*

The true vital consciousness is one in which the vital makes full surrender, converts itself into an instrument of the Divine, making no demand, insisting on no desire, answering to the Mother's force and to no other, calm, unegoistic, giving an absolute loyalty and obedience, with no personal vanity or ambition, only willing to be a pure and perfect instrument, desiring nothing for itself but that the Truth may prevail within itself and everywhere and the Divine Victory take place and the Divine Work be done.

*

It [*the true vital*] is capable of receiving the movements of the higher consciousness, and afterwards it can be capable of receiving the still greater supramental power and Ananda. If it is not, then the descent of the higher consciousness would be impossible and supramentalisation would be impossible. It is not meant that it possesses these things itself in its own right and that as soon as one is aware of the true vital, one gets all these things as inherent in the true vital.

*

It is as I told you — only by losing ego and having the sense of the Infinite can one experience the true vital. So you got the experience of the loss of ego and the sense of a true vital existence. But there are all those parts of the human vital nature that are not the true vital and these are full of impurities which have to be thrown in the fire of aspiration burning in the true vital being.

*

It [*the illumined vital*] is in contact with the Divine Power or the higher Truth and seeks to transform itself and become a true instrument — it rejects the ordinary vital movements.

Parts of the Vital Being

There are four parts of the vital being — first, the mental vital which gives a mental expression by thought, speech or otherwise to the emotions, desires, passions, sensations and other movements of the vital being; the emotional vital which is the seat of various feelings such as love, joy, sorrow, hatred, and the rest; the central vital which is the seat of the stronger vital longings and reactions, e.g. ambition, pride, fear, love of fame, attractions and repulsions, desires and passions of various kinds and the field of many vital energies; last, the lower vital which is occupied with small desires and feelings, such as make the greater part of daily life, e.g. food desire, sexual desire, small likings, dislikings, vanity, quarrels, love of praise, anger at blame, little wishes of all kinds — and a numberless host of other things. Their respective seats are (1) the region from the throat to the heart, (2) the heart (it is a double centre, belonging in front to the emotional and vital and behind to the psychic), (3) from the heart to the navel, (4) below the navel.

*

The point about the emotional and the higher vital is a rather difficult one. In one classification in which mind is taken as something more than the thinking, perceiving and willing intelligence,

the emotional can be reckoned as part of the mind, the vital in the mental. In another classification it is rather the most mentalised part of the vital nature. In the first case, the term higher vital is confined to that larger movement of the conscious life-force which is concerned with creation, with power and force and conquest, with giving and self-giving and gathering from the world for farther action and expenditure of power, throwing itself out in the wider movements of life, responsive to the greater objects of Nature. In the second arrangement, the emotional being stands at the top of the vital nature and the two together make the higher vital. As against them stands the lower vital which is concerned with the pettier movements of action and desire and stretches down into the vital physical where it supports the life of the more external activities and all physical sensations, hungers, cravings, satisfactions. The term lower must not be considered in a pejorative sense; it refers only to the position in the hierarchy of the planes. For although this part of the nature in earthly beings tends to be very obscure and is full of perversions, — lust, greed of all kinds, vanity, small ambitions, petty anger, envy, jealousy are its ordinary guests, — still there is another side to it which makes it an indispensable mediator between the inner being and the outer life.

It is not a fact that every psychic experience embodies itself in a purified and rightly directed vital current; it does that when it has to externalise itself in action. Psychic experience is in itself a quite independent thing and has its own characteristic forms. The psychic being stands behind all the others; its force is the true soul-power. But if it comes to the front, it can suffuse all the rest; mind, vital, the physical consciousness can take its stamp and be transformed by its influence. When the nature is properly developed, there is a psychic in the mental, a psychic in the vital, a psychic in the physical. It is when that is there and strong, that we can say of someone that he evidently has a soul. But there are some in whom this element is so lacking that we have to use faith in order to believe that they have a soul at all. The centre of the psychic being is behind the centre of the emotional being; it is the emotional that is nearest dynamically to the psychic and

in most men it is through the emotional centre that the psychic can be most easily reached and through the psychicised emotion that it can be most easily expressed. Many therefore mistake the one for the other; but there is a world of difference between the two. The emotions normally are vital in their character and not part of the psychic nature.

It must be remembered that while this classification is indispensable for psychological self-knowledge and discipline and practice, it can be used best when it is not made too rigid and cutting a formula. For things run very much into each other and a synthetical sense of these powers is as necessary as the analysis. Mind for instance is everywhere. The physical mind is technically placed below the vital and yet it is a prolongation of the mind proper and can act in its own sphere by direct touch with the higher mental intelligence. And there is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules, corpuscles. Haeckel, the German materialist, spoke somewhere of the will in the atom, and recent Science, dealing with the incalculable individual variation in the activity of the electrons, comes near to perceiving that this is not a figure but the shadow thrown by a secret reality. This body-mind is a very tangible truth; owing to its obscurity and mechanical clinging to past movements and facile oblivion and rejection of the new, we find in it one of the chief obstacles to permeation by the supermind force and the transformation of the functioning of the body. On the other hand, once effectively converted, it will be one of the most precious instruments for the stabilisation of the supramental light and force in material Nature.

The Mental Vital or Vital Mind

It is the mental part of the vital that is there between the throat and the heart. The place of the mind is from the crown of the head to the throat (where is the physical mind); from below the throat to the heart is the emotional heart or the [*higher*] vital (mental emotional, emotional feelings); the navel and abdomen [*are the seats of*] the middle and lower vital.

It is not possible to say with any precision what the resistance in the higher vital parts will be, what form it takes, because it may take different forms with different natures. It is quite normal that there should be some resistance almost at every point to the descent of the higher consciousness; for the different parts of the present nature are each more or less attached to their own established way of seeing, acting, feeling, reacting to things and to the habitual movements and formations of their own domain which each individual has made for himself in the past or in his present life. What is needed is a general plasticity of the mind, the vital, the physical consciousness, a readiness to give up all attachment to these things, to accept whatever the higher consciousness brings down with it however contrary to one's own received ideas, feelings, habits of nature. The greater the plasticity in any part of the nature, the less the resistance there.

By the higher vital parts of the nature I mean the vital mind, the emotional nature, the life-force dynamis in the being. The vital mind is that part of the vital being which builds, plans, imagines, arranges things and thoughts according to the life-pushes, desires, will to power or possession, will to action, emotions, vital ego reactions of the nature. It must be distinguished from the reasoning will which plans and arranges things according to the dictates of the thinking mind proper, the discriminating reason or according to the mental intuition or a direct insight and judgment. The vital mind uses thought for the service not of reason but of life-push and life-power and when it calls in reasoning it uses that for justifying the dictates of these powers, imposes their dictates on the reason instead of governing by a discriminating will the action of the life-forces. This higher vital with all its parts is situated in the chest and has the cardiac centre as its main stronghold governing all this part down to the navel. I need not say anything about the emotional nature, for its character and movements are known to all. From the navel downwards is the reign of the vital passions and sensations and all the small life-impulses that constitute the bulk of the ordinary human life and character. This is what we call the lower vital nature. The Muladhara is the main support of the physical

consciousness and the material parts of the nature.

*

It [*the vital mind*] is a mind of dynamic (not rationalising) will, action, desire — occupied with force and achievement and satisfaction and possession, enjoyment and suffering, giving and taking, growth, expansion, success and failure, good fortune and ill fortune etc. etc.

*

That [*repetitive imaginative thinking*] is the ordinary activity of the vital mind which is always imagining and thinking and planning what to do about this and how to arrange about that. It has obviously its utility in human nature and human action, but acts in a random and excessive way without discipline, economy of its powers or concentration on the things that have really to be done.

*

The things which come to you in this way in sleep or waking are of the nature of vital mind imaginations and activities about things and work and whatever presents itself to the mind. On all things that present themselves to the mind, the vital imagination in man is able to work, imagining, speculating, building ideas or plans for the future etc. etc. It has its utility for the consciousness in ordinary life, but must quiet down and be replaced by a higher action in Yoga. In sleep it is also the vital plane into which you enter. If properly seen and coordinated, what is experienced in the vital plane has its value and gives knowledge which is useful and control over the vital self and vital plane. But all that is coming to you through the subconscious in an incoherent way — this is the cause of the trouble. The whole thing has to be quieted down and we shall try to get that done. When I spoke of your opening yourself, I meant simply that you should fix it in your mind that the help is coming and have the will to receive it — not necessarily that you should open yourself by an effort.

*

The source from which these imaginations¹ come has nothing to do with the reason and does not care for any rational objections. They come either from the vital mind, the same source from which come all the fine imaginations and long stories which men tell themselves in which they are the heroes and do great things or they come from little entities attached to the physical mind which pick up any random suggestion anywhere and present it to the mind just to see whether it will be accepted. If one watches oneself closely one can find the most queer and extraordinary or nonsensical things crossing the mind or peeping in on it in this way. Usually one laughs or hardly notices and the thing falls back to the world of incoherent thought from which it came.

*

It is again the vital mind. It has no sense of proportion or measure and is eager to be or achieve something big at once.

*

All that [*pleasurable imaginations*] is the vital mind — it has in everybody the habit of such imaginations. It is not very important, but of course it has to be got rid of, as the basis is ego.

*

The vital mind in the ordinary nature cannot get on without these imaginations — so the habit remains for a long time. To be detached and indifferent is the best, then after a time it may get disgusted and drop the habit.

*

That kind of talking [*in one's mind to another person*] is very common with the vital mind. It is a way it has of acting on the subtle plane on things in which it is interested, especially if the physical action is stopped or restricted.

¹ *The disciple had imagined that he was the Buddha. — Ed.*

The Emotional Being or Heart

The emotional being is itself a part of the vital.

*

The heart is the centre of the emotional being and the emotions are vital movements. When the heart is purified, the vital emotions change into psychic feelings or else psychicised vital movements.

*

The heart is part of the vital—it has to be controlled in the same way as the rest, by rejection of the wrong movements, by acceptance of the true psychic surrender which prevents all demand and clamour, by calling in the higher light and knowledge. It is not usually however the heart that bothers about mental questions and the answer to them.

*

Pure and true thoughts and emotions and impulsions can rise from the human mind, heart and vital, because all is not evil there. The heart may be unpurified, but that does not mean that everything in it is impure.

*

I make the distinction [*between emotions and lower vital movements*] by noting where these things rise from. Anger, fear, jealousy touch the heart no doubt just as they touch the mind but they rise from the navel region and entrails (i.e. the lower or at highest the middle vital). Stevenson has a striking passage in *Kidnapped* where the hero notes that his fear is felt primarily not in the heart but the stomach. Love, hope have their primary seat in the heart, so with pity etc.

The Central Vital or Vital Proper

Above the heart is the vital mind—sense and the rising of

sensation is lower than the emotion, not higher.

Sensation is much nearer the physical than emotion.

The place of desire is below the heart in the central vital (navel) and in the lower vital, but it invades the emotion and the vital mind.

*

A mistake [*to think that all men seek after happiness*]; many men are not after happiness and do not believe it is the true aim of life. It is the physical vital that seeks after happiness, the bigger vital is ready to sacrifice it in order to satisfy its passions, search for power, ambition, fame or any other motive. If you say it is because of the happiness power, fame etc. gives, that again is not universally true. Power can give anything else, but not happiness; it is something in its very nature arduous and full of difficulty to get, to keep or to use — I speak of course of power in the ordinary sense. A man may know he can never have fame in this life but yet work in the hope of posthumous fame or in the chance of it. He may know that the satisfaction of his passion will bring him everything rather than happiness — suffering, torture, destruction — yet he will follow his impulse. So also the mind as well as the larger vital is not bound by the pursuit of happiness. It can seek Truth rather or the victory of a cause. To reduce all to a single hedonistic strain seems to me very poor psychology. Neither Nature nor the vast Spirit in things are so limited and one-tracked as that.

*

The nervous part of the being is a portion of the vital — it is the vital physical, the life-force closely enmeshed in the reactions, desires, needs, sensations of the body. The vital proper is the life-force acting in its own nature, impulses, emotions, feelings, desires, ambitions etc. having as their highest centre what we may call the outer heart of emotion, while there is an inner heart where are the higher or psychic feelings and sensibilities, the emotions and intuitive yearnings and impulses of the soul. The vital part of us is, of course, necessary to our completeness, but

it is a true instrument only when its feelings and tendencies have been purified by the psychic touch and taken up and governed by the spiritual light and power.

The Lower Vital, the Physical Vital and the Material Vital

Below the navel is the lower vital plane, which is ignorant and obscure, the seat of small desires, greeds, passions and enjoyments.

*

As there is a physical mind, so there is a physical vital — a vital turned entirely upon physical things, full of desires and greeds and seekings for pleasure on the physical plane.

*

That [*seeking enjoyment*] is the attitude not of the whole vital but of the physical vital, the animal part of the human being. Of course it cannot be convinced by mental reasoning of any kind. In most men it is the natural and accepted attitude towards life varnished over with some conventional moralism and idealism as a concession to the mind and higher vital. In a few this part of the being is gripped and subordinated to the mental or the higher vital aim, forced to take a subordinate place so that the mind may absorb itself persistently in mental pursuits or idealisms or great political or personal ambitions (Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini). The ascetic and the Puritan try to suppress it mostly or altogether. In our Yoga the principle is that all must become an instrument of the Spirit and the parts of enjoyment taste the Ananda in things, not the animal enjoyment of the surface. But the Ananda will not come or will not stay so long as this part is not converted and insists on its own way of satisfaction.

*

Yes — they [*the lower vital, the physical vital and the material vital*] become very clear to the increasing consciousness. And the distinctions are necessary — otherwise one may influence or

control the lower vital or a part of the physical vital and then be astonished to find that something intangible but apparently invincible still resists — it is the material vital with so much of the rest as it can influence by its resistance.

*

I don't know about subtle vital. One says subtle physical to distinguish from gross material physical — because to our normal experience all physical is gross, *sthūla*. But the vital is in its nature non-material, so the adjective is superfluous. By material vital, we mean the vital so involved in matter as to be bound by its movements and gross physical character. The action is to support and energise the body and keep in it the capacity of life, growth, movement etc., also of sensitiveness to outer impacts.

A Strong Vital

A strong vital is one that is full of life-force, has ambition, courage, great energy, a force for action or for creation, a large expansive movement whether for generosity in giving or for possession and lead and domination, a power to fulfil and materialise — many other forms of vital strength there are also. It is often difficult for such a vital to surrender itself because of this sense of its own powers — but if it can do so, it becomes an admirable instrument for the Divine Work.

*

No, a weak vital has not the strength to turn spiritually — and being weak more easily falls under a wrong influence and even when it wants, finds it difficult to accept anything beyond its own habitual nature. The strong vital when the will is there can do it much more easily — its one central difficulty is the pride of its ego and the attraction of its powers.

The chest has more connection with the psychic than the vital. A strong vital may have a good physique, but as often it has not — it draws too much on the physical, eats it up as it were.

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In a mere vampire there is no psychic, for the vampire is a vital being — but in all humans (even if dominated by a vital being or vampire force), there is a psychic veiled behind it all.

The Vital Body

The physical life cannot last without the body nor can the body live without the life force, but the life in itself has a separate existence and a separate body of its own, the vital body, just as the mind has a separate existence and can exist on its own plane. All the organisation is held together by the psychic which is the support of all.

The Vital Nature

It was not your own vital that you saw, but the general vital Nature in the Ignorance that took form and spoke. The battle you saw was the struggle between the Powers of the Light and the Powers of the Darkness for possession of the vital Nature on earth.

Your vital cannot be destroyed, because it is needed as an instrument for the manifestation of the Divine element in you. There can be no life and no manifestation here on earth without the vital. It has not to be destroyed, but purified and changed into the true Vital.

The Vital Plane and the Physical Plane

Things do happen on the vital plane — but they are not *more* important than what happens here because it is here we have to realise and what happens in the vital is only a help.

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Most things happen in the vital before they happen in the physical, but all that happens in the vital does not realise itself in the physical or not in the same way. There is always or at least

usually a change in the form, time, circumstances due to the different conditions of the physical plane.

The Life Heavens

Where do you find in “The Life Heavens”² that I say or anybody says the conditions on the earth are glorious and suited to the Divine Life? There is not a word to that effect there! The Life Heavens are the heavens of the vital gods and there is there a perfect harmony but a harmony of the sublimated satisfied senses and vital desires only. If there is to be a Harmony, it must be of all the powers raised to their highest and harmonised together. All the non-evolutionary worlds are worlds of a type limited to its own harmony like the Life Heavens. The Earth on the other hand is an evolutionary world, not at all glorious or harmonious even as a material world (except in certain appearances), but rather most sorrowful, disharmonious, imperfect. Yet in that imperfection is the urge towards a higher and more many-sided perfection. It contains the last finite which yet yearns to the supreme infinite (it is not to be satisfied by sense-joys precisely because in the conditions of earth it is able to see their limitations). God is pent in the mire (mire is not glorious, so there is no claim to glory or beauty here) but that very fact imposes a necessity to break through that prison to a consciousness which is ever rising towards the heights. And so on. That is “a deeper power”, not a greater actual glory or perfection. All that may be true or not to the mind, but it is the traditional attitude of Indian spiritual experience. Ask any Yogi, he will tell you that the Life Heavens are childish things; even the gods, says the Purana, must come down to earth and be embodied there if they want *mukti*, giving up the pride of their limited perfection — they must enter into the last finite if they want to reach the last infinite. A poem is not a philosophical treatise or a profession of religious faith — it is the expression of a vision or an experience of some kind,

² A poem by Sri Aurobindo. See *Collected Poems, volume 2 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO*, p. 549. — Ed.

mundane or spiritual. Here it is the vision of the Life Heavens, its perfection, its limitations and the counterclaim of the Earth or rather the Spirit or Power behind the earth consciousness. It has to be taken at that, as an expression of a certain aspect of things, an expression of a certain kind of experience, not of a mental dogma. There is a deep truth behind it, though it may not be the whole truth of the matter. In the poem, also, there is no question of a Divine Life here, though that is hinted at as the unexpressed possible result of the ascent — because the Earth is not put aside (“Earth’s heart was felt beating below me still”); nevertheless the poem expresses only the ascent towards the Highest, far beyond the Life Heavens, and the Earth-Spirit claims that power and does not speak of any descent of a Divine Life. I say so much in order to get rid of that misconception so as not to have to go back to it when dealing with Earth’s disharmonies.

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They wouldn’t be heavens if they were not immune [*from attacks by hostile powers*] — a heaven with fear in it would be no heaven. The Life Heavens have an influence on earth and so have the Life Hells, but it does not follow that they influence each other in their own domain. Overmind can influence earth, so can the hostile Powers, but it does not follow that hostile Powers can penetrate the Overmind — they can’t: they can only spoil what it sends to the earth. Each power of the Divine (life like mind and matter are powers of the Divine) has its own harmony inherent in the purity of its own principle — it is only if it is disturbed or perverted that it produces disorder. That is another reason why the evolution could have been a progressing harmony, not a series of discords through which harmony of a precarious and wounded kind has to be struggled for at each step: for the Divine Principle is there within. Each plane therefore has its heavens; there are the subtle physical heavens, the vital heavens, the mental heavens. If Powers of disharmony got in, they would cease to be heavens.

Chapter Eight

The Physical Consciousness

The Physical Consciousness and Its Parts

The physical consciousness is that part which directly responds to physical things and physical Nature, sees the outer only as real, is occupied with it — not like the thinking mind with thought and knowledge, or like the vital with emotion, passion, subtler satisfaction of desire. If this part is obscure, then it is difficult to bring into it the consciousness of deeper or spiritual things, feelings etc. even when the mind or the vital are after these deeper things.

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You ask whether the mind and vital do not come in the way as well as the physical. Yes, but when I speak of the physical consciousness, I mean the physical mind and the physical vital as well as the body consciousness proper. This physical mind and physical vital are concerned with the small ordinary movements of life and are governed by a very external view of things and by habitual small reactions and do not respond at once to the inner consciousness not because they are in active opposition to it, as the vital mind and vital proper can be, but because they find it difficult to change their habitual movements. It is this now that you feel and that makes you think you have a poor responsiveness to the inner experience. But that is not a fact; in your mind and in a great part of your vital there is a considerable capacity of response. As for the physical its difficulty is universal in everybody and not peculiar to you. It has come up because it always comes up in the sadhana when the physical consciousness has to be worked upon for the necessary change. As soon as that is done, the difficulty you feel will first diminish and then go.

It is this work that is going on and when you felt the white light in meditation and the result which lasted even after opening

the eyes, the head and eyes cool and all vast and wide, it was this working taking place in your physical mind to change it. The rest of the physical consciousness was still undergoing another kind of working and so felt heat and not this release and wideness. But afterwards the working can go down first to the heart and then still lower and to all the body and the same release and wideness come there. Naturally, at present these results are not permanent but only for a time, they come as experiences, not lasting realisations. But it cannot be otherwise at the present stage. These experiences, however passing, are meant to prepare and do prepare the different parts of the nature.

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They [*the physical mind and vital physical*] are very near to it [*the Inconscient*] — except that part of the physical mind which is trained to deal with physical objects and affairs. But that is agile and active and competent only in its own limits. When it has to deal with supraphysical things it becomes incompetent, often imbecile and yet positive and arrogant and dogmatic in its ignorance. The rest of the physical consciousness is near to the inconscient. Here again in its own field it can have accurate perceptions and instincts if it is able to act spontaneously; but usually in the human being it is not allowed to do so, for the mind and vital intervene. The vital physical is entirely irrational in its action — even when it is right, it cannot explain why; for it is made more of automatic or habitual instincts, impulses, sensations and feelings than anything else. It is the mind that gives reasons and justifications to its movements and if the mind stands back and judges and questions, the vital physical can only answer “I want”, “I like”, “I dislike”, “I feel like that”.

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Each plane of our being — mental, vital, physical — has its own consciousness, separate though interconnected and interacting; but to our outer mind and sense, in our waking experience, they are all confused together. The body, for instance, has its own consciousness and acts from it, even without any conscious

mental will of our own or even against that will, and our surface mind knows very little about this body consciousness, feels it only in an imperfect way, sees only its results and has the greatest difficulty in finding out their causes. It is part of the Yoga to become aware of this separate consciousness of the body, to see and feel its movements and the forces that act upon it from inside or outside and to learn how to control and direct it even in its most hidden and (to us) subconscious processes. But the body consciousness itself is only part of the individualised physical consciousness in us which we gather and build out of the secretly conscious forces of universal physical Nature.

There is the universal physical consciousness of Nature and there is our own which is a part of it, moved by it, and used by the central being for the support of its expression in the physical world and for a direct dealing with all these external objects and movements and forces. This physical consciousness-plane receives from the other planes their powers and influences and makes formations of them in its own province. Therefore we have a physical mind as well as a vital mind and the mind proper; we have a vital physical part in us — the nervous being — as well as the vital proper; and both are largely conditioned by the gross material bodily part which is almost entirely subconscious to our experience.

The physical mind is that which is fixed on physical objects and happenings, sees and understands these only, and deals with them according to their own nature, but can with difficulty respond to the higher forces. Left to itself, it is sceptical of the existence of supraphysical things, of which it has no direct experience and to which it can find no clue; even when it has spiritual experiences, it forgets them easily, loses the impression and result and finds it difficult to believe. To enlighten the physical mind by the consciousness of the higher spiritual and supramental planes is one object of this Yoga, just as to enlighten it by the power of the higher vital and higher mental elements of the being is the greatest part of human self-development, civilisation and culture.

The vital physical on the other hand is the vehicle of the

nervous responses of our physical nature; it is the field and instrument of the smaller sensations, desires, reactions of all kinds to the impacts of the outer physical and gross material life. This vital physical part (supported by the lowest part of the vital proper) is therefore the agent of most of the lesser movements of our external life; its habitual reactions and obstinate pettinesses are the chief stumbling-block in the way of the transformation of the outer consciousness by the Yoga. It is also largely responsible for most of the suffering and disease of mind or body to which the physical being is subject in Nature.

As to the gross material part it is not necessary to specify its place, for that is obvious, but it must be remembered that this too has a consciousness of its own, the obscure consciousness proper to the limbs, cells, tissues, glands, organs. To make this obscurity luminous and directly instrumental to the higher planes and to the divine movement is what we mean in our Yoga by making the body conscious, — that is to say, full of a true, awake and responsive awareness instead of its own obscure, limited half-subconscience.

There is an inner as well as an outer consciousness all through our being, upon all its levels. The ordinary man is aware only of his surface self and quite unaware of all that is concealed by the surface. And yet what is on the surface, what we know or think we know of ourselves and even believe that that is all we are, is only a small part of our being and far the larger part of us is below the surface, the frontal consciousness. Or, more accurately, it is behind the frontal consciousness, behind the veil, occult and known only by an occult knowledge. Modern psychology and psychic science have begun to perceive this truth just a little. Materialistic psychology calls this hidden part the Inconscient, although practically admitting that it is far greater, more powerful and profound than the surface conscious self, — very much as the Upanishads called the superconscient in us the Sleep self, although this Sleep self is said to be an infinitely greater Intelligence, omniscient, omnipotent, Prajna, the Ishwara. Psychic science calls this hidden consciousness the subliminal self, and, here too, it is seen that this subliminal self

has more powers, more knowledge, a freer field of movement than the smaller self that is on the surface. But the truth is that all this that is behind, this sea of which our waking consciousness is only a wave or series of waves, cannot be described by any one term, for it is very complex. Part of it is subconscious, lower than our waking consciousness; part of it is on a level with it but behind and much larger than it; part is above and superconscious to us. What we call our mind is only an outer mind, a surface mental action, instrumental for the partial expression of a larger mind behind of which we are not ordinarily aware and can only know by going inside ourselves. So too what we know of the vital in us is only the outer vital, a surface activity partially expressing a larger secret vital which we can only know by going within. Equally, what we call our physical being is only a visible projection of a greater and subtler invisible physical consciousness which is much more complex, much more aware, much wider in its receptiveness, much more open and plastic and free.

If you understand and experience this truth, then only you will be able to realise what is meant by the inner mental, the inner vital, the inner physical consciousness. But it must be noted that this term “inner” is used in two different senses. Sometimes it denotes the consciousness behind the veil of the outer being, the mental or vital or physical within, which is in direct touch with the universal mind, the universal life forces, the universal physical forces. Sometimes, on the other hand, we mean an inmost mental, vital, physical, more specifically called the true mind, the true vital, the true physical consciousness which is nearest to the soul and can most easily and directly respond to the Divine Light and Power. There is no real Yoga possible, still less any integral Yoga, if we do not go back from the outer self and become aware of all this inner being and inner nature. For then alone can we break the limitations of the ignorant external self which receives consciously only the outer touches and knows things indirectly through the outer mind and senses, and become directly aware of the universal consciousness and the universal forces that play through us and around us. And

then only too can we hope to be directly aware of the Divine in us and directly in touch with the Divine Light and the Divine Force. Otherwise we can feel the Divine only through external signs and external results and that is a difficult and uncertain way and very occasional and inconstant, and it leads only to belief and not to knowledge, not to the direct consciousness and awareness of the constant presence.

As for instances of the difference, I may give you two from the opposite poles of experience, one from the most external phenomena showing how the inward opens to the awareness of universal forces, one of spiritual experience indicating how the inward opens to the Divine. Take illness. If we live only in the outward physical consciousness, we do not usually know that we are going to be ill until the symptoms of the malady declare themselves in the body. But if we develop the inward physical consciousness, we become aware of a subtle environmental physical atmosphere and can feel the forces of illness coming towards us through it, feel them even at a distance and, if we have learned how to do it, we can stop them by the will or otherwise. We sense too around us a vital physical or nervous envelope which radiates from the body and protects it, and we can feel the adverse forces trying to break through it and can interfere, stop them or reinforce the nervous envelope. Or we can feel the symptoms of illness, fever or cold for instance, in the subtle physical sheath before they are manifest in the gross body and destroy them there, preventing them from manifesting in the body. Take now the call for the Divine Power, Light, Ananda. If we live only in the outward physical consciousness, it may descend and work behind the veil but we shall feel nothing and only see certain results after a long time. Or at most we feel a certain clarity and peace in the mind, a joy in the vital, a happy state in the physical and infer the touch of the Divine. But if we are awake in the inward physical, we shall feel the light, power or Ananda flowing through the body, the limbs, nerves, blood, breath and, through the subtle body, affecting the most material cells and making them conscious and blissful and we shall sense directly the Divine Power and Presence. These are

only two instances out of a thousand that are possible and can be constantly experienced by the sadhaka.

Living in the Physical Consciousness

So far as it [*living in the physical consciousness*] can be said to be distinguishable by outward signs, it is a state of fundamental passivity in which one is and does what the forces of the physical plane make one be and do. When one lives in the mind, there is an active mental intelligence and mental will that tries to control and shape action and experience and life and everything else. When one is in the vital one is full of energy and enthusiasm and passion and force which may be right or wrong, but is very much alive. These things in the physical inertia either disappear or become weak or are forces that act upon the system occasionally but are not possessed by it. This condition may not be absolute, for one has a mind and a vital, but it is what predominates. There are two ways of getting out of this — one is to rise above in the self and see the physical from there as an instrument, not oneself, the other is to bring down the divine Force from above and make the physical the instrument of that Force.

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The forces of the physical mind, vital physical, material consciousness [*are the forces of the physical plane*]. Of course, as I said, the statement must be taken with a qualification, for the true mind and vital are also there, but in this condition [*of passivity and inertia*] it is the forces of the physical consciousness that predominate and determine the general condition which is a proneness to *aprakāśa* and sometimes *apavr̥tti*.

The Opening of the Physical Consciousness

The physical consciousness? It opens just like the rest, receives a new consciousness, obeys the Force, feels a change even in the cells, aspires to and seeks self-giving and union with the Divine.

The True Activity of the Senses

It [*the true activity of the senses*] is to record the divine or true appearance of things and return to them the reaction of an equal Ananda without dislike or desire.

The Physical Parts of the Mind and Emotional Being

Everything has a physical part—even the mind has a physical part; there is a mental physical, a mind of the body and the material. So the emotional being has a physical part. It has no location separate from the rest of the emotional. One can only distinguish it when the consciousness becomes sufficiently subtle to do so.

The Mental Physical or Mechanical Mind

That is the nature of the mental physical to go on repeating without use the movement that has happened. It is what we call the mechanical mind—it is strong in childhood because the thinking mind is not developed and has besides a narrow range of interests. Afterwards it becomes an undercurrent in the mental activities. It must now have risen up with the other characteristics of the mental physical because it is in the physical that the action has come down. Sometimes also when there is silence of the mind, these things come up till they also are quieted down.

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The mechanical mind is a sort of engine—whatever comes to it it puts into the machine and goes on turning it round and round—no matter what it is.

*

From what you describe it seems that you have got into contact with the mechanical mind whose nature is to go on turning

round in a circle on the thoughts that come into it. This sometimes happens when the thinking mind is quiet. This is part of the physical mind and you should not be disturbed or alarmed by its rising up, but see what it is and quiet it down or get control of its movements.

*

What is called the mechanical mind is necessary for the maintenance (in the physical) of things gained — it is by conservation and repetition that Nature does that. The subconscious is the basis of conservation and the mechanical mind is the means of repetition. Only they have to be enlightened and change and conserve and repeat the new divine things and not the old undivine ones.

*

If there is a strong activity of the higher parts of the consciousness, the possibility of the mechanical mind working is very much diminished. It may come up in moments of relaxation or fatigue but usually it is active only in a subordinate way that does not attract notice.

*

When the higher consciousness takes hold of the mechanical mind, it ceases to be mechanical.

The Vital Physical

The physical vital is the being of small desires and greeds etc. — the vital physical is the nervous being; they are closely connected together.

*

The vital physical governs all the small daily reactions to outward things — reactions of the nerves and the body consciousness and the reflex reactions and sensations; it motives much of the ordinary actions of man and joins with the lower parts of

the vital proper in producing lust, jealousy, anger, violence etc. In its lowest parts (vital-material) it is the agent of pain, physical illness etc.

*

The vital physical forces can be received from anywhere by the body, from around, below or above. The order of the planes is in reference to each other, not in reference to the body. In reference to each other, the vital physical is below the physical mind, but above the material: but at the same time these powers interpenetrate each other.

*

The body energy is a manifestation of material forces supported by a vital-physical energy which is the vital energy precipitated into matter and conditioned by it.

The Material Consciousness or Body Consciousness

By material is meant the body consciousness, the consciousness of Matter etc. Physical is a wider term. There is for instance a physical mind (which cannot be called material) dealing with outside earthly things.

*

A great part of the body consciousness is subconscient and the body consciousness and the subconscient are closely bound together. The body and the physical do not coincide — the body consciousness is only part of the whole physical consciousness.

*

What you describe is the material consciousness; it is mostly subconscient, but the part of it that is conscious, is mechanical, inertly moved by habits or by the forces of the lower nature. Always repeating the same unintelligent and unenlightened movements, it is attached to the routine and established rule of what already exists, unwilling to change, unwilling to

receive the Light or obey the higher Force. Or, if it is willing, then it is unable. Or if it is able, then it turns the action given to it by the Light or the Force into a new mechanical routine and so takes out of it all soul or life. It is obscure, stupid, indolent, full of ignorance and inertia, darkness and slowness of *tamas*.

It is this material consciousness into which we are seeking to bring first the higher (divine or spiritual) Light and Power and Ananda, and then the supramental Truth which is the object of our Yoga. But there is an obstinate dark and inert resistance both from material Nature and from the physical consciousness of the *sadhaks* — of which the lower vital and the material consciousness, both of them still unregenerated, are the cause.

*

It [*the material*] is the most physical grade of the physical — there is the mental physical, the vital physical, the material physical.

*

Yes — or at least it [*the material consciousness*] is a separate part of the physical consciousness. Physical mind for instance is narrow and limited and often stupid, but not inert. Matter consciousness is on the contrary inert as well as largely subconscious — active only when driven by an energy, otherwise inactive and immobile. When one first falls into direct contact with this level, the feeling in the body is that of inertia and immobility, in the vital physical exhaustion or lassitude, in the physical mind absence of *prakāśa* and *pravṛtti* or only the most ordinary thoughts and impulses. It took me a long time to get down any kind of light or power into this level. But when once it is illumined, the advantage is that the subconscious becomes conscient and this removes a very fundamental obstacle from the *sadhana*.

The Gross Physical and the Subtle Physical

By the gross physical is meant the earthly and bodily physical

— as experienced by the outward sense mind and senses. But that is not the whole of Matter. There is a subtle physical also with a subtler consciousness in it which can (for instance) go to a distance from the body and yet feel and be aware of things in a not merely mental or vital way. As for mind and vital they are everywhere — there is an obscure mind and life even in the cells of the body, the stones or in molecules and atoms.

*

It [*the subtle physical*] is difficult to realise without definite experience, e.g. as when light or ananda or force come into the body and one feels it working as if in the cells, yet with a little attention it becomes clear that it is not the material cells, but something more subtle that feels it.

*

There is what is called the nervous envelope surrounding the body — you are probably seeing the *sūkṣma* and the nervous envelope in one view. The *sūkṣma deha* contains the *sthūla deha*. Only it is not bound to itself and can contract or expand unlike the material body.

The Physical Nerves and the Subtle Nerves

The physical nerves are part of the material body, but they are extended into subtle nerves in the subtle body and there is a connection between the two.

*

Yes, there are nerves in the subtle body.

*

The physical nerves have many centres or plexuses. The nervous being proper is part of the physical — and it starts from the physical centre, the Muladhara.

*

The nerves are distributed all over the body — but the vital-physical action is concentrated in its origin between the Muladhara and the centre just above it.

The Sheaths of the Indian Tradition

Yes [*the inner being is made up of sheaths*]. Sheaths is simply a term for bodies, because each is superimposed on the other and acts as a covering and can be cast off. Thus the physical body itself is called the food sheath and its throwing off is what is called death.

*

You can only distinguish [*the different sheaths*] either by intuition or by experience and then you have established direct knowledge of the different sheaths.

Chapter Nine

The Environmental Consciousness

The Environmental Consciousness around the Individual

Everyone carries around him an environmental consciousness or atmosphere through which he is in relation with others or with the universal forces. It is through this that these forces or the thoughts or feelings of others enter.

*

The environmental is not a world — it is an individual thing.

*

The individual is not limited to the physical body — it is only the external consciousness which feels like that. As soon as one gets over this feeling of limitation, one can feel first the inner consciousness which is connected with the body but does not belong to it, afterwards the planes of consciousness above the body — also a consciousness surrounding the body, but part of oneself, part of the individual being, through which one is in contact with the cosmic forces and with other beings. This last is what I have called the environmental consciousness.

*

Each man has his own personal consciousness entrenched in his body and gets into touch with his surroundings only through his body and senses and the mind using the senses.

Yet all the time the universal forces are pouring into him without his knowing it. He is aware only of thoughts, feelings etc. that rise to the surface and these he takes for his own. Really they come from outside in mind waves, vital waves, waves of feeling and sensation etc. which take particular forms in him and rise to the surface after they have got inside.

But they do not get into his body at once. He carries

about with him an environmental consciousness (called by the Theosophists the aura) into which they first enter. If you can become conscious of this environmental self of yours, then you can catch the thought, passion, suggestion or force of illness, or whatever it may be, before it enters and prevent it from entering into you. If things in you are thrown out, they often do not go altogether but take refuge in this environmental atmosphere and from there try to get in again or they go to a distance outside but linger on the outskirts or even perhaps far off, waiting till they get an opportunity to attempt entrance.

*

It [*the environmental consciousness*] can become silent when there is the wideness. One can become conscious of it and deal with what passes through it. A man without it would be without contact with the rest of the world.

The Environmental Consciousness and the Movements of the Lower Nature

These things [*self-esteem, depression, etc.*] usually hide in recesses of the vital or the physical in which there is not yet the full force of the Peace and Light. When they are quite driven out from there, they may lodge in the subconscious and send up suggestions from there. Thrown out altogether they remain in the environmental consciousness and try to act from there, but then they are no longer part of one's own consciousness and are not felt as such but as something trying to come in from outside.

*

One can be free [*from lower vital movements*], but one cannot say that the freedom has been made absolutely complete or secure until the complete transformation takes place. For these things always remain in the environmental consciousness or even at a distance in the universal itself and take any opportunity to come in from there.

*

These [*forces of depression, dullness of mind, etc.*] are things that wander about in the atmosphere and jump upon one without notice. It is often difficult to see where precisely they come from and often there is no reason at all or any inviting cause in oneself. They have simply to be thrown off as when something falls on the body.

*

There is no mystery [*about the power of lower forces to attack*]. These things were violent and obstinate in you for a long time and you were indulging them — hence they acquired a great force to return even after you began rejecting them, first because of habit, secondly because of their belief that they have acquired a right over you, thirdly because of the habit of assent and passive response to them or endurance of them that has been stamped on the physical consciousness. This physical consciousness is not as yet liberated, it has not begun to be as responsive to the higher force as the vital, so it cannot resist their invasion. So these forces when thrown out retreat into the environmental consciousness and remain there concealed and at any opportunity make an attack on the centres accustomed to receive them (external mind and the external emotional) and get in. This happens with most sadhaks. Two things are necessary — (1) to open fully the physical to the higher forces, (2) to reach the stage when even if the forces attack, they cannot come fully in, the inner being remaining calm and free. Then even if there is still a surface difficulty, there will not be these overpowerings.

The Environmental Consciousness and the Subconscious

They [*the environmental consciousness and the subconscious*] are two quite different things. What is stored in the subconscious — impressions, memories, rise up from there into the conscious parts. In the environmental things are not stored up and fixed, although they move about there. It is full of mobility, a field of vibration or passage of forces.

Chapter Ten

The Subconscious and the Inconscious

The Subconscious in the Integral Yoga

In our Yoga we mean by the subconscious that quite submerged part of our being in which there is no wakenly conscious and coherent thought, will or feeling or organised reaction, but which yet receives obscurely the impressions of all things and stores them up in itself and from it too all sorts of stimuli, of persistent habitual movements, crudely repeated or disguised in strange forms can surge up into dream or into the waking nature. For if these impressions rise up most in dream in an incoherent and disorganised manner, they can also and do rise up into our waking consciousness as a mechanical repetition of old thoughts, old mental, vital and physical habits or an obscure stimulus to sensations, actions, emotions which do not originate in or from our conscious thought or will and are even often opposed to its perceptions, choice or dictates. In the subconscious there is an obscure mind full of obstinate *sanskaras*, impressions, associations, fixed notions, habitual reactions formed by our past, an obscure vital full of the seeds of habitual desires, sensations and nervous reactions, a most obscure material which governs much that has to do with the condition of the body. It is largely responsible for our illnesses; chronic or repeated illnesses are indeed mainly due to the subconscious and its obstinate memory and habit of repetition of whatever has impressed itself upon the body consciousness. But this subconscious must be clearly distinguished from the subliminal parts of our being such as the inner or subtle physical consciousness, the inner vital or inner mental; for these are not at all obscure or incoherent or ill-organised, but only veiled from our surface consciousness. Our surface constantly receives something, inner touches, communications

or influences, from these sources but does not know for the most part whence they come.

*

The subconscious is below the waking physical consciousness — it is an automatic, obscure, incoherent, half-unconscious realm into which light and awareness can with difficulty come. The inner vital and physical are quite different — they have a larger, plastic, subtler, freer and richer consciousness than the surface vital and physical, much more open to the Truth and in direct touch with the universal.

*

The subconscious is not the whole foundation of our nature; it is only the lower basis of the Ignorance and governs mostly the lower vital and physical exterior consciousness and these again affect the higher parts of the nature. While it is necessary to see what it is and how it acts, one must not be too preoccupied with this dark side or this apparent aspect of the instrumental being. One should rather regard it as something not oneself, a mask of false nature imposed on the true being by the Ignorance. The true being is the inner with all its vast possibilities of reaching and expressing the Divine and especially the inmost, the soul, the psychic Purusha which is always in its essence pure, divine, turned to all that is good and true and beautiful. The exterior being has to be taken hold of by the inner being and turned into an instrument no longer of the upsurgings of the ignorant subconscious Nature, but of the Divine. It is by remembering always that and opening the nature upwards that the Divine Consciousness can be reached and descend from above into the whole inner and outer existence, mental, vital, physical, the subconscious, the subliminal, all that we overtly or secretly are. This should be the main preoccupation. To dwell solely on the subconscious and the aspect of imperfection creates depression and should be avoided. One has to keep a right balance and stress on the positive side most, recognising the other but only to reject and change it. This and a constant faith and reliance on

the Mother are what is needed for the transformation to come.

*

The Subconscious is the basis of much of the lower activities — that is now generally admitted.

*

The subconscious is the evolutionary basis in us, it is not the whole of our hidden nature, nor is it the whole origin of what we are. But things can rise from the subconscious and take shape in the conscious part and much of our smaller vital and physical instincts, movements, habits, character-forms has this source.

There are three occult sources of our action — the superconscious, the subliminal, the subconscious, but of none of them are we in control or even aware. What we are aware of is the surface being which is only an instrumental arrangement. The source of all is the general Nature, — universal Nature individualising itself in each person; for this general Nature deposits certain habits of movement, personality, character, faculties, dispositions, tendencies in us, and that, whether formed now or before our birth, is what we usually call ourselves. A good deal of this is in habitual movement and use in our known conscious part on the surface, a great deal more is concealed in the other unknown three which are below or behind the surface.

But what we are on the surface is being constantly set in motion, changed, developed or repeated by the waves of the general Nature coming in on us either directly or else indirectly through others, through circumstances, through various agencies or channels. Some of this flows straight into the conscious part and acts there, but our mind ignores its source, appropriates it and regards all that as its own; a part comes secretly into the subconscious or sinks into it and waits for an opportunity of rising up into the conscious surface; a good deal goes into the subliminal and may at any time come out — or may not, may rather rest there as unused matter. Part passes through and is rejected, thrown back or thrown out or spilt into the universal sea. Our nature is a constant activity of forces supplied to us out

of which (or rather out of a small amount of it) we make what we will or can. What we make seems fixed and formed for good, but in reality it is all a play of forces, a flux, nothing fixed or stable; the appearance of stability is given by constant repetition and recurrence of the same vibrations and formations. That is why our nature can be changed in spite of Vivekananda's saying and Horace's adage and in spite of the conservative resistance of the subconscious, but it is a difficult job because the master mode of Nature is this obstinate repetition and recurrence.

As for the things in our nature that are thrown away from us by rejection but come back, it depends on where you throw them. Very often there is a sort of procedure about it. The mind rejects its mentalities, the vital its vitalities, the physical its physicalities — these usually go back into the corresponding domain of general Nature. It all stays at first, when that happens, in the environmental consciousness which we carry about with us, by which we communicate with the outside Nature, and often it persistently rushes back from there — until it is so absolutely rejected, or thrown far away as it were, that it cannot return upon us any more. But when what the thinking and willing mind rejects is strongly supported by the vital, it leaves the mind indeed but sinks down into the vital, rages there and tries to rush up again and reoccupy the mind and compel or capture our mental acceptance. When the higher vital too — the heart or the larger vital dynamis rejects it, it sinks from there and takes refuge in the lower vital with its mass of small current movements that make up our daily littleness. When the lower vital too rejects it, it sinks into the physical consciousness and tries to stick by inertia or mechanical repetition. Rejected even from there it goes into the subconscious and comes up in dreams, in passivity, in extreme *tamas*. The Inconscient is the last resort of the Ignorance.

As for the waves that recur from the general Nature, it is the natural tendency of the inferior forces there to try and perpetuate their action in the individual, to rebuild what he has unbuilt of their deposits in him, so they return on him, often with an increased force, even with a stupendous violence, when they

find their influence rejected. But they cannot last long once the environmental consciousness is cleared — unless the “Hostiles” take a hand. Even then they can indeed attack, but if the sadhak has established his position in the inner self, they can only attack and retire.

It is true that we bring most of ourselves — or rather most of our predispositions, tendencies of reaction to the universal Nature — from past lives. Heredity only affects strongly the external being; besides, all the effects of heredity are not accepted even there, only those that are in consonance with what we are to be or not preventive of it at least.

*

The subconscious is a concealed and unexpressed inarticulate consciousness which works below all our conscious physical activities. Just as what we call the superconscious is really a higher consciousness above from which things descend into the being, so the subconscious is below the body consciousness and things come up into the physical, the vital and the mind-nature from there.

Just as the higher consciousness is superconscious to us and supports all our spiritual possibilities and nature, so the subconscious is the basis of our material being and supports all that comes up in the physical nature.

Men are not ordinarily conscious of either of these planes of their own being, but by sadhana they can become aware.

The subconscious retains the impressions of all our past experiences of life and they can come up from there in dream forms. Most dreams in ordinary sleep are formations made from subconscious impressions.

The habit of strong recurrence of the same things in our physical consciousness, so that it is difficult to get rid of its habits, is largely due to a subconscious support. The subconscious is full of irrational habits.

When things are rejected from all other parts of the nature, they go either into the environmental consciousness around us through which we communicate with others and with universal

Nature and try to return from there or they sink into the subconscious and can come up from there even after lying long quiescent so that we think they are gone.

When the physical consciousness is being changed, the chief resistance comes from the subconscious. It is constantly maintaining or bringing back the inertia, weakness, obscurity, lack of intelligence which afflict the physical mind and vital or the obscure fears, desires, angers, lusts of the physical vital, or the illnesses, dullnesses, pains, incapacities to which the body-nature is prone.

If light, strength, the Mother's consciousness is brought down into the body it can penetrate the subconscious also and convert its obscurity and resistance.

When something is erased from the subconscious so completely that it leaves no seed and thrown out of the circumconscient so completely that it can return no more, then only can we be sure that we have finished with it for ever.

*

About the subconscious — it is the submaterial base of the being and is made up of impressions, instincts, habitual movements that are stored there. Whatever movement is impressed on it, it keeps. If one impresses the right movement on it, it will keep and send up that. That is why it has to be cleared of old movements before there can be a permanent and total change in the nature. When the higher consciousness is once established in the waking parts, it goes down into the subconscious and changes that also, makes a bedrock of itself there also. Then no farther trouble from the subconscious will be possible. But even before that one can minimise the trouble by putting the right will and the right habit of reaction on the subconscious parts.

*

All that one does and thinks leaves its trace in the subconscious.

*

Yes, the subconscious is a cosmic as well as an individual plane.

The Subconscious in Traditional Indian Terminology

I don't know that there is any [*term corresponding to the subconscious in Patanjali or the Sankhya*] — this plane was spoken of more as inconscient than subconscious — it is practically the indiscriminate or *jada prakṛti*, perhaps — or the seed state. In the Veda it is symbolised by the cave of the Panis. Perhaps by looking through books like the Yogavasishtha one could find something about the subconscious in fact though not in express terms.

*

You had asked the other day about the subconscious, what it was. In the vision you describe you were shown the universal subconscious in the figure of Patala, a place without light of consciousness and, because universal, therefore without bounds or end — the dark unconscious infinite out of which this material universe has arisen — it is walled with darkness on all sides, it seems also to have no bottom. The Light comes from above from the higher consciousness and coming down through the mind and heart and vital and physical has to pour down into this subconscious and make it luminous.

*

“Patala” [*in an experience described by the correspondent*] is a name for the subconscious — the beings there had no heads, that is to say, there is there no mental consciousness; men have all of them such a subconscious plane in their own being and from there rise all sorts of irrational and ignorant (headless) instincts, impulses, memories etc. which have an effect upon their acts and feelings without their detecting the real source. At night many incoherent dreams come from this world or plane. The world above is the superconscious plane of being — above the human consciousness — there are many worlds of that kind; they are divine worlds.

The Subconscious and the Superconscious

Below the feet is the subconscious, just as above the head is the superconscious.

The Subconscious and the Subliminal

Subliminal is a general term used for all the parts of the being which are not on the waking surface. Subconscious is very often used in the same sense by European psychologists because they do not know the difference. But when I use the word, I mean always what is *below* the ordinary physical consciousness, not what is behind it. The inner mental, vital, physical, the psychic are not subconscious in this sense, but they can be spoken of as subliminal.

*

What he [*a correspondent*] has written about the subconscious and the outer nature is true. But the role of subliminal forces cannot be said to be small, since from there come all the greater aspirations, ideals, strivings towards a better self and better humanity without which man would be only a thinking animal — as also most of the art, poetry, philosophy, thirst for knowledge which relieve if they do not yet dispel the ignorance.

The role of the superconscious has been to evolve slowly the spiritual man out of the mental half-animal. That also cannot be called an insignificant role.

The Subconscious Memory and Conscious Memory

Exact images are retained by the subliminal memory. All that is subliminal is described by ordinary psychology as subconscious; but in our psychology that cannot be done, for the consciousness that holds them is as precise and far wider and fuller than our waking or surface consciousness, so how can it be called subconscious? Conscious memory is that which can bring up at

any moment we like the memory of a thing, it is under our control. Subliminal memory can hold all things, even those which the mind cannot understand, e.g. if you hear somebody talking Hebrew, the subliminal memory can hold that and bring it up accurately in some abnormal state, e.g. the hypnotic. Subconscious memory is a memory of impressions; when they come up as in dream, either the result is something incoherent or fancifully rearranged or it is only the essence of the thing, its psychological deposit that comes up, e.g. sex, fear, some particular libido as the psychoanalysts call it, but the expression given to the latter need not be the same as memory would give; it may repeat the same forms if it gets hold of the mechanical mind in the physical to help its expression, but also it may be quite different from anything in real life.

*

The clear memory of words, images and thoughts is an action of the conscious mind, not the unconscious. Of course the memory goes behind, so to speak, in the back part of the mind, but it can be brought out. Also the memory can be lost or defaced, so that one remembers wrongly or forgets altogether, but that is still an imperfect action of the conscious mind, not an action of the subconscious. What the subconscious keeps is a mass of impressions, not of clear or exact images and these can come up as in dreams in an incoherent jumble distorted altogether or else in the waking state as a mechanical recurrence or repetition of the same suggestions, impulses (subconscious vital) or sensations. There is a recognisable difference between the two functionings.

*

It [*the memory of things*] is not in the mind alone; it is stored in the subconscious (mind, vital and physical) as impressions — also in the inner being all is present but held back as a store of past experience.

*

All that our consciousness meets in day-to-day experience is

registered in subconscious memory and from there can be brought up to the mind or come of itself. But what we call memory is when the thing registered is kept in the conscious mind at its back and brought forward at will — that is conscious memory.

*

No — that [*the record of Chitragnpta*] is quite different [*from the cosmic subconscious*], since it belongs to something where the records are precise and accurate. The subconscious is a suppressed and obscure seed state where things are emerging out of the indeterminate inconscience of original Nature but are yet fluent and imprecise, having all the potentiality of determination in them, but not yet determinate. The past things fall back into it not as memories, but as impressions which is a quite different thing. When they come up from there it is in all sorts of queer forms with variations and mixtures.

*

There is very often a complaint of this kind [*weakening of memory*] made during the course of the sadhana. I suppose that the usual action of memory is for a time suspended by the mental silence or else by the physical *tamas*.

*

By the change of consciousness there can be a more conscious and perfect functioning of the memory replacing the old mechanism.

The Subconscious and the Inconscient

The subconscious is universal as well as individual like all the other main parts of the nature. But there are different parts or planes of the subconscious. All upon earth is based on the Inconscient as it is called, though it is not really inconscient at all, but rather a complete “sub”-conscience, a suppressed or involved consciousness, in which there is everything but nothing

is formulated or expressed. The subconscious lies in between this Inconscious and the conscious mind, life and body. It contains the potentiality of all the primitive reactions to life which struggle out to the surface from the dull and inert obscurity of Matter and form by a constant development a slowly evolving and self-formulating consciousness; it contains them not as ideas or perceptions or conscious reactions but as the fluid substance of these things. But also all that is consciously experienced sinks down into the subconscious, not as precise though submerged memories but as obscure yet obstinate impressions of experience, and these can come up at any time as dreams, as mechanical repetitions of past thought, feelings, action etc., as “complexes” exploding into action and event etc. etc. The subconscious is the main cause why all things repeat themselves and nothing ever gets changed except in appearances. It is the cause why people say character cannot be changed, the cause also of the constant return of things one hoped to have got rid of for ever. All seeds are there and all the sanskaras of the mind and vital and body, — it is the main support of death and disease and the last fortress (seemingly impregnable) of the Ignorance. All too that is suppressed without being wholly got rid of sinks down there and remains in seed ready to surge up or sprout up at any moment.

Section Four

The Chakras
or Centres of Consciousness

Chapter One

The System of the Chakras

The Functions of the Chakras or Centres

The centres or Chakras are seven in number —

- (1) The thousand-petalled lotus on the top of the head.
- (2) In the middle of the forehead — the Ajna Chakra — (will, vision, dynamic thought).
- (3) Throat centre — externalising mind.
- (4) Heart-lotus — emotional centre. The psychic is behind it.
- (5) Navel — higher vital (proper).
- (6) Below navel — lower vital.
- (7) Muladhara — physical.

All these centres are in the middle of the body; they are supposed to be attached to the spinal cord; but in fact all these things are in the subtle body, *sūkṣma deha*, though one has the feeling of their activities as if in the physical body when the consciousness is awake.

*

Chakras

The thousand-petalled (head) lotus	Chakra or centre of the higher will and knowledge
The lotus in the forehead	Will, vision, mental dynamism
The lotus in the throat	Expression — external mind
The lotus of the heart	Emotion, dynamic vital feeling (behind the heart is the seat of the psychic being)
The lotus of the navel	Higher vital
The lotus of the abdomen	Lower vital
The lotus at the end of the spine (Muladhara)	Physical consciousness

*

In the process of our Yoga the centres have each a fixed psychological use and general function which base all their special powers and functionings. The *mūlādhāra* governs the physical down to the subconscious; the abdominal centre — *svādhiṣṭhāna* — governs the lower vital; the navel centre — *nābhipadma* or *maṇipūra* — governs the larger vital; the heart centre — *hrīpadma* or *anāhata* — governs the emotional being; the throat centre — *viśuddha* — governs the expressive and externalising mind; the centre between the eyebrows — *ājñācakra* — governs the dynamic mind, will, vision, mental formation; the thousand-petalled lotus — *sahasradala* — above commands the higher thinking mind, houses the still higher illumined mind and at its highest opens to the intuition through which or else by an overflowing directness the overmind can have with the rest communication or an immediate contact.¹

*

I never heard of two lotuses in the heart centre; but it is the seat of two powers, in front the higher vital or emotional being, behind and concealed the soul or psychic being.

The colours of the lotuses and the numbers of petals are respectively, from bottom to top: — (1) the Muladhara or physical consciousness centre, four petals, red; (2) the abdominal centre, six petals, deeper purple red; (3) the navel centre, ten petals, violet; (4) the heart centre, twelve petals, golden pink; (5) the throat centre, sixteen petals, grey; (6) the forehead centre between the eyebrows, two petals, white; (7) the thousand-petalled lotus above the head, blue with gold light around. The functions are, according to our Yoga, — (1) commanding the physical consciousness and the subconscious; (2) commanding the small vital movements, the little greeds, lusts, desires, the small sense-movements; (3) commanding the larger life-forces and the passions and larger desire-movements; (4) commanding

¹ In a draft of this letter Sri Aurobindo wrote in the opening paragraph: "I have often written of the centres — but without using the Sanskrit names which are intelligible only to Hindus. They are the same but our interpretation and application is not quite identical. We relate them to the psychological levels or planes." — Ed.

the higher emotional being with the psychic deep behind it; (5) commanding expression and all externalisation of the mind-movements and mental forces; (6) commanding thought, will, vision; (7) commanding the higher thinking mind and the illumined mind and opening upwards to the intuition and overmind. The seventh is sometimes confused with the brain, but that is an error — the brain is only a channel of communication situated between the thousand-petalled and the forehead centre. The former is sometimes called the void centre, *śūnya*, either because it is not in the body, but in the apparent void above or because rising above the head one enters first into the silence of the self or spiritual being.

*

There is one centre below the navel (lower vital), another at the navel (central vital), another in the chest (emotional vital, heart centre), another in the throat (physical mind), another above the head (higher consciousness); besides these there is the centre in the forehead (mind, will, vision) and one at the bottom of the spine (muladhara, physical centre). The working in each will be according to the nature of the centre.

The Chakras in Reference to Yoga

One can speak of the chakras only in reference to Yoga. In ordinary people the chakras are not open, it is only when they do sadhana that they open. For the chakras are the centres of the inner consciousness and belong organically to the subtle body. So much as is active in ordinary people is very little — for in them it is the outer consciousness that is active.

*

The centres of consciousness [*are meant by the term "centres"*], the chakras. It is by their opening that the Yogic or inner consciousness develops — otherwise you are bound to the ordinary outer consciousness.

*

One does not pass through the psychic centre or any centre [*during the sadhana*]. The centres open under the pressure of the sadhana. You can say that the Force descends or ascends into a centre.

*

The spine is the support of the centres and it is through the spine that in the Tantric sadhana the Kundalini rises.

*

Allow me to state my difficulty [*with the idea that the “spirit entity” is lodged in the pineal gland*]. How the devil can a spirit entity be enclosed in a material gland? So far as I know the self or spirit is not enclosed in the body, rather the body is in the Self. When we have the full experience of the Self, we feel it as a wide consciousness in which the body is a very small thing, an adjunct, or a thing contained, not a container. What then is this spirit entity? There can be a small formation which stands for the Self or Spirit, like the Upanishad’s Purusha no bigger than a man’s thumb. Is this the spirit entity? But even then in which sense, in what relativity of space can it be said to be *in* the very material pineal gland? A spirit confined in a gland and dislodged from it by a pistol shot is a kind of language which I buck at. A spirit touching grey brain matter and so entering into contact with universal mind and touching white matter and so entering into contact with loftier spiritual realities is also too weird a conception for my intelligence. What happens to it when it has no matter to touch? Dissolution? laya?

When we speak of the Purusha in the head, heart etc., we are using a figure. The Muladhara from which the Kundalini rises is not in the physical body, but in the subtle body (the subtle body is that in which the being goes out in deep trance or more radically, at the time of death); so also are all the centres. But as the subtle body penetrates and is interfused with the gross body, there is a certain correspondence between these chakras and certain centres in the physical proper. So figuratively we speak of the Purusha in this or that centre of the body. Owing to this correspondence, again, when the Ananda or anything else

comes down into the being, it is the subtle body that it pervades, but it communicates itself through it to the gross body and its consciousness, so that it is felt as if pervading the body. But all that is very different from saying that the spirit is lodged in a gland. The gross body is an engine, a means of communication and action of the spirit upon the world and it is only a small part of the instrumentation. It is absurd to make so much of it as all that. It is a sort of false materialism intended to placate minds that have a scanty knowledge of science. But what is the use of that? Everybody now knows that science is not a statement of the truth of things, but only a language expressing a certain experience of objects, their structure, their mathematics, a coordinated and utilisable impression of their processes — it is nothing more. Matter itself is something (a formation of energy perhaps?) of which we know superficially the structure as it appears to our mind and senses and to certain examining instruments (about which it is now suspected that they largely determine their own results, Nature adapting its replies to the instrument used), but more than that no scientist knows or can know. If the Radhasoami affirmations [*mentioned by the correspondent*] are meant to be another kind of language expressing certain psycho-physical experiences, I have no objection. But why all this pineal glandism and talk about entities and bullets?

N.B. If I say the Purusha is in the heart, do I mean it is there in the physical heart, tumbling about in the flow of the blood or stuck in the valves or muscular portions and when a bullet is lodged in the heart it jumps with an Ooah! and tumbles down dead or goes off skating and swimming into some grey or white matter worlds beyond? Certainly not. I am using a significant language which expresses certain relations between the psychic consciousness and the physical of which we become aware by Yoga.

The Centres and the Planes

Each centre of the system (*cakra, padma*) represents or centralises a plane of experience and each is supported on the spine

which is the support of the nervous energies. When the serpent Energy from above and below have free passage through the centres (which is represented by the spine appearing like a serpent) then they open and there is the free wideness of the universal or infinite consciousness on all these planes.

*

All the centres above the Muladhara are connected with the higher worlds above the physical, with the vital, mental, psychic and still higher worlds — the Muladhara and below with the physical and subconscious worlds (subconscious physical and sub-physical). The whole physical body of course belongs to the earth-world, but it is connected through these centres with the other worlds.

*

According to our system the three lower centres are the vital, the lower vital and the physical — but the planes are quite different. The three lower planes are mind, life and matter and it is true that the human mind confines itself to these three activities. But it is not true that its activities are confined to the vital and physical things.

*

What is the fourth centre? In our system the fourth centre is the heart and the Divine is there in the psychic, behind the heart. But the fourth of our seven planes is the supramental which is far above the head, but can be communicated with through the seventh centre, the Sahasradala padma.

The Mind Centres

This must be the psychicised higher mental being — the position above the head points to that. In other words, you have become aware of your higher mental being which is in contact at once with the Divine above and with the psychic behind the heart and is aware of the Truth and has the psychic and spiritual insight and view into things.

Above the head extends the higher consciousness centre, sahasradala padma. But usually there is partial working of the forehead centre also when the sahasradala opens.

The ordinary mind is at the highest the free intelligence, receiving perhaps intuitions and intimations from above which it intellectualises. It is on the surface and sees things from outside except in so far as it is helped by intuition and other powers to see a little deeper. When this ordinary mind opens within to inner mind and psychic and above to higher mind and higher consciousness generally, then it begins to be spiritualised and its highest ranges merge into the spiritual mind-consciousness of which this higher mind can be a beginning. This merging is part of the spiritual transformation.

For the mind there are many centres: (1) the sahasradala which centralises spiritual mind, higher mind, intuitive mind and acts as a receiving station for the intuition proper and overmind, (2) the centre in the forehead for inner thought, will and vision, (3) the throat centre for the externalising or physical mind.

The Sahasradala or Sahasrara or Crown Centre

The thousand-petalled lotus is above the head. It is the seventh and highest centre.

Usually those who take the centres in the body only, count six centres, the Sahasrara being excluded.

*

It is evidently the sahasradala padma through which the higher intuition, illumined mind and overmind all pass their rays.

*

The sahasradala commands all between the ordinary mind and the supermind — therefore its opening necessarily takes long. But opening by itself only creates a connection or communication — to dwell in that centre, one needs to have overpassed the mind and be able to live mainly in the spiritual self.

*

The Supramental is not organised in the body so there is no separate centre for it; but all that comes from above the Mind uses the Sahasrara for its transit and so opens something there.

*

The centre at the crown must be part of the *sahasradala*, the centre of communication direct between the individual being and the Infinite Consciousness above. There is not supposed to be any other main centre of dynamism between that and the Ajna Chakra. But there can be many nerve-centres in various parts of the body, apart from the six or rather seven main centres.

*

The crown centre open removes the difficulty of the lid between the ordinary mind and the higher consciousness above. If the ajnachakra also is open, then it is possible to have a clear communication between the higher consciousness and the inner mind and the outer mind (throat centre) also. That is the condition for the realisation of knowledge and the mental illumination and transformation. The heart centre commands the psychic and vital — that opening enables the psychic influence to work in the vital and ends in the coming forward of the psychic being.

*

It [*the opening at the top of the head*] is the Brahmarandhra through which there is the communication between the higher consciousness and the lower in the body. It is a passage, not a centre. The centre is the thousand-petalled lotus just above the head, at that part.

*

The crown is the place of passage between the body consciousness with all it contains of mind and life and the higher being above the body. It is there that the two consciousnesses begin to meet.

*

The brain is only a centre of the physical consciousness. One feels stationed there so long as one dwells in the physical mind or is identified with the body consciousness, then one receives through the sahasradala into the brain. When one ceases to be stationed in the body, then the brain is not a station but only a passive and silent transmitting channel.

The Ajnachakra or Forehead Centre

There are different centres in the body which are represented in vision by these lotuses — one is between the eyebrows in the forehead, a centre of inner consciousness, will and visions — that is opening in you.

*

If the forehead centre opens, it is fairly certain that the crown centre must have opened sufficiently at least to allow the passage of the higher force which is above it. The psychic is a different matter — it stands behind the centres and the time of its opening varies with different people — in fact it is not so much the opening of a centre as the coming forward of the psychic being.

The usual rule in this Yoga is from above downwards. There may be variations in the preparatory stage. There may for instance be a partial opening first of the heart centre. The higher vital centre may become active first also, but that means much struggle and difficulty.

*

The psychic being is behind the heart-centre — the centre between the eyes is that of inner (occult) thought, will and vision. This inner or occult vision is called by ordinary people psychic vision.

*

It [*the centre between the eyebrows*] is the centre of the inner mind — therefore also of the inner mental will and inner mental vision.

*

The centre of vision is between the eyebrows in the centre of the forehead. When it opens one gets the inner vision, sees the inner forms and images of things and people and begins to understand things and people from within and not only from outside, develops a power of will which also acts in the inner (Yogic) way on things and people etc. Its opening is often the beginning of the Yogic as opposed to the ordinary mental consciousness.

*

In the forehead between the eyes but a little above is the Ajna-chakra, the centre of the inner will, also of the inner vision, the dynamic mind etc. (This is not the ordinary outer mental will and sight, but something more powerful, belonging to the inner being.) When this centre opens and the Force there is active, then there is the opening of a greater will, power of decision, formation, effectiveness beyond what the ordinary mind can achieve.

*

The centre Ajnachakra is in the place I indicated [*in the previous letter*], but the pressure can be felt in all the forehead and the eyebrows also or anywhere there. It radiates from the centre.

*

The forehead centre is that of inner mind and vision. It is really through that inner vision that one sees the lights — the open eyes are only a channel for seeing them outside as well as within.

*

The pressure from within upon the forehead centre begins very often after the pressure from above on the forehead — something of the Force has come in sufficiently to exercise this second pressure. That on the back must be a direct pressure on the psychic region (if it is in or near the middle of the back) mainly to prepare the action in the heart. When the centres begin to open, inner experiences such as the seeing of light or images through the subtle vision in the forehead centre or psychic experiences

and perceptions in the heart, become frequent — gradually one becomes aware of one's inner being as separate from the outer and what can be called a Yogic consciousness with all its deeper movements develops in the place of the ordinary superficial mental and vital movements.

*

A third eye does open there [*in the centre of the forehead*] — it represents the occult vision and the occult power which goes with that vision — it is connected with the Ajnachakra.

The Throat Centre

The throat centre is the centre of the physical mind, the external will and the expression.

*

Yes [*the throat centre is the physical mind centre*]. It is the centre of externalisation, — speech, expression, the power to deal mentally with physical things etc. Its opening brings the power to open the physical mind to the light of the divine consciousness instead of remaining in the ordinary outward-going mentality.

*

Yes, it is so — it is the physical mind that acts like that [*rising up from the throat centre to cover the mind*]. The centre of the physical mind or externalising mind is in the subtle body in the throat and connected strongly with the speech — but it acts by connection with the brain. All forces that want to cover the consciousness rise up to do it, covering and acting on the mind centres if they can — because otherwise the covering is not complete.

*

Speech comes from the throat centre, but it is associated with whatever is the governing centre or level of the consciousness — wherever one thinks from. If one rises above the head, then

thought takes place above the head and one can speak from there, that is to say, the direction of the speech is from there.

The Throat Centre and the Lower Centres

The throat centre is the externalising (physical) mind, the heart is the emotional mind and beginning of the higher vital. If the heart centre is dominated by the physical mind to any extent, it will necessarily be open to the outer attacks that affect the physical and nervous consciousness. The heart has to be in connection with the psychic and the higher consciousness.

*

The centre in the throat is that of the physical mind and all between it and the centre in the heart is the joining place of the mind and the vital-emotional being. If the pain is of the nerves, then there must be some resistance and difficulty there which should go with the full opening.

*

The heart is the centre of the emotional being, the highest part of the vital. The navel is the centre of the dynamic and sensational vital (this is the source of pride, sense of possession, ambition, anger and other passions — but it expresses them often through the heart centre). The centre between the navel and the Muladhara commands the lower vital (physical desires, small greeds, passions etc.). The throat centre is not the vital — it is the physical mind, the expressive externalising consciousness. What you feel may be the vital taking hold of the physical mind and using it for expression.

*

The physical mind centre is in the throat and mouth — the vital physical is between the two lowest centres — the material consciousness is in the *mūlādhāra*.

The Heart Centre

The heart is the centre of the being and commands the rest, as the psychic being or chaitya purusha is there. It is only in that sense that all flows from it, for it is the psychic being who each time creates a new mind, vital and body for himself.

*

There is one centre for the heart, although it is a double centre, in front the emotional, behind the psychic.

*

The apex of the psychic and emotional centre (like the apex of all centres) is in the backbone, the base in front in the middle of the sternum.

*

The physical heart is in the left side, but the heart centre of Yoga is in the middle of the chest — the cardiac centre.

*

I do not quite understand what you mean by soul. The psychic being (which is the soul) does not make centres for itself in the Adhar — the centres are there. The psychic being can take control of the centres that are already there — the heart and the navel centre and the two below the navel. Also the mind and vital are not abolished — they are brought under the psychic influence and psychicised, or they are occupied by the higher consciousness from above and transformed into its instruments.

*

The heart-centre is the emotional centre. The navel is the main vital centre. In the abdomen is the lower vital centre. It is in these two that there is the origination of desire — but desire rises and becomes emotional in the heart and mental in the higher centres above.

The Navel and Abdominal Centres

The navel is the chief vital centre below the emotional — there is another centre of small vital movements below it, between the navel and Muladhara.

*

The navel is the vital centre in the physical body but the natural seat of the vital is in the vital sheath of the subtle body, which sheath it pervades; but for action through the gross body it is centred at the navel and below it.

*

A centre may be opened and still there may be resistances in that part of the nature. If the vital were clear of all difficulties one would be on the point of Yogic perfection. Below the navel is the physical vital.

*

The navel is the seat of the central vital, below it is the lower vital. It must have been the resistance of the lower vital to the fire that you felt.

*

The feeling you have of coming down to the navel corresponds to the actual fact of a change of the centre of consciousness, which one speaks of as a lowering of the consciousness. In this stage of sadhana one must keep always above until one is seated for good in the above-head position and the higher consciousness has pervaded the lower centres and fields down to the Muladhara and the whole body.

The Muladhara

The Muladhara is the centre of the physical consciousness proper, and all below in the body is the sheer physical, which as it goes downward becomes increasingly subconscious, but the real seat of the subconscious is below the body as the real seat

of the higher consciousness (superconscient) is above the body. At the same time, the subconscious can be felt anywhere, felt as something below the movement of the consciousness and, in a way, supporting it from beneath or else drawing the consciousness down towards itself. The subconscious is the main support of all habitual movements, especially the physical and lower vital movements. When something is thrown out of the vital or physical, it very usually goes down into the subconscious and remains there as if in seed and comes up again when it can. That is the reason why it is so difficult to get rid of habitual vital movements or to change the character; for, supported or refreshed from this source, preserved in this matrix your vital movements, even when suppressed or repressed, surge up again and recur. The action of the subconscious is irrational, mechanical, repetitive. It does not listen to reason or the mental will. It is only by bringing the higher light and force into it that it can change.

*

The Muladhara is the centre of the physical consciousness, but the legs below represent the special field governed by it—as distinct from the mental and vital parts in the body. So when there is working there, it means a working in the physical proper itself. Of course the physical is half-subconscious, but the field of the subconscious proper is below the feet, just as the field of the superconscient is above the head.

*

The lowest centre at the bottom of the spine [*is the sex centre*]. It contains many other things, but also it is in its front the support of the sexual movements.

*

It [*the end of the spine*] is the place of the physical centre which is also the sex-centre. The apex of it is at the end of the spine and it projects forward from there—commanding the organ and its action.

*

The sex centre is the physical centre — it [*the physical centre*] happens to be the centre for sex and physical propagation also, but it is not separately and solely the centre of sex. If that were so, there would be no centre governing the physical consciousness, but only a centre governing the sex organ.

No Subconscious Centre

There is no subconscious centre. Its plane is below the feet as that of the superconscious is above the head.

*

No, the subconscious is too vague to have a centre. It has a level — below the feet as the superconscious is above, but from there it can surge up anywhere.

Chapter Two

The Parts of the Body and the Centres

The Parts of the Body in Yoga

Different parts of the body indicate for this purpose different parts of the nature. The head is the seat of the mind (buddhi) and the lower part of the mouth, chin, neck are the seat of the external or physical mind. It indicates that the force is working there to change and prepare this part of the mind and get rid of resistance and wrong mental habits.

The Cerebellum

Yes, it [*the cerebellum*] has some connection with the subconscious.

The Ear, Nose, Face and Throat

It cannot be anything physical but only a subtle physical sensation. The ear is the passage of communion between the inner mind centre and the thought-forces or thought-waves of the universal Nature. It sounds like a sensation of opening and enlarging of this passage.

*

The nose is connected with the vital dynamic part of the mental — a man with a strong nose is supposed to have a strong will or a strong mental personality, — though I don't know whether it is invariably true. But the vital physical? Of course the nose is the passage of the Prana and the Prana is the support of the vital physical.

*

The working on the lower part of the face always indicates an action on the externalising mind (physical mental) whose centre is in the throat.

*

The neck and throat and the lower part of the face belong to the externalising mind, the physical mental. The forehead to the inner Mind. Above the head are the higher planes of Mind.

*

The organ of speech is an instrument of the physical mental or expressive externalising mind.

The Chest, Stomach and Abdomen

It is because the centre of your difficulties has been there [*in the chest and stomach*]. The chest = the emotional nature exposed to wrong feelings; the stomach = the dynamic vital centre, exposed to wrong desires, ambitions, sense of possession and vital ego etc. But all that will progressively become things of the past, when the Peace, the Presence, the inner happiness increase and take possession of the external nature.

*

Yogically, psycho-physically etc. etc. stomach, heart and intestine lodge the vital movements, *not* the physical consciousness — it is there that anger, fear, love, hate and all the other psychological privileges of the animal tumble about and upset the physical and moral digestion. The Muladhara is the seat of the physical consciousness proper.

*

As for the lower part of the body, it is the physical and external vital that it represents at present and that has still to be penetrated and held by the Force. But the conditions under which it can be done are growing more complete. The physical opening needs a great quietude which replaces the tamasic inertia of body

nature by a true peace. Then all else can be done.

The Legs and Feet

It is the material consciousness that is indicated by the legs and feet. Below the feet is the subconscient. There is no big centre below the Muladhara in the body, but there are minor centres everywhere.

*

The leg indicates the physical (material) consciousness. All below the Muladhara is the range of the physical consciousness proper including the mental physical, vital physical, material physical. This [*aspiration rising from the legs*] would indicate therefore an aspiration from Matter (bodily Matter).

The Sides of the Body

The two sides of the body are supposed to represent two different sides of the being, the side of consciousness and knowledge and the side of force and action. The feeling you had at meditation may have been the sense of the removal of some veil of obscurity covering the mind — the head from the crown to the throat being the seat of the thinking mind.

*

It is usually supposed that the left is the side of power, the right of knowledge.

The ascent from below [*the left foot*] means of course the material and subconscient calling down the higher power — and it is true that there is a correspondence between the depth from which the ascension goes and the height from which the power from above comes.

Part Three

The Evolutionary Process and the Supermind

Section One

The Supramental Evolution

Chapter One

The Problem of Suffering and Evil

The Riddle of This World

It is not to be denied, no spiritual experience will deny that this is an unideal and unsatisfactory world, strongly marked with the stamp of inadequacy, suffering, evil. Indeed this perception is in a way almost the starting-point of the spiritual urge — except for the few to whom the greater experience comes spontaneously without being forced to seek it by the strong or overwhelming, the afflicting and detaching sense of the Shadow overhanging the whole range of this manifested existence. But still the question remains whether this is indeed, as is contended, the essential character of all manifestation or so long at least as there is a physical world it must be of this nature, so that the desire of birth, the will to manifest or create has to be regarded as the original sin and withdrawal from birth or manifestation as the sole possible way of salvation. For those who perceive it so or with some kindred look — and these have been the majority — there are well-known ways of issue, a straight-cut to spiritual deliverance. But equally it may not be so but only seem so to our ignorance or to a partial knowledge — the imperfection, the evil, the suffering may be a besetting circumstance or a dolorous passage, but not the very condition of manifestation, not the very essence of birth in Nature. And if so, the highest wisdom will lie not in escape, but in the urge towards a victory here, in a consenting association with the Will behind the world, in a discovery of the spiritual gate to perfection which will be at the same time an opening for the entire descent of the Divine Light, Knowledge, Power, Beatitude.

All spiritual experience affirms that there is a Permanent above the transience of this manifested world we live in and this limited consciousness in whose narrow borders we grope and struggle, and that its characters are infinity, self-existence,

freedom, absolute Light, absolute Beatitude. Is there then an unbridgeable gulf between that which is beyond and that which is here or are they two perpetual opposites and only by leaving this adventure in Time behind, by overleaping the gulf can men reach the Eternal? That is what seems to be at the end of one line of experience which has been followed to its rigorous conclusion by Buddhism and a little less rigorously by a certain type of Monistic spirituality which admits some connection of the world with the Divine, but still opposes them in the last resort to each other as truth and illusion. But there is also this other and indubitable experience that the Divine is here in everything as well as above and behind everything, that all is in That and is That when we go back from its appearance to its Reality. It is a significant and illumining fact that the knower of Brahman even moving and acting in this world, even bearing all its shocks, can live in some absolute peace, light and beatitude of the Divine. There is then something here other than that mere trenchant opposition, — there is a mystery, a problem which one would think must admit of some less desperate solution. This spiritual possibility points beyond itself and brings a ray of hope into the darkness of our fallen existence.

And at once a first question arises — is this world an unchanging succession of the same phenomena always or is there in it an evolutionary urge, an evolutionary fact, a ladder of ascension somewhere from an original apparent Inconscience to a more and more developed consciousness, from each development still ascending, emerging on highest heights not yet within our normal reach? If so, what is the sense, the fundamental principle, the logical issue of that progression? Everything seems to point to such a progression as a fact — to a spiritual and not merely a physical evolution. Here too there is a justifying line of spiritual experience in which we discover that the Inconscience from which all starts is apparent only, for in it there is an involved Consciousness with endless possibilities, a consciousness not limited but cosmic and infinite, a concealed and self-imprisoned Divine, imprisoned in Matter but with every potentiality held in its secret depths. Out of this

apparent Inconscience each potentiality is revealed in its turn, first organised Matter concealing the indwelling Spirit, then Life emerging in the plant and associated in the animal with a growing Mind, then Mind itself evolved and organised in Man. This evolution, this spiritual progression — does it stop short here in the imperfect mental being called Man? Or is the secret of it simply a succession of rebirths whose only purpose or issue is to labour towards the point at which it can learn its own futility, renounce itself and take its leap into some original unborn Existence or Non-Existence? There is at least the possibility, there comes at a certain point the certitude that there is a far greater consciousness than what we call Mind, and that by ascending the ladder still farther we can find a point at which the hold of the material Inconscience, the vital and mental Ignorance ceases; a principle of consciousness becomes capable of manifestation which liberates not partially, not imperfectly, but radically and wholly this imprisoned Divine. In this vision each stage of evolution appears as due to the descent of a higher and higher Power of consciousness, raising the terrestrial level, creating a new stratum, but the highest yet remain to descend and it is by their descent that the riddle of terrestrial existence will receive its solution and not only the soul but Nature herself find her deliverance. This is the Truth which has been seen in flashes, in more and more entirety of its terms by the line of seers whom the Tantra would call the hero-seekers and the divine seekers and which may now be nearing the point of readiness for its full revelation and experience. Then whatever be the heavy weight of strife and suffering and darkness in the world, yet if there is this as its high result awaiting us, all that has gone before may not be counted too great a price by the strong and adventurous for the glory that is to come. At any rate the shadow lifts; there is a Divine Light that leans over the world and is not only a far-off incommunicable Lustre.

It is true that the problem still remains why all this that yet is should have been necessary — those crude beginnings, this long, dark and stormy passage — why should the heavy and tedious price be demanded, why should evil and suffering ever have been

there? For to the how of the fall into the Ignorance as opposed to the why, as to the effective cause, there is a substantial agreement in all spiritual experience. It is the division, the separation, the principle of isolation from the Permanent and One that brought it about; it is because the ego set up for itself in the world affirming its own desire and self-affirmation in preference to its unity with the Divine and its oneness with all; it is because instead of the one supreme Force, Wisdom, Light determining the harmony of all forces each Idea, Force, Form of things was allowed to work itself out as far as it could in the mass of infinite possibilities by its separate will and inevitably in the end by conflict with others. Division, ego, the imperfect consciousness and groping and struggle of a separate self-affirmation are the effective cause of the suffering and ignorance of this world. Once consciousnesses separated from the One Consciousness, they fell inevitably into ignorance and the last result of ignorance was Inconscience; from a dark immense Inconscient this material world arises and out of it a soul that by evolution is struggling into consciousness, attracted towards the hidden Light, ascending but still blindly towards the lost Divinity from which it came.

But why should this have happened at all? One common way of putting the question and answering it ought to be eliminated from the first, — the human way and its ethical revolt and reprobation, its emotional outcry. For it is not, as some religions suppose, a supra-cosmic, arbitrary, personal Deity himself altogether uninvolved in the fall who has imposed evil and suffering on creatures made capriciously by his fiat. The Divine we know is an Infinite Being in whose infinite manifestation these things have come — it is the Divine itself that is here, behind us, pervading the manifestation, supporting the world with its oneness; it is the Divine that is in us upholding itself the burden of the fall and its dark consequence. If above it stands for ever in its perfect Light, Bliss and Peace, it is also here; its Light, Bliss and Peace are secretly here supporting all; in ourselves there is a spirit, a central presence greater than the series of surface personalities which, like the supreme Divine itself, is not overborne by the

fate they endure. If we find out this Divine within us, if we know ourselves as this spirit which is of one essence and being with the Divine, that is our gate of deliverance and in it we can remain ourselves even in the midst of this world's disharmonies, luminous, blissful and free. That much is the age-old testimony of spiritual experience.

But still what is the purpose and origin of the disharmony — why came this division and ego, this world of a painful evolution? Why must this evil and sorrow enter into the divine Good, Bliss and Peace? It is hard to answer to the human intelligence on its own level, for the consciousness to which the origin of this phenomenon belongs and to which it stands as it were automatically justified in a supra-intellectual knowledge, is a cosmic and not an individualised human intelligence; it sees in larger spaces, it has another vision and cognition, other terms of consciousness than human reason and feeling. To the human mind one might answer that while in itself the Infinite might be free from those perturbations, yet once manifestation began infinite possibility also began and among the infinite possibilities which it is the function of the universal manifestation to work out, the negation, the apparent effective negation — with all its consequences — of the Power, Light, Peace, Bliss was very evidently one. If it is asked why even if possible it should have been accepted, the answer nearest to the Cosmic Truth which the human intelligence can make is that in the relations or in the transition of the Divine in the Oneness to the Divine in the Many, this ominous possible became at a certain point an inevitable. For once it appears it acquires for the Soul descending into evolutionary manifestation an irresistible attraction which creates the inevitability — an attraction which in human terms on the terrestrial level might be interpreted as the call of the unknown, the joy of danger and difficulty and adventure, the will to attempt the impossible, to work out the incalculable, the will to create the new and uncreated with one's own self and life as the material, the fascination of contradictories and their difficult harmonisation — these things translated into another supraphysical, superhuman consciousness, higher and wider than the mental, were the temptation that

led to the fall. For to the original being of light on the verge of the descent the one thing unknown was the depths of the abyss, the possibilities of the Divine in the Ignorance and Inconscience. On the other side from the Divine Oneness a vast acquiescence, compassionate, consenting, helpful, a supreme knowledge that this thing must be, that having appeared it must be worked out, that its appearance is in a certain sense part of an incalculable infinite wisdom, that if the plunge into Night was inevitable the emergence into a new unprecedented Day was also a certitude, and that only so could a certain manifestation of the Supreme Truth be effected — by a working out with its phenomenal opposites as the starting-point of the evolution, as the condition laid down for a transforming emergence. In this acquiescence was embraced too the will of the great Sacrifice, the descent of the Divine itself into the Inconscience to take up the burden of the Ignorance and its consequences, to intervene as the Avatar and the Vibhuti walking between the double sign of the Cross and the victory towards the fulfilment and deliverance. A too imaged rendering of the inexpressible Truth? but without images how to present to the intellect a mystery far beyond it? It is only when one has crossed the barrier of the limited intelligence and shared in the cosmic experience and the knowledge which sees things from identity that the supreme realities which lie behind these images — images corresponding to the terrestrial fact — assume their divine forms and are felt as simple, natural, implied in the essence of things. It is by entering into that greater consciousness alone that one can grasp the inevitability of its self-creation and its purpose.

This is indeed only the Truth of the manifestation as it presents itself to the consciousness when it stands on the border line between Eternity and the descent into Time where the relation between the One and the Many in the evolution is self-determined, a zone where all that is to be is implied but not yet in action. But the liberated consciousness can rise higher where the problem exists no longer and from there see it in the light of a supreme identity where all is predetermined in the automatic self-existent truth of things and self-justified to an absolute

consciousness and wisdom and absolute Delight which is behind all creation and non-creation and the affirmation and negation are both seen with the eyes of the ineffable Reality that delivers and reconciles them. But that knowledge is not expressible to the human mind; its language of light is too undecipherable, the light itself too bright for a consciousness accustomed to the stress and obscurity of the cosmic riddle and too entangled in it to follow the clue or to grasp the secret. In any case, it is only when we rise in the spirit beyond the zone of the darkness and the struggle that we enter into the full significance of it and there is a deliverance of the soul from its enigma. To rise to that height of liberation is the true way out and the only means of the indubitable knowledge.

But that liberation and transcendence need not necessarily impose a disappearance, a sheer dissolving cut from the manifestation; it can prepare a liberation into action of the highest Knowledge and an intensity of Power that can transform the world and fulfil the evolutionary urge. It is an ascent from which the return is no longer a fall but a winged or self-sustained descent of light, force and Ananda.

It is what is inherent in force of being that manifests as becoming; but what the manifestation shall be, its terms, its balance of energies, its arrangement of principles depends on the consciousness which acts in the creative force, on the power of consciousness which being delivers from itself for manifestation. It is in the nature of being to be able to grade and vary its powers of consciousness and determine according to the grade and variation its world or its degree and scope of self-revelation. The manifested creation is limited by the power to which it belongs and sees and lives according to it and can only see more, live more powerfully, change its world by opening or rising towards or making descend a greater power of consciousness that was above it. This is what is happening in the evolution of consciousness in our world, a world of inanimate matter producing under the stress of this necessity a power of life, a power of mind which bring into it new forms of creation and still labouring to produce, to make descend into it some

supramental power. It is farther an operation of creative force which moves between two poles of consciousness. On one side there is a secret consciousness within and above which contains in it all potentialities—there eternally manifest, here awaiting delivery—of light, peace, power and bliss. On the other side there is another outward on the surface and below that starts from the apparent opposite of unconsciousness, inertia, blind stress, possibility of suffering and grows by receiving into itself higher and higher powers which make it always recreate its manifestation in larger terms, each new-creation of this kind bringing out something of the inner potentiality, making it more and more possible to bring down the Perfection that waits above. At last the line will be crossed that will make possible the entire reversion and the manifestation in the terms of ensouled Matter of That which is above. As long as the outward personality we call ourselves is centred in the lower powers of consciousness, the riddle of its own existence, its purpose, its necessity is to it an insoluble enigma; if something of the truth is at all conveyed to this outward mental man, he but imperfectly grasps it and perhaps misinterprets and misuses and mislives it. His true staff of walking is made more of a fire of faith than any ascertained and indubitable light of knowledge. It is only by rising toward a higher consciousness beyond the line and therefore superconscious now to him that he can emerge from his inability and his ignorance. His full liberation and enlightenment will come when he crosses the line into the light of a new superconscious existence. That is the transcendence which was the object of aspiration of the mystics and the spiritual seekers.

But in itself this would change nothing in the creation here; the evasion of a liberated soul from the world makes to that world no difference. But this crossing of the line if turned not only to an ascending but to a descending purpose would mean the transformation of the line from what it now is, a lid, a barrier, into a passage for the higher powers of consciousness of the Being now above it. It would mean a new creation on earth, a bringing in of the ultimate powers which would reverse the conditions here, in as much as that would produce a creation

raised into the full flood of spiritual and supramental light in place of one emerging into a half-light of mind out of a darkness of material inconscience. It is only in such a full flood of the realised spirit that the embodied being could know, in the sense of all that was involved in it, the meaning and temporary necessity of his descent into the darkness and its conditions and at the same time dissolve them by a luminous transmutation into a manifestation here of the revealed and no longer of the veiled and disguised or apparently deformed Divine.

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I suppose you have not read my "Riddle of This World",¹ but it is a similar solution I put there. X's way of putting it is a trifle too "Vedantic-Theistic" — in my view it is a transaction between the One and the Many. In the beginning it was you (not the human you who is now complaining but the central being) which accepted or even invited the adventure of the Ignorance; sorrow and struggle are a necessary consequence of the plunge into the Inconscience and the evolutionary emergence out of it. The explanation is that it had an object, the eventual play of the Divine Consciousness and Ananda not in its original transcendence but under conditions for which the plunge into the Inconscience was necessary. It is fundamentally a cosmic problem and can be understood only from the cosmic consciousness. If you want a solution which will be agreeable to the human mind and feelings, I am afraid there is none. No doubt if human beings had made the universe, they would have done much better; but they were not there to be consulted when they were made. Only your central being was there and that was much nearer in its temerarious foolhardiness to Vivekananda's or X's than to the repining prudence of your murmuring and trembling human mentality of the present moment — otherwise it would never have come down into the adventure. Or perhaps it did not realise what it was in for? It is the same with the wallowers

¹ *The preceding letter was published under the heading "The Riddle of This World" in a book of the same name in 1933. — Ed.*

under their cross. Even now they wallow because something in them likes the wallowing and bears the cross because something in them chooses to suffer. So?

The Disharmonies of Earth

That brings me to your second question² about the missing Harmony and the actual disharmonies of earth, a dissonance out of which like most people you build a justification for a saving flight towards Nirvana, — although in the true theory of Mayavada harmony and disharmony are of equal value or rather equal non-value: for the glory of Heaven and the joy of the gods are as much an illusion and, if anything, a greater illusion than any ugliness of life or redundancy of human suffering. But I agree with you that disharmony is what is the matter with the world here and it is harmony that is the one thing desirable. Then the whole question is whether harmony is intended to be found or not or whether the very nature and condition and grain of life is a disharmony that, because the very root of life is ego and division, is incurable. The Mayavadin contends that it is; Buddha also decided that the only way out of suffering and disharmony was out of life into the permanence or perhaps the nothingness of Nirvana. But the question is whether what is now is the base of existence or only a temporary phase of existence here. Is life radically just an expression of ego and division? and is there nothing else, is there not behind it the unity of the Divine? and cannot it be brought out, — cannot we get rid in the end of the little things on the surface and express these greater things behind it? If, as spiritual experience shows us, the unity of the Divine is there at the very base and if as both ancient and modern knowledge declare, there has been a spiritual evolution from down upwards, — though the modern speaks only of an evolution of the body with the consciousness

² The first question of the correspondent concerned “the results of the manifestation of a new supramental principle in the earth-consciousness”. See Sri Aurobindo’s letters beginning “There is not much profit” and “As I have said” on pages 280–84. — Ed.

depending on it and the ancient, as in the Tantras, only of a spiritual evolution of the soul from vegetable life-form to the human mind-life, — then there is no reason why this spiritual evolution should not arrive beyond its present incomplete and therefore still disharmonious consciousness in man to its logical consummation, an expression of the Divine. There is not only no reason why it should not, but such an arrival is inevitably pointed to both by the logic of reason and the gaze of intuition. Not only so, but the first step towards solution has been taken by the Yogi's extension of consciousness beyond ego and division; spiritual experience has shown that the embodied soul can arrive beyond ego and division to consciousness governed by the unity of the one Self or the Divine; and the existence of the Jivanmukta proves that one can thus exceed ego and division and yet live and act, so that life in the Divine is not an imagination or a fable.

The ascension above ego and division is no doubt only a first step achieved in rare individuals, but in evolution it is the first step which counts and makes all the rest possible. Also, no doubt, to stand above an egoistic and divided world and act on it from the egoless heights of the spirit is not enough — a power is needed and a process, — the descent of a power that can bring harmony because in its nature it is at once superior, fundamental and comprehensive and a discovery of the process that fits the power. All achievement in embodied life has been made possible by the discovery of the necessary power and the effective process. It must so also be done in the achievement of harmony in a still discordant earth-nature.

Is there any conclusive reason for declaring such an achievement or spiritual evolution impossible? The only argument you advance amounts to this only that it has not been done yet and that shows that it cannot be done. That reasoning has not much value. It is the usual logic of the physical intellect which is bound by what is and believes that to be definitive. It has been used against all new or yet unaccomplished ideas or achievements and, when they have been accomplished, still urged against their successors. The physical mind always comes in with its fixed line

of the present and “No farther” and when the fixed line of the present is unfixed and overpassed, it again erects a new line and cries “No farther”. If an “elemental” who had attained to the physical mind had been present at the different stages of the earth-history he would have argued like that. When only matter was there and there was no life, if told that there would soon be life on earth embodied in matter, he would have cried out, “What is that? It is impossible, it cannot be done. Life is possible only in a subtle body. It has never been and never will be embodied in gross matter. What, this mass of electrons, gases, chemical elements, this heap of mud and water and stones and inert metals, how are you going to get life in that? Will the metal walk? can the stone live? will you take mud and water and make out of it a body that can move, feel, act, desire?” But life came in spite of the impossibility and living forms were developed—plant and tree and living bodies were built out of the protoplasm and molecule; some ingenious force or being evolved slowly out of that through millions of years with an amazing patience, using chemical and biological elements alike, gene and gland and heart and brain and nerve and cell and living tissue and the animal walked and bounded and man arose evolving through tens of thousands, perhaps millions of years in the body of an erect two-footed animal. There again the physical-minded elemental would have intervened and cried out, “What is this that is being attempted? No, no, impossible. Such a thing has never been done. Reflexes, memories, associations, instinctive combinations of life and action, these things of course are possible; but reason, intelligent will, conscious planning and creation, art, poetry, philosophy in this savage shambling creature? An animal cannot evolve powers and activities which have never been possessed except by the gods and the Asuras. How can this material animal organism ever be capable of such a [*incomplete*]

Chapter Two

Spiritual Evolution and the Supramental

Human History and Spiritual Evolution

There have been times when the seeking for spiritual attainment was, at least in certain civilisations, more intense and widespread than now or rather than it has been in the world in general during the past few centuries. For now the curve seems to be the beginning of a new turn of seeking which takes its start from what was achieved in the past and projects itself towards a greater future. But always, even in the age of the Vedas or in Egypt, the spiritual achievement or the occult knowledge was confined to a few; it was not spread in the whole mass of humanity. The mass of humanity evolves slowly, containing in itself all stages of the evolution from the material and the vital man to the mental man. A small minority has pushed beyond the barriers, opening the doors to occult and spiritual knowledge and preparing the ascent of the evolution beyond mental man into spiritual and supramental being. Sometimes this minority has exercised an enormous influence as in Vedic India, Egypt or, according to tradition, in Atlantis, and determined the civilisation of the race, giving it a strong stamp of the spiritual or the occult; sometimes they have stood apart in their secret schools or orders, not directly influencing a civilisation which was sunk in material ignorance or in chaos and darkness or in the hard external enlightenment which rejects spiritual knowledge.

The cycles of evolution tend always upward, but they are cycles and do not ascend in a straight line. The process therefore gives the impression of a series of ascents and descents, but what is essential in the gains of the evolution is kept or, even if eclipsed for a time, reemerges in new forms suitable to the new ages.

The Creation has descended all the degrees of being from

the Supermind to Matter and in each degree it has created a world, reign, plane or order proper to that degree. In the creating of the material world there was a plunge of this descending Consciousness into an apparent Inconscience and an emergence of it out of that Inconscience, degree by degree, until it recovers its own highest spiritual and supramental summits and manifests their powers here in Matter. But even in the Inconscience there is a secret Consciousness which works, one may say, by an involved and hidden Intuition proper to itself. In each stage of Matter, in each stage of Life, this Intuition assumes a working proper to that stage and acts from behind the veil, supporting and enforcing the immediate necessities of the creative Force. There is an intuition in Matter which holds the action of the material Energy together and dictates the organisation of the material world from the electron to the sun and planet and their contents. There is an intuition in Life which similarly supports and guides the play and development of life in matter till it is ready for the mental evolution of which man is the vehicle. In man also the creation follows the same upward process, — the intuition within develops according to the stage he has reached in his progress. Even the precise intellect of the scientist, who is inclined to deny the separate existence or the superiority of intuition, yet cannot really move forward unless there is behind him a mental intuition which enables him to take a forward step or to divine what has to be done. Intuition therefore is present at the beginning of things and in their middle as well as at their consummation.

But Intuition takes its proper form only when one goes beyond the mental into the spiritual domain, for there only it comes fully forward from behind the veil and reveals its true and complete nature. Along with the mental evolution of man there has been going forward the early process of another evolution which prepares the spiritual and supramental being. This has had two lines, one the discovery of the occult forces secret in Nature and of the hidden planes and worlds concealed from us by the world of Matter and the other the discovery of man's soul and spiritual self. If the tradition of Atlantis is correct, it is that

of a progress which went to the extreme of occult knowledge but could go no farther. In the India of Vedic times we have the record left of the other line of achievement, that of spiritual self-discovery; occult knowledge was there but kept subordinate. We may say that here in India the reign of Intuition came first, intellectual Mind developing afterwards in the later philosophy and science. But in fact the mass of men at the time, it is quite evident, lived entirely on the material plane, worshipped the Godheads of material nature, sought from them entirely material objects. The effort of the Vedic mystics revealed to them the things behind through a power of inner sight and hearing and experience which was confined to a limited number of seers and sages and kept carefully secret from the mass of humanity — secrecy was always insisted on by the mystics. We may very well attribute this flowering of intuition on the spiritual plane to a rapid reemergence of the essential gains brought down from a previous cycle. If we analyse the spiritual history of India we shall find that after reaching this height there was a descent which attempted to take up each lower degree of the already evolved consciousness and link it to the spiritual at the summit. The Vedic age was followed by a great outburst of intellectual philosophy which yet took spiritual truth as its basis and tried to reach it anew, not through a direct intuitive or occult process as did the Vedic seers, but by the power of the mind's reflective, speculative, logical thought; at the same time processes of Yoga were developed which used the thinking mind as a means of arriving at spiritual realisation, spiritualising this mind itself at the same time. Then followed an era of the development of philosophies and Yoga processes which more and more used the emotional and aesthetic being as the means of spiritual realisation and spiritualised the emotional level in man through the heart and feeling. This was accompanied by Tantric and other processes which took up the mental will, the life-will, the life of sensations and made them at once the instruments and the field of spiritualisation. In Hathayoga and in the various attempts at divinisation of the body there is also a line of endeavour which attempted to arrive at the same achievement with regard

to living matter; but this still awaits the discovery of the true characteristic method and power of spirit in the body. We may say therefore that the universal Consciousness after its descent into Matter has conducted the evolution there along two lines, one of ascent to the discovery of the self and spirit, the other of descent through the already evolved levels of mind, life and body so as to bring down the spiritual consciousness into these also and to fulfil thereby some secret intention in the creation of the material universe. Our Yoga is in its principle a taking up and summarising and completing of this process, an endeavour to rise to the highest possible supramental level and bring down its consciousness and powers into mind, life and body.

The condition of present-day civilisation, materialistic with an externalised intellect and life-endeavour, which you find so painful, is an episode, but one which was perhaps inevitable. For if the spiritualisation of mind, life and body is the thing to be achieved, the conscious presence of the Spirit even in the physical consciousness and material body, an age which puts Matter and the physical life in the forefront and devotes itself to the effort of the intellect to discover the truth of material existence, had perhaps to come. On one side, by materialising everything up to intellect itself it has created the extreme difficulty of which you speak for the spiritual seeker; but on the other hand it has given the life in Matter an importance which the spirituality of the past was inclined to deny to it. In a way it has made the spiritualisation of it a necessity for spiritual seeking and so aided the descent movement of the evolving spiritual Consciousness in the earth-nature. More than that we cannot claim for it; its conscious effect has been rather to stifle and almost extinguish the spiritual element in humanity; it is only by the divine use of the pressure of contraries and an intervention from above that there will be the greater spiritual outcome.

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All the phases of human history may be regarded as a working out of the earth-consciousness in which each phase has its place and significance, so this materialistic-intellectual phase had to

come and has had, no doubt, its purpose and significance. One may also hold that one of its uses was as an experiment to see how far and whither the human consciousness would go through an intellectual and external control of Nature with physical and intellectual means only and without the intervention of any higher consciousness and knowledge — or that it may help by resistance to draw the spiritual consciousness that is growing behind all vicissitudes to attempt the control of Matter and turn it towards the Divine, as the Tantriks and Vaishnavas tried to do with the emotional and lower vital nature, not contenting themselves with the Vedantic turning of the mind towards the Supreme. But it is difficult to go farther than that or to hold that this materialism is itself a spiritual thing or that the dark, confused and violent state of contemporary Europe was an indispensable preparation for the descent of the Spirit. This darkness and violence which seems bent on destroying such light of mental idealism and desire of harmony as had succeeded in establishing itself in the mind of humanity, is obviously due to a descent of fierce and dark vital Powers which seek to possess the human world for their own, not for a spiritual purpose. It is true that such a precipitation of Asuric forces from the darker vital worlds has been predicted by some occultists as one first result of the pressure of the Divine Descent on their vital domain, but it was regarded as a circumstance of the battle, not as something helping towards the Divine Victory. The churning of Matter by the attempt of the human intellect to conquer material Nature and use it for its purposes may break something in the passivity and inertia, but it is done for material ends, in a rajasic spirit, with a denial of spirituality as its mental basis. Such an attempt may end, seems to be ending indeed in chaos and a disintegration, while the new attempts at creation and reintegration seem to combine the obscure rigidity of material Nature with a resurgence of the barbaric brutality and violence of a half animal vital Nature. How are the spiritual Forces to deal with all that or make use of such a churning of the energies of the material universe? The way of the Spirit is the way of peace and light and harmony; if it has to battle it is precisely because of the presence

of such forces which seek either to extinguish or to pervert the spiritual light. In the spiritual change inertia has to be replaced by the divine peace and calm, the rajasic troubled energy by a tranquil and potent, pure and liberated dynamis, while the mind must be kept plastic for the workings of a higher Light of Knowledge. How will the activity of Materialism lend itself to that change?

Materialism can hardly be spiritual in its basis because its basic method is just the opposite of the spiritual way of doing things. The spiritual works from within outward, the way of materialism is to work from out inwards. It makes the inner a result of the outer, fundamentally a phenomenon of Matter and it works upon that view of things. It seeks to “perfect” humanity by outward means and one of its main efforts is to construct a perfect social machine which will train and oblige men to be what they ought to be. The loss of the ego in the Divine is the spiritual ideal; here it is replaced by the immolation of the individual to the military and industrial State. Where is there any spirituality in all that? Spirituality can only come by opening of the mind, vital and physical to the inmost soul, to the higher Self, to the Divine, and their subordination to the spiritual forces and instrumentation as channels of the inner light, the higher Knowledge and Power. Other things, mental, aesthetic, vital, are often misnamed spirituality, but they lack that essential character without which the word loses its true significance.

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All that you say only amounts, on the general issue, to the fact that this is a world of slow evolution in which man has emerged out of the beast and is still not out of it, light out of darkness, a higher consciousness out of first a dead and then a struggling and troubled unconsciousness. A spiritual consciousness is emerging and it is through this spiritual consciousness that one can meet the Divine. Religions, full of mental and vital mixed, troubled and ignorant stuff, can only get glimpses of the Divine; positivist reason with its questioning based upon things as they are and refusing to believe in anything that may or will be cannot get

any vision of it at all. The spiritual is a new consciousness that has to evolve and has been evolving. It is quite natural that at first and for a long time only a few should get the full light, while a greater number but still only a few compared with the mass of humanity, should get it partially. But what has been gained by the few can at a stage of the evolution be completed and more generalised and that is the attempt which we are making. But if this greater consciousness of light, peace and joy is to be gained, it cannot be by questioning and scepticism which can only fall back on what is and say, "It is impossible, impossible — what has not been in the past cannot be in the future; what is so imperfectly realised as yet, cannot be better realised in the future." A faith, a will or at least a persistent demand and aspiration are needed — a feeling that with this and this alone I can be satisfied and a push towards it that will not cease till it is done. That is why a spirit of denial and scepticism stands in the way, because they stand against the creation of the conditions under which spiritual experience can unroll itself. In the absence of faith and firm will to achieve, the Divine has to manifest in conditions which are the most adverse to that manifestation. It can be done, but you cannot expect it to be easily done.

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I do not know what Mahatma Gandhi means by complete realisation.¹ If he means a realisation with nothing more to realise, no farther development possible, then I agree — I have myself spoken of farther divine progression, an infinite development. But the question is not that; the question is whether the Ignorance can be transcended, whether a complete essential realisation turning the consciousness from darkness to light, from an instrument of the Ignorance seeking for Knowledge into an instrument or rather a manifestation of Knowledge proceeding to greater

¹ *These observations were made with regard to a statement by Mahatma Gandhi: "I hold that complete realisation is impossible in this embodied life. Nor is it necessary. A living immovable faith is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height attainable by human beings." This statement appeared in an article submitted to Sri Aurobindo by the correspondent. — Ed.*

Knowledge, Light enlarging, heightening into greater Light, is or is not possible. My view is that this conversion is not only possible, but inevitable in the spiritual evolution of the being here. The embodiment of life has nothing to do with it. This embodiment is not of life, but of consciousness and its energy, of which life is only one phase or force. As life has developed mind, and the embodiment has modified itself to suit this development (mind is precisely the main instrument of ignorance seeking for knowledge), so mind can develop supermind which is in its nature knowledge not seeking for itself, but manifesting itself by its own automatic power, and the embodiment can again modify itself or be modified from above so as to suit this development. Faith is a necessary means for arriving at realisation because we are ignorant and do not yet know that which we are seeking to realise; faith is indeed knowledge giving the ignorance an intimation of itself previous to its own manifestation, it is the gleam sent before by the yet unrisen Sun. When the Sun shall rise there will be no longer any need of the gleam. The supramental knowledge supports itself, it does not need to be supported by faith; it lives by its own certitude. You may say that farther progression, farther development will need faith. No, for the farther development will proceed on a basis of knowledge, not of Ignorance. We shall walk in the light of knowledge towards its own wider vistas of self-fulfilment.

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I do not see what answer you can give to your uncle that would satisfy him, as he is evidently living in the mentality of the past and would not readily understand anything about spiritual evolution, the supermind and the Divine Manifestation in life and matter. You can perhaps tell him casually that it is not our hope to transform suddenly the whole human race. Your object is precisely to lead a higher life away from the ordinary world, only it is not solitary; there is a collective side to it and a side, not only of meditation, but of work, action and creation. There is nothing in this that is impossible.

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It is quite possible that there have been periods of harmony on different levels, not supramental, which were afterwards disturbed — but those could only be a stage or resting place in a world of spiritual evolution out of the Ignorance.

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This is a world of evolution in Matter. If everything were supramental from the beginning, there would be no place for evolution.

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The evolution I speak of is not the evolution of the Darwinian theory.

Spiritual and Supramental

Spiritual and supramental are not the same thing. The spiritual planes from higher mind to Overmind are accessible to the old sadhanas so there is no difficulty about that. If they were not accessible there would have been no Yoga at all and no Yogis in the past in India.

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If spiritual and supramental were the same thing, as you say my readers imagine, then all the sages and devotees and Yogis and sadhaks throughout the ages would have been supramental beings and all I have written about the supermind would be so much superfluous stuff, useless and otiose. Anybody who had spiritual experiences would then be a supramental being; the Asram would be chock-full of supramental beings and every other Asram in India also. Spiritual experiences can fix themselves in the inner consciousness and alter it, transform it, if you like; one can realise the Divine everywhere, the Self in all and all in the Self, the universal Shakti doing all things; one can feel merged in the Cosmic Self or full of ecstatic bhakti or Ananda. But one may and usually does still go on in the outer active parts of Nature thinking with the intellect or at best

the intuitive mind, willing with a mental will, feeling joy and sorrow on the vital surface, undergoing physical afflictions and suffering the struggle of life in the body with death and disease. The change then only will be that the inner self will watch all that without getting disturbed or bewildered, with a perfect equality, taking it as an inevitable part of Nature, inevitable at least so long as one does not withdraw to the Self out of Nature. That is not the transformation I envisage. It is quite another power of knowledge, another kind of will, another luminous nature of emotion and aesthesis, another constitution of the physical consciousness that must come in by the supramental change.

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Spiritual realisation can be had on any plane by contact with the Divine (who is everywhere) or by perception of the Self within, which is pure and untouched by the outer movements. The Supermind is something transcendent — a dynamic Truth consciousness which is not here yet and has to be brought down from above.

The Overmind and the Supramental

There are many aspects of the Divine and of existence manifested as separate by the Overmind. Different minds are drawn by different aspects and each follows its own path to its own goal. Each is free to follow its own path and is not bound by another.

As for the Supramental, it is by definition a consciousness above the Overmind in which all aspects are infused in the integral Divine. But none is bound to seek after the Supramental consciousness if his tendency is elsewhere.

The manifestation is complex and there are beings in it who belong to various levels. If a soul wishes to plunge into the Divine through Nirvana or seeks spiritual fulfilment in a world of the Gods, such as Vaikuntha or Goloka, it has the freedom to do so, to follow its own tendency.

The discovery of the Supramental is especially important for the spiritual evolution on the earth. If the souls here have to reach

it eventually, no doubt the Divine will evolve them to seek it. There is nothing compelling all to reach it by a progress towards it in direct line or by the same path and stages. It is possible for them to be satisfied with another path and intermediary partial fulfilment. If it is their destiny, they may return afterwards to pursue the further ascent to the Supramental level.

The Gita accepted the current belief that freedom from birth was the consequence of reaching the highest state. It is a natural deduction from the belief that this is not only a world of Ignorance but cannot be ever anything else.

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Yes, there has been some progress in that respect [*psychicisation*] and all progress in the psychic or spiritual consciousness of the sadhaks makes the descent more easy. But the main cause [*of the descent of Light and Power*] is that the Overmind principle which is the immediate secret support of the present earth-nature with all its limitations is more and more undergoing the pressure of the Supramental and letting through a greater Light and Power. For so long as the Overmind intervenes (the principle of the Overmind being a play of forces, each trying to realise itself as the Truth) the law of struggle remains and with it the opportunity for the adverse Forces.

*

It is not immortality *of* the body, but the consciousness of immortality *in* the body that can come with the descent of Overmind into Matter or even into the physical mind or with the touch of the modified Supramental Light on the physical mind-consciousness. These are preliminary openings, but they are not the supramental fulfilment in Matter.

Involution and Evolution

The involution is of the Divine in the Inconscience and it is done by the interposition of intermediate planes (Overmind etc., mind, vital) — then the plunge into the Inconscient which is the

origin of matter. But all that is not a process answering to the evolution in the inverse sense — for there is no need for that, but a gradation of consciousness which is intended to make the evolution upwards possible.

*

Man has evolved from Matter — or rather Nature has evolved first the plant, then the animal, then Man in a regular succession out of Matter. What is involved is not Man, but mind and life and spirit. “Involved” means that they are there even though there seems to be no mental activity (as in the tree) and no mental or vital activity (as in the stone); as the evolution goes on the involved life appears and begins to organise itself and the plants appear and then the animals; next mind, first in the animal, and then man appears.

*

Everything here that belongs strictly to the earth plane is evolved out of the Inconscient, out of Matter — but the essential mental being exists already, not involved on the mental plane. It is only the personal mental that is evolved here by something rising out of the Inconscient and developing under a pressure from above.

*

What is meant here² is the Divine in its essential manifestation which reveals itself to us as Light and Consciousness, Power, Love and Beauty. But in its actual cosmic manifestation the Supreme, being the Infinite and not bound by any limitation, can manifest in itself, in its consciousness of innumerable possibilities, something that seems to be the opposite of itself, something in which there can be Darkness, Inconscience, Inertia, Insensibility, Disharmony and Disintegration. It is this that we see at the basis of the material world and speak of nowadays as the Inconscient — the inconscient Ocean of the Rigveda in which the One was hidden and arose in the form of this Universe, —

² *The statement is not available. — Ed.*

or, as it is sometimes called, the non-being, Asat. The Ignorance which is the characteristic of our mind and life is the result of this origin in the Inconscience. Moreover, in the evolution out of inconscient existence there rise up naturally powers and beings which are interested in the maintenance of all negations of the Divine, error and unconsciousness, pain, suffering, obscurity, death, weakness, illness, disharmony, evil. Hence the perversion of the manifestation here, its inability to reveal the true essence of the Divine. Yet in the very base of this evolution all that is divine is there involved and pressing to evolve, Light, Consciousness, Power, Perfection, Beauty, Love. For in the Inconscient itself and behind the perversions of the Ignorance Divine Consciousness lies concealed and works and must more and more appear, throwing off in the end its disguises. That is why it is said that the world is called to express the Divine.

Your statement about the supramental evolution is correct except that it does not follow that humanity as a whole will become supramental. What is more likely to happen is that the supramental principle will be established in the evolution by the descent just as the mental principle was established by the appearance of thinking Mind and Man in earthly life. There will be a race of supramental beings on the earth just as now there is a race of mental beings. Man himself will find a greater possibility of rising to the planes intermediary between his mind and supermind and making their powers effective in his life, which will mean a great change in humanity on earth, but it is not likely that the mental stage will disappear from the ascending ladder and, if so, the continued existence of a mental race will be necessary so as to form a stage between the vital and the supramental in the evolutionary movement of the spirit.

Such a descent of higher beings as you suggest may be envisaged as a part of the process of the change. But the main part of the change will be the appearance of the supramental being and the organisation of a supramental nature here, as a mental being has appeared and a mental nature organised itself during the last stage of the evolution. I prefer nowadays not to speak of the descent of the higher beings because my experience is that

it leads in the minds of the sadhaks to a vain and often egoistic romanticism which distracts the attention from the real work, that of the realisation of the Divine and the transformation of the nature.

*

In the descent it [*falsehood*] begins with Mind, in the evolutionary ascent it is difficult to say where it begins — for here the beginning is Inconscience and Ignorance; but I suppose we may say that conscious falsehood begins with the beginnings of mind still involved in Life or appearing out of it.

*

An evolution from the Inconscient need not be a painful one if there is no resistance; it can be a deliberately slow and beautiful efflorescence of the Divine. One ought to be able to see how beautiful outward Nature can be and usually is, although it is itself apparently “inconscient”. Why should the growth of consciousness in inward Nature be attended by so much ugliness and evil spoiling the beauty of the outward creation? Because of a *perversity* born from the Ignorance, which came in with Life and increased in Mind — that is the Falsehood, the Evil that was born because of the starkness of the Inconscient’s sleep separating its action from the luminosity of the secret Conscient that was all the time within it. But it need not have been so except for the overriding Will of the Supreme which meant that the possibility of Perversion by inconscience and ignorance should be manifested in order to be eliminated through being given their chance, since all possibility has to manifest somewhere: once it is eliminated, the Divine Manifestation in Matter will be greater than it otherwise could be because it will gather all the possibilities involved in this difficult creation and not some of them as in an easier and less strenuous creation might naturally be.

“From beauty to greater beauty, from joy to intenser joy, by an especial adjustment of the senses” — yes, that would be the normal course of a divine manifestation, however gradual, in

Matter. “Discordant sound and offensive odour” are creations of a disharmony between consciousness and Nature and do not exist in themselves; they would not be present to a liberated and harmonised consciousness for they would be foreign to its being, nor would they afflict a rightly developing harmonised soul and Nature. Even the “belching volcano, crashing thunderstorm and whirling typhoon” are in themselves grandiose and beautiful things and only harmful or horrible to a consciousness unable to meet or deal with them or make a pact with the spirits of the Wind and Fire. You are assuming that the manifestation from the Inconscient must be what it is now and here and that no other kind of world of Matter was possible, but the harmony of material Nature in itself shows that it need not necessarily be a discordant, evil, furiously perturbed and painful creation — the psychic being, if allowed to manifest from the first in Life and lead the evolution instead of being relegated behind the veil, would have been the principle of a harmonious outflowering; everyone who has felt the psychic at work within him, freed from the vital intervention, can at once see that this would be its effect because of its unerring perception, true choice, harmonic action. If it has not been so, it is because the dark Powers have made Life a claimant instead of an instrument. The reality of the Hostiles and the nature of their role and trend of their endeavour cannot be doubted by anyone who has had his inner vision unsealed and made their unpleasant acquaintance.

The Supermind and the Lower Creation

It [*the Supermind*] can act directly on everything if it is brought down into the material consciousness — at present in the arrangement of things here it is latent behind and acts through other media.

*

No, one can't say that [*there is a direct supramental action at work in plants*]. It is the vital force that works, but there is a sort of underlying Intuition in this Life-Force which is behind

the whole action and that is what one might call a reflection or delegated Power at the back of which is latent Supermind.

*

There is no reason why the vegetable, animal and human life should not evolve in the Truth and not in the Ignorance — if once the Knowledge is there in the earth-plane.

Speculations about the Supramental Descent

It is not perhaps very useful to forecast by the mind what will be the precise results of the descent of a supramental consciousness into a world in which up to now the mental intelligence has been the highest evolutionary product and leading power. For the supermind is a consciousness which will work in a very different way from the mind and the lines laid down for it by the latter are not likely to be respected by the greater energy in its self-organisation and operation here.

*

There is not much profit in mental and intellectual speculations about what precisely the results would be of the introduction of a supramental principle and a supramental organisation and order in the earth-consciousness and the earth-life. In all probability the speculations would be quite beside the mark or, even where they hit on some broad lines, would draw them wrong and all awry and out of proportion; for the intellectual mind is a different and inferior power of consciousness; it is analytical and synthetic, pulling things to pieces and putting them together in order to understand and deal with them, proceeding by representation and abstraction and formulas and schematic figures; it imposes a rigid logic on an illogical world in order to bring about a fixed and mechanical order; it cuts up, divides, compares, contrasts, confronts one element of existence contradictorily with another; classifies according to similarity and difference. In the end it produces a system of things explained and intelligible; but each such system is only a segment of truth dried up into

a formula. Life compelled into these systems either escapes and flows through its hard set lines and undermines and slowly or quickly upsets or transmogrifies the system till it is no longer what it pretends to be or else it remains fossilised and cramped within until it dies or until an explosion of its suppressed forces liberates it into a new order. Supermind is a totally different power. It has a whole-vision and an essential vision; it reposes on an all-seeing authority of Truth which spontaneously produces harmony according to the inner truth of the One and the inner truth of the Many in the One. Out of things that to the mind are opposites and incompatible contrasts it takes in each its essence and joins them harmoniously into a single piece. This it does by raising them beyond their separated appearances and putting them in the light of the one Truth where they can find their reality and their reconciling principle. The things that in the mind are in constant conflict or with only a patched-up truce between them, liberty and order, commonalty and individuality and the rest will in supermind find their natural harmony because they are not only indispensable aspects of the essential whole, but themselves one. But for this our existing materials mind, life, body must be supramentalised; otherwise the discordances and oppositions of mind will remain oppositions and discords, the confusions and conflicts of life will remain confused and conflicting, the cramps and limits of form will prevent plastic change, perfection, fulfilment. Mind has failed to liberate and perfect life, because it has imperfectly mentalised life and form, without finding their secret by which they can find themselves and their perfection through a higher light than their own half-conscious self-feeling. Supermind will supramentalise fully mind, life and body and in the very doing of it liberate their own perfection because it is in supermind that the full and perfect secret of mind, life and form are treasured and await their time of descent into terrestrial nature.

*

As I have said [*in the preceding letter*], speculation on the results of the manifestation of a new supramental principle in the earth-

consciousness organising itself there as mind, life and matter have already organised themselves — for that is what it comes to — is a little perilous and premature, because we must do it with the mind and the mind has not the capacity to forecast the action of what is above itself — just as a merely animal or vital perception of things could not have forecast what would be the workings of Mind and a mentalised race of beings here. The supermind is a different order of consciousness far removed from the mental — there are in fact several grades of higher consciousness between the human mind and the supramental. If the earth were not evolutionary but a typical world, then indeed one could predict that the descent of a higher type of consciousness would swallow up or abolish the existing type. Ignorance would end and the creation in the ignorance disappear either by transmutation or by annihilation and replacement. The human mental kingdom would be transformed into the supramental; the vital and subhuman, if it existed in the typical world, would also be changed and become supramental. But, earth being an evolutionary world, the supramental descent is not likely to have such a devastating completeness. It would be only the establishment of a new principle of consciousness and a new order of conscious beings and this new principle would evolve its own forms and powers in the terrestrial order. Even the whole human kingdom need not and would not be transformed at once or to the whole supramental extent. But at the same time the beginning of a supramental creation on earth is bound to have a powerful effect on the rest of terrestrial existence. Its first effect on mankind would be to open a way between the order of the Truth-light and the orders of the Ignorance here on earth itself, a sort of realised gradation by which it would be possible for mental man to evolve more easily and surely from the Ignorance towards the Light and, as he went, organise his existence according to these steps. For at present the grades of consciousness between mind and supermind act only as influences (the highest of them very indirect influences) on human mind and consciousness and cannot do more. This would change. An organised higher human consciousness could appear on several degrees

of it, with the supermind-organised consciousness as the leader at the top influencing the others and drawing them towards itself. It is likely that as the supramental principle evolved itself the evolution would more and more take on another aspect — the Daivic nature would predominate, the Asuro-Rakshaso-Pishachic prakriti which now holds so large a place would more and more recede and lose its power. A principle of greater unity, harmony and light would emerge everywhere. It is not that the creation in the Ignorance would be altogether abolished, but it would begin to lose much of its elements of pain and falsehood and would be more a progression from lesser to higher Truth, from a lesser to a higher harmony, from a lesser to a higher Light, than the reign of chaos and struggle, of darkness and error that we now perceive. For according to all occult teaching the evolutionary creation could have been such but for the intervention of the Powers of Darkness — all traditions including that of the Veda and Upanishads point under different figures to the same thing. In the Upanishads it is the Daityas that smite with evil all that the gods create, in the Zoroastrian tradition it is Ahriman coming across the work of Ahura Mazda, the Chaldean tradition uses a different figure. But the significance is the same; it is the perception of something that has struck across the harmonious development of creation and brought in the principle of darkness and disorder. The occult tradition also foresees the elimination of this disturbing element by the descent of a divine Principle or Power on earth, but gives to it usually a sudden and dramatic form. I conceive that the supramental descent would effect the same event by a progressive elimination of the darkness and evolution of the Light, but with what rate of rapidity it would be rash to try to forecast or prefigure.

This is a very general statement, but perhaps it is a sufficient answer to your first question. I need only add that there is nothing to prevent the supramental creation, the creation in the higher Truth-Light from being evolutionary, a continuous efflorescence of the Divine Truth and Harmony in a manifold variety, not a final and decisive creation in a single fixed type. What would be decisive would be the crossing of the border

between twilight and Light, the transference of the base of development from the consciousness in the Ignorance to the Truth-consciousness. That would be, on this level, final. The transition into a world of spirits would only effectuate itself, first, if the whole earth-consciousness became thoroughly supramentalised, secondly, if after that the turn were to a realisation here of the principle of those worlds of Sachchidananda where determination disappears in the interpenetration of All-in-All. But that would be to look too far into the potentialities of the future. In short, if the supramental principle came down it would not be in order to reproduce Heaven here under celestial conditions but to “create a new Heaven and a new earth” in the earth-consciousness itself, completing and transmuting but not abolishing the earth order.

It is evident that the creative process here could be greatly modified and transmuted by the appearance of the supramental principle. What would be its exact forms is a more difficult question, for the principle of a supramental creation is obvious but the possibilities of its manifestation are many and it is only the dynamic Truth itself that can choose and determine.

Section Two

The Supramental Descent and Transformation

Chapter One

The Descent of the Supermind

Inevitability of the Descent

The descent of the supramental is an inevitable necessity in the logic of things and is therefore sure. It is because people do not understand what the supermind is or realise the significance of the emergence of consciousness in a world of “inconscious” Matter that they are unable to realise this inevitability. I suppose a matter-of-fact observer if there had been one at the time of the unrelieved reign of inanimate Matter in the earth’s beginning would have criticised any promise of the emergence of life in a world of dead earth and rock and mineral as an absurdity and a chimaera; so too afterwards he would have repeated his mistake and regarded the emergence of thought and reason in an animal world as an absurdity and a chimaera. It is the same now with the appearance of supermind in the stumbling mentality of this world of human consciousness and its reasoning ignorance.

*

If the supramental descent is decreed, nothing can prevent it; but all things are worked out here through a play of forces, and an unfavourable atmosphere or conditions can delay even when they cannot prevent. Even when the thing is destined, it does not present itself as a certitude in the consciousness here (Overmind-mind-vital-physical) till the play of forces has been worked out up to a certain point at which the descent not only is, but appears as inevitable.

*

The descent of the supermind is a long process or at least a process with a long preparation and one can only say that the work is going on sometimes with a strong pressure for completion, sometimes retarded by the things that rise from below

and have to be dealt with before farther progress can be made. The process is a (spiritual) evolutionary process concentrated into a brief period—it could be done otherwise (by what men would regard as a miraculous intervention) only if the human mind were more flexible and less attached to its ignorance than it is. As we envisage it, it must manifest in a few first and then spread, but it is not likely to sweep over the earth in a moment. It is not advisable to discuss too much what it will do and how it will do it, because these are things the Supermind itself will fix, acting out of that Divine Truth in it, and the mind must not try to fix for it grooves in which it will run. Naturally, the release from subconscious ignorance and from disease, duration of life at will, and a change in the functioning of the body must be among the ultimate results of a supramental change; but the details of these things must be left for the supramental Energy to work out according to the truth of its own nature.

A Beginning, Not a Completion

What we are doing, if and when we succeed, will be a beginning, not a completion. It is the foundation of a new consciousness on earth—a consciousness with infinite possibilities of manifestation. The eternal progression is in the manifestation and beyond it there is no progression.

If the redemption of the soul from the physical vesture be the object, then there is no need of supramentalisation. Spiritual Mukti and Nirvana are sufficient. If the object is to rise to supra-physical planes, then also there is no need of supramentalisation. One can enter into some heaven above by devotion to the Lord of that heaven. But that is no progression. The other worlds are typical worlds, each fixed in its own kind and type and law. Evolution takes place on the earth and therefore the earth is the proper field for progression. The beings of the other worlds do not progress from one world to another. They remain fixed to their own type.

The purely monistic Vedantist says, all is Brahman, life is a dream, an unreality, only Brahman exists. One has Nirvana or

Mukti, then one lives only till the body falls — after that there is no such thing as life.

They do not believe in transformation, because mind, life and body are an ignorance, an illusion — the only reality is the featureless, relationless Self or Brahman. Life is a thing of relations; in the pure Self, all life and relations disappear. What would be the use or the possibility of transforming an illusion that can never be anything else (however transformed) than an illusion? There is no such thing for them as a “Nirvanic life”.

It is only some Yogas that aim at a transformation of any kind except that of ignorance into knowledge. The idea varies, — sometimes a divine knowledge or power or else a divine purity or an ethical perfection or a divine love.

What has to be overcome is the opposition of the Ignorance that does not want the transformation of the nature. If that can be overcome, then old spiritual ideas will not form an obstacle.

It is not intended to supramentalise humanity at large, but to establish the principle of the supramental consciousness in the earth-evolution. If that is done, all that is needed will be evolved by the supramental Power itself. It is not therefore important that the mission should be widespread. What is important is that the thing should be done at all in however small a number; that is the only difficulty.

If the transformation of the body is complete, that means no subjection to death — it does not mean that one will be bound to keep the same body for all time. One creates a new body for oneself when one wants to change, but how it will be done cannot be said now. The present method is by physical birth — some occultists suppose that a time will come when that is not necessary — but the question must be left for the supramental evolution to decide.

The questions about the supermind cannot be answered profitably now. Supermind cannot be described in terms that the mind will understand, because the terms will be mental and mind will understand them in a mental way and mental sense and miss their true import. It would therefore be a waste of time and energy which should be devoted to the preliminary work

—psychicisation and spiritualisation of the being and nature without which no supramentalisation is possible. Let the whole dynamic nature led by the psychic make itself full of the dynamic spiritual light, peace, purity, knowledge, force; let it afterwards get experience of the intermediate spiritual planes and know, feel and act in their sense; then it will be possible to speak last of the supramental transformation.

*

All that [*ideas such as “everything will soon be spiritualised”*] is absurd. The descent of the supramental means only that the Power will be there in the earth consciousness as a living force just as the thinking mental and the higher mental are already there. But an animal cannot take advantage of the presence of the thinking mental Power or an undeveloped man of the presence of the higher mental Power — so too everybody will not be able to take advantage of the presence of the supramental Power. I have also often enough said that it will be at first for the few, not for the whole earth, — only there will be a growing influence of it on the earth life.

*

It [*the world*] wants and it does not want something that it has not got. All that the supramental could give, the inner mind of the world would like to have, but its outer mind, its vital and physical do not like to pay the price. But after all I am not trying to change the world all at once but only to bring down centrally something into it it has not yet, a new consciousness and power.

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Not in their entirety [*will cosmic Mind, Life and Matter be transformed*] — for that is not our business. It is ourselves that we have to transform and change the earth consciousness by bringing in the supramental principle into the evolution there. Once there it will necessarily have a powerful influence on the whole earth-life — as mind has had through the evolution of men, but much greater.

*

It is not possible for a force like the Supramental to come down without making a large change in earth conditions. It does not follow that all will become supramentalised and it is not necessary — but mind itself will be influenced as life has been influenced by the development of mind on earth.

*

Nothing permanent can be done without the real Supramental Force. But the result of its descent would be that in human life intuition would become a greater and more developed force than it now is and the other intermediate powers between Mind and Supermind would become also more common and develop an organised action.

*

It is not for considerations of gain or loss that the Divine Consciousness acts — that is a human standpoint necessary for human development. The Divine, as the Gita says, has nothing to gain and nothing that it has not, yet it puts forth its power of action in the manifestation. It is the earth-consciousness, not the supramental world that has to gain by the descent of the supramental principle — that is sufficient reason for it to descend. The supramental worlds remain as they are and are in no way affected by the descent.

*

It [*the descent of the Supermind*] would not necessarily be known by everybody beforehand. Besides even if the descent were here one would have to be ready before one could get the final change.

*

It is the supermind we have to bring down, manifest, realise. Anything higher than that is impossible at this stage of the evolution except as a reflection in the consciousness or a power delegated and modified in its descent.

*

The descent of the Supramental can hasten things, but it is not going to act as a patent universal medicine or change everything in the twinkling of an eye.

Clarifications about the Supramental Descent

But what will happen when the supramental comes down is a matter for the supramental to decide — no use laying down laws for it beforehand with the mind. It is the Truth-consciousness, sir — it will act according to the divine Truth behind things.

*

It is the very principle of this Yoga that only by the supramentalisation of the consciousness which means rising above mind to supermind and the descent of the supermind into the nature can the final transformation be made. So if nobody can rise above mind to supermind or obtain the descent of the supermind, then logically this Yoga becomes impossible. Every being is in essence one with the Divine and in his individual being a portion of the Divine, so there is no insuperable bar to his becoming supramental. It is no doubt impossible for the human nature being mental in its basis to overcome the Ignorance and rise to or obtain the descent of the Supermind by its own unaided effort, but by surrender to the Divine it can be done. One brings it down into the earth Nature through his own consciousness and so opens the way for the others, but the change has to be repeated in each consciousness to become individually effective.

*

There need not be [*catastrophes when the Supramental descends*]. There will necessarily be great changes but they are not bound to be catastrophic. When there is a strong pressure from Overmind forces for change, then there are likely to be catastrophes because of the resistance and clash of forces. The supramental has a greater, in its fullness a complete mastery of things and power of harmonisation which can

overcome resistance by other means than dramatic struggle and violence.

*

There are three powers of the cosmos to which all things are subject — creation, preservation and destruction; whatever is created lasts for a time, then begins to crumble down. The taking away of the power of destruction implies a creation that will not be destroyed but last and develop always. In the Ignorance destruction is necessary for progress — in the Knowledge, the Truth-creation, the law is that of a constant unfolding without any Pralaya.

*

It is not by a general descent that people come out of the physical mind. If one chooses to remain in the physical mind, one million descents can come down and make no difference to him.

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The Supermind coming down on earth will change nothing in a man if he clings to the ego.

Chapter Two

Descent and Transformation

A World-Changing Yoga

What is a perfect technique of Yoga or rather of a world-changing and Nature-changing Yoga? Not one that takes a man by a little bit of him somewhere, attaches a hook and pulls him up by a pulley into Nirvana or Paradise. The technique of a world-changing Yoga has to be as multiform, sinuous, patient, all-including as the world itself. If it does not deal with all the difficulties or possibilities and carefully deal with each necessary element, has it any chance of success? And can a perfect technique which everybody can understand do that? It is not like writing a small poem in a fixed metre with a limited number of modulations. If you take the poem simile, it is the Mahabharata of a Mahabharata that has to be done. And what, compared with the limited Greek perfection, is the technique of the Mahabharata?

Next, what is the use of *vicārabuddhi* in such a case? If one has to get to a new consciousness which surpasses the reasoning intellect, can one do it on lines which are to be judged and understood by the reasoning intellect, controlled at every step by it, told by the intellect what it is to do, what is the measure of its achievements, what its steps must be and what their value? If one does that, will one ever get out of the range of the reasoning intelligence into what is beyond it? And if one does, how shall others judge what one is doing by the intellectual measure? How can one judge what is beyond the ordinary consciousness when one is oneself in the ordinary consciousness? Is it not only by exceeding yourself that you can feel, experience, judge what exceeds you? What is the value of a judgment without the feeling and experience?

What the Supramental will do the mind cannot foresee or lay down. The mind is Ignorance seeking for the Truth, the

Supramental by its very definition is Truth Consciousness, Truth in possession of itself and fulfilling itself by its own power. In a supramental world imperfection and disharmony are bound to disappear. But what we propose just now is not to make the earth a supramental world but to bring down the Supramental as a power and established consciousness in the midst of the rest — to let it work there and fulfil itself as Mind descended into Life and Matter and has worked as a Power there to fulfil itself in the midst of the rest. This will be enough to change the world and to change Nature by breaking down her present limits. But what, how, by what degrees it will do it is a thing that ought not to be said now — when the Light is there, the Light will itself do its work — when the Supramental Will stands on earth, that Will will decide. It will establish a perfection, a harmony, a Truth-creation — for the rest, well, it will be the rest — that is all.

*

I certainly hope to bring down an effective power of the Truth which will replace eventually the Falsehood that has governed the minds and hearts of men for so long. The liberation of a few individuals is a thing that is always possible and has always been done — but, to my seeing, it cannot be the sole aim of existence. Whatever the struggles and sufferings and blunders of humanity, there is still in it an urge towards the Light, an impulse towards a greater Truth not only of the soul but the life. If it has not been done yet, it is surely because those who reached the Light and the greater Truth, rested there and saw in it more a means of escape for the soul than a means of transformation for the life. The liberation of the spirit is necessary, nothing can be done without it — but the transformation is also possible.

*

You have missed altogether the qualifying words which I put with great care and prominent emphasis¹ — if you don't read

¹ *In a letter published in Letters on Himself and the Ashram, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 649. — Ed.*

carefully, you will necessarily misunderstand what I write. I said “*This transformation cannot be done individually in a solitary way only.*” No individual solitary transformation apart from the work for the earth (which means more than any individual transformation) would be either possible or useful. (Also no individual human being can by his own power alone work out the transformation, nor is it the object of the Yoga to create an individual superman here and there.) The object of the Yoga is to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth, to fix it there, to create a new race with the principle of the supramental consciousness governing the inner and outer individual and collective life. Therefore the existence of the Asram, whatever difficulties it created for ourselves or for the individual, was inevitable. The method was the preparation of the earth consciousness in the human being as represented by the members of the Asram and others (with also a certain working in the general earth consciousness) so as to make the descent of the supramental Force possible. That Force accepted by individual after individual according to their preparation would establish the supramental consciousness in the physical world and so create a nucleus for its own expansion.

*

As far as I can see, once the supramental is established in Matter, the transformation will be possible under much less troublesome conditions than now are there. These bad conditions are due to the fact that the Ignorance is in possession and the hostile Powers an established authority, as it were, who do not care to give up their hold and there is no full force of Light established in the earth consciousness which would not only meet but outweigh their full force of darkness.

*

It is the darkest nights that prepare the greatest dawns — and it is so because it is into the deep inconscience of material life that we have to bring, not an intermediate glimmer, but the full glory of the divine Light.

The Vital World and the Supramental Descent

When there is a pressure on the vital world due to the preparing Descent from above, that world usually precipitates something of itself into the human. The vital world is very large and far exceeds the human in extent. But usually it dominates by influence not by descent. Of course the effort of this part of the vital world is always to maintain humanity under its sway and prevent the higher Light.

*

The vital descent cannot prevent the supramental—still less can the possessed nations do it by their material power, since the supramental descent is primarily a spiritual fact which will bear its necessary outward consequences. What previous vital descents have done is to falsify the Light that came down as in the history of Christianity where it took possession of the teaching and distorted it and deprived it of any widespread fulfilment. But the supermind is by definition a Light that cannot be distorted if it acts in its own right and by its own presence. It is only when it holds itself back and allows inferior Powers of consciousness to use a diminished and already deflected Truth that the knowledge can be seized by the vital Forces and made to serve their own purpose.

The Nature and Scope of the Transformation

When the mind, life and body are entirely divine and supramentalised, that is the perfect transformation and the true transformation is the process that leads towards it.

*

It is not a question of “can” or “cannot” [*the Divine Force transform someone*]—it is a question of what is necessary for the true transformation. Theoretically the Force can transform you in one hundredth of a second from an animal to a god, but that would not be transformation or the working out of a spiritual evolution, it would be mere thaumaturgy, i.e. miracle

working without a significance or purpose.

*

The whole of humanity cannot be changed at once. What has to be done is to bring the Higher Consciousness down into the earth-consciousness and establish it there as a constant realised force, just as mind and life have been established and embodied in Matter, so to establish and embody the Supramental Force.

*

It would not be possible to change all that [*ordinary life on earth*] in a moment — we have always said that the whole of humanity will not change the moment there is the Descent. But what can be done is to establish the higher principle in the earth consciousness in such a way that it will remain and go on strengthening and spreading itself in the earth-life. That is how a new principle in the evolution must necessarily work.

*

There is no proposal to transform the whole earth consciousness — it is simply to introduce the supramental principle there which will transform those who can receive and embody it.

The Earth, the Earth Consciousness and the Supramental Creation

The earth is the place of evolution in which all these [*universal*] forces meet and try to manifest and out of their working something has to develop. On the other planes (the mental, vital etc.) there is not the evolution — there each acts separately according to its own law.

*

It [*the earth*] contains all the potentialities which come out in the beings of earth and also much that is unexpressed.

*

It is first through the individual that it [*the supramental activity*] becomes part of the earth consciousness and afterwards it spreads from the first centres and takes up more and more of the global consciousness till it becomes an established force there.

*

The consciousness of this Earth alone [*is the earth consciousness.*]. There is a separate global consciousness of the earth (as of other worlds) which evolves with the evolution of life on the planet.

*

Yes, all that [*humans, animals, vegetables, minerals*] is the earth consciousness — mineral = matter, vegetable = the vital-physical creation, animal = the vital creation, man = the mental creation. Into the earth consciousness so limited to mind, vital, matter has to come the supramental creation. Necessarily *at first* it cannot be in a great number — but even if it is only in a few at first, that does not mean that it will have no effect on the rest or will not change the whole balance of the earth-nature.

The Supramental Change and the Ananda Plane

The supramental change is the ultimate stage of siddhi and it is not likely to come so soon; but there are many levels between the normal mind and the supermind and it is easy to mistake an ascent into one of them or a descent of their consciousness or influence for a supramental change.

It is quite impossible to ascend to the real Ananda *plane* (except in a profound trance), until after the supramental consciousness has been entered, realised and possessed; but it is quite possible and normal to feel some form of Ananda *consciousness* on any level. This consciousness wherever it is felt is a derivation from the Ananda plane, but it is very much diminished in power and modified to suit the lesser power of receptivity of the inferior levels.

*

I presume it is the development of the Truth Power and the Ananda Power in the overmind consciousness that is being pursued. The transcendent Ananda in itself could descend only after the complete Supramentalisation of the being and would mean a stupendous change in the earth consciousness. It is the divine Truth in the overmind and the divine Ananda in the overmind that can now prepare their manifestation and it is that which is being indicated in these experiences.

Chapter Three

The Supramental Transformation

Preparatory Steps towards the Supramental Change

It is not possible to have the direct supramental working now. The Adhar is not yet ready. First one must accept an indirect working which prepares the lower planes for the supramental change.

*

The gate of the supramental cannot be smashed open like that. The Adhar has to be steadily prepared, changed, made fit for the supramental Descent. There are several powers between the ordinary mind and the supramental and these must be opened up and absorbed by the consciousness — only then is the supramental change possible.

*

To speak of “receiving power from the supramental when we are not conscious” is strange. When one is not conscious, one can still receive a *higher* force; the Divine Shakti works often from behind the veil, otherwise in the ignorant and unconscious condition of the human being she would not be able to work at all. But the nature of the force or action is modified to suit the condition of the sadhak. One must develop a very full consciousness before one can receive anything from the direct supramental Power and one must be very advanced in consciousness even to receive something of it modified through the Overmind or other intermediate region.

The Supramental Influence and Supramentalisation

Who told you that it [*the supermind*] was descending on the physical consciousness without touching the mind and vital?

Certainly no part of the Nature has been supramentalised — that is not possible, until the whole being has been put under the supramental influence. The supramental influence must come first, the supramental transformation can only come afterwards.

*

A touch or influence of the supramental is not the same thing as supramentalisation. To suppose that the physical can be supramentalised before the mental and vital is an absolute absurdity. What I said was that the mind and vital could not be supramentalised so long as the physical was left as it was, untouched by the supramental descent.

*

It is quite impossible for the supramental to take up the body before there has been the full supramental change in the mind and the vital. X and others seem always to expect some kind of unintelligible miracle — they do not understand that it is a concentrated evolution, rapid but following the law of creation, that has to take place. A miracle can be only a moment's wonder. A change according to the Divine Law can alone endure.

*

If the supramental can stand in the mind and vital, then it must stand in the physical also. If it does not stand in the physical, it cannot stand in the mind and vital also; it will be something else, not the supramental.

*

It [*the supermind*] cannot be brought down into the mind and vital without being brought down into the physical also. One can feel its influence or get something from it, but bringing down means much more than that.

*

The supermind is a harmonious whole — it is not a mixture of light and ignorance. If the physical mind is not supramentalised,

then there will be in mind a mixture of ignorance, but then it will not be supermind there, but something else. So also with the vital. All that can manifest in the mind separately is a partly supramentalised overmind.

*

There can be no conquest of the other planes by the supermind, but only an influence, so long as the physical is not ready.

*

Aspiration is necessary in all spiritual aims from whatever part of the consciousness. The supermind can descend into the physical only if there is brought down into it the power of higher and higher levels till the supramental intensity is possible.

Premature Claims of Possession of the Supermind

It is very unwise for anyone to claim prematurely to have possession of the supermind or even a taste of it. The claim is usually accompanied by an outburst of superegoism, some radical blunder of perception or a gross fall into wrong condition and wrong movement. A certain spiritual humility, a serious un-arrogant look at oneself and quiet perception of the imperfections of one's present nature and, instead of self-esteem and self-assertion, a sense of the necessity of exceeding one's present self, not from egoistic ambition, but from an urge towards the Divine would be, it seems to me, for this frail terrestrial and human composition far better conditions for proceeding towards its supramental change.

*

He is using the word supermind too easily. What he describes as supermind is a higher illumined consciousness; a modified supramental light may touch it, but not the full power of the supermind; and, in any case, it is not the supermind. He speaks of a supramental part which is unreceptive, — that is impossible, the supramental cannot be unreceptive. The supermind is the

Truth-consciousness itself; it already possesses the Truth and does not even need to receive it. The word *vijñāna* is sometimes used for the higher illumined Intelligence in communication with the Truth, and this must be the part in himself which he felt — but this is not the supermind. One can enter into supermind only at the very end of the sadhana, when all difficulties have disappeared and there is no obstacle any longer in the way of the realisation.

*

The question arose and always arises because of an eagerness in the vital to take any stage of strong experience as the final stage, even to take it for the overmind, supermind, full siddhi. The supermind or the overmind either is not so easy to reach as that, even on the side of Knowledge or inner experience only. What you are experiencing belongs to the spiritualised and liberated mind. At this stage there may be intimations from the higher mind levels, but these intimations are merely isolated experiences, not a full change of consciousness. The supermind is not part of mind or a higher level of mind — it is something entirely different. No sadhak can reach the supermind by his own efforts and the effort to do it by personal tapasya has been the source of many mishaps. One has to go quietly stage by stage until the being is ready and even then it is only the Grace that can bring the real supramental change.

*

The action that took place was not supramental; the fact that you were aware of a centre in the brain shows that it was through the mind that it was done. The force that acted was the Divine Power which can work in this way on any plane, supramental, mental, vital or physical or on all the planes together. The supramental action can only be achieved after a long discipline of Yoga directed towards that end; it cannot be an initial experience.

That there was no mental expectation was all to the good; if there had been an expectation, the mind might have been active and interfered and either prevented the experience or else stood in the way of its being pure and complete.

Chapter Four

Transformation and the Body

The Transformation of the Body

It is quite true that the surrender and the consequent transformation of the whole being is the aim of the Yoga — the body is not excluded, but at the same time this part of the endeavour is the most difficult and doubtful — the rest, though not facile, is comparatively less difficult to accomplish. One must start with an inner control of the consciousness over the body, a power to make it obey more and more the will or the force transmitted to it. In the end as a higher and higher Force descends and the plasticity of the body increases, the transformation becomes possible.

*

It is absolutely idle to think of transforming the body when other things that are so much easier to do — though of course none is easy — are not done. The inner must change before the outermost can follow. So what is the use of such a concentration — unless one thinks that everything else is perfect, which would be a rather astonishing claim. What has to be done with the body at first is to make it open to the Force, so as to receive strength against illness and fatigue — when they come, there must be the power to react and throw them off and to keep a constant flow of force into the body. If that is done, the rest of the bodily change can wait for its proper time.

*

The supramental perfection means that the body becomes conscious, is filled with consciousness and that as this is the Truth consciousness all its actions, functionings etc. become by the power of the consciousness within it harmonious, luminous, right and true — without ignorance or disorder.

The Hathayogic method is to bring an immense vital force into the body and by this and by certain processes keep it strong and in good health and a capable instrument.

The Transformation of the Body in Other Traditions

It [*a body of light seen by the correspondent in a vision*] is the luminous body spoken of in the Veda as possessed by the beings of the higher planes. It is supposed by certain schools of Yoga in the East and West that in the final transformation on earth man will develop a body having these qualities. It was called the *corps glorieux*, “body of glory”, by the Mother’s first spiritual instructor.

*

It has been the idea of many who have speculated on the subject that the body of the future race will be a luminous body (*corps glorieux*) and that might mean radio-active.¹ But also it has to be considered (1) that a supramental body must necessarily be one in which the consciousness determines even the physical action and reaction to the most material and these therefore are not wholly dependent on material conditions or laws as now known, (2) that the subtle process will be more powerful than the gross, so that a subtle action of Agni will be able to do the action which would now need a physical change such as increased temperature.

*

I did not intend to evade anything, except that in so far as I do not yet know what will be the chemical constitution of the changed body, I could not answer anything to that. That was why I said it needed investigation.

I was simply putting my idea on the matter which has always been that it is the supramental which will create its own

¹ *The correspondent asked whether the chemicals in a transformed body would become “more Peace-active, Light-active, Force-active (as we say, radio-active)”.* — Ed.

physical basis. If you mean that the supramental cannot *fulfil itself* in the present body with its present processes that is true. The processes will obviously have to be altered. How far the constitution of the body will be changed and in what direction is another question. As I said it may become as you suggest radio-active: Théon (Mother's teacher in occultism) spoke of it as luminous, *le corps glorieux*. But all that does not make it impossible for the supramental to act in the present body for change. It is what I am looking forward to at present.

Of course a certain preliminary transformation is necessary, just as the psychic and spiritual transformation precedes the supramental. But this is a change of the physical consciousness down to the submerged consciousness of the cells so that they may respond to higher forces and admit them and to a certain extent a change or at least a greater plasticity in the processes. The rules of food etc. are meant to help that by minimising obstacles. How far this involves a change of the chemical constitution of the body I cannot say. It seems to me still that whatever preparatory changes there may be, it is only the action of the supramental Force that can confirm and complete them.

*

If the consciousness cannot determine the physical action and reaction in the present body, if it needs a different basis, then that means this different basis must be prepared by different means. By what means? Physical? The old Yogis tried to do it by physical tapasya; others by seeking the elixir of life etc. According to this Yoga, the action of the higher Force and consciousness which includes the subtle action of Agni has to open and prepare the body and make it more responsive to Consciousness-Force instead of being rigid in its present habits (called laws). But a different basis can only be created by the supramental action itself. What else but the supermind can determine its own basis?

*

I read the Bible, — very assiduously at one time. When I have looked at it, it has always given me a sense of imprecision in the

thought-substance, in spite of the vividness of the expression, and that makes it very difficult to be sure about these things. This passage about the body, for instance—although St. Paul had remarkable mystic experiences and, certainly, much profound spiritual knowledge (profound rather than wide, I think)—I would not swear to it that he is referring to the supramentalised body (*physical body*). Perhaps to the supramental body or to some other luminous body in its own space and substance, which he found sometimes as if enveloping him and abolishing this body of death which he felt the material envelope to be. This verse like many others is capable of several interpretations and might refer to a quite supraphysical experience. The idea of a transformation of the body occurs in different traditions, but I have never been quite sure that it meant the change in this very matter. There was a Yogi some time ago in this region who taught it, but he hoped when the change was complete, to disappear in light. The Vaishnavas speak of a divine body which will replace this one when there is the complete siddhi. But, again, is this a divine physical or supraphysical body? At the same time there is no obstacle in the way of supposing that all these ideas, intuitions, experiences point to, if they do not exactly denote, the physical transformation.

*

The physical Nature does not mean the body alone but the phrase includes the transformation of the whole physical mind, vital, material nature—not by imposing siddhis on them, but by creating a new physical nature which is to be the habitation of the supramental being in a new evolution. I am not aware that this has been done by any Hathayogic or other process. Mental or vital occult power can only bring siddhis of the higher plane into the individual life—like the Sannyasi who could take any poison without harm, but he died of a poison after all when he forgot to observe the conditions of the siddhi. The working of the supramental power envisaged is not an influence on the physical giving it abnormal faculties, but an entrance and permeation changing it wholly into a supramentalised physical. I did not

learn the idea from Veda or Upanishad, and I do not know if there is anything of the kind there. What I received about the supermind was a direct, not a derived knowledge given to me; it was only afterwards that I found certain confirmatory revelations in the Upanishad and Veda.

Transforming the Body Consciousness

That [*stopping at each stage of transformation in order to deal with the body*] is hardly possible. The body consciousness is there and cannot be ignored, so that one can neither transform the higher parts completely leaving the body for later dealing nor make each stage complete in all its parts before going to the next. I tried that method but it never worked. A predominant overmentalisation of mind and vital is the first step, for instance, when overmentalising, but the body consciousness retains all the lower movements unovermentalised and until these can be pulled up to the overmental standard, there is no overmental perfection, always the body consciousness brings in flaws and limitations. To perfect the overmind one has to call in the supramental force and it is only when the overmind has been partially supramentalised that the body begins to be more and more overmental. I do not see any way of avoiding this process, though it is what makes the thing so long.

*

The fallacy of the argument [*that after supramentalisation severe attacks on the body will still be possible*] lies in the premiss laid down in the beginning that even after supramentalisation difficulties and attacks will continue. In the supramental consciousness such attacks are not possible — the coexistence of the supramental and the lower darkness in the same being and body is not possible. It is precisely for that reason that the supramentalisation of the body consciousness is laid down as the condition of the successful transformation. If attacks continue and can come in successfully, it means that the body consciousness is not yet supramentalised.

Death and the Supramental Transformation

The change of the consciousness is the necessary thing and without it there can be no physical siddhi. But the fullness of the supramental change is not possible if the body remains as it is, a slave of death, disease, decay, pain, unconsciousness and all the other results of the ignorance. If these are to remain the descent of the supramental is hardly necessary — for a change of consciousness which would bring mental-spiritual union with the Divine, the Overmind is sufficient, even the Higher Mind is sufficient. The supramental descent is necessary for a dynamic action of the Truth in mind, vital and body. This would imply as a final result the disappearance of the unconsciousness of the body; it would no longer be subject to decay and disease. That would mean that it would not be subject to the ordinary processes by which death comes. If a change of body had to be made, it would have to be by the will of the inhabitant. This (not an obligation to live 3000 years, for that too would be a bondage) would be the essence of physical immortality. Still, if one wanted to live 1000 years or more, then supposing one had the complete siddhi, it should not be impossible.

*

Death is necessary in the evolution, because the body can progress no longer — cannot suffice any longer as an instrument for the progress or evolution of the consciousness — it has to change its physical instrument and get a new one. If something can be brought into the body that will make it a plastic instrument for the soul, then only death is no longer necessary. If the supramental transformation is complete that is what should happen.

*

It [*death*] has no separate existence by itself, it is only a result of the principle of decay in the body and that principle is there already — it is part of the physical nature. At the same time it is not inevitable; if one could have the necessary consciousness

and force, decay and death is not inevitable. But to bring that consciousness and force into the whole of the material nature is the most difficult thing of all — at any rate in such a way as to annul the decay principle.

*

Immunity from death by anything but one's own will to leave the body, immunity from illness are things that can be achieved only by a complete change of consciousness which each man has to develop in himself, — there can be no automatic immunity without that achievement.

*

That² is the argument of the Mayavadin to whom all manifestation is useless and unreal because it is temporary — even the life of the gods is no use because it is in Time, not in the Timeless. But if manifestation is of any use, then it is worthwhile having a perfect manifestation rather than an imperfect one. “Have to be left willingly” is a contradiction in terms. One keeps the body as long as one wills, with an illumined will, leaves it or changes it according to the same will. That is a very different thing from a body assailed constantly by desire and suffering and death brought on by decay or illness. Always assuming that the divine manifestation or any manifestation is worthwhile.

As for the second argument,³ change and progress are not excluded from the supramental life. I do not see why the change of cells, supposing it continues in the supramentalised body, takes away from the value of the transformation, if it is a change to something equally or more conscious and luminous.

*

Well, don't you know that old men sometimes get a new or third set of teeth in their old age? And if monkey glands can renew

² The correspondent asked, “What is the need of transformation if the body will have to be left willingly or unwillingly?” — Ed.

³ The correspondent asked, “Since the body cells undergo changes from second to second, what value has the transformation of the body?” — Ed.

functionings and forces and can make hair grow on a bald head, as Voronoff has proved by living examples, — well? And mark that Science is only at the beginning of these experiments [*to prolong life*]. If these possibilities are opening before Science, why should one declare their absolute impossibility by other means?

*

There is no ambiguity that I can see.⁴ “*En fait*” and “*attachée*” do not convey any sense of inevitability. “*En fait*” means simply that in fact, actually, as things are at present all life (on earth) has death attached to it as its end; but it does not in the least convey the idea that it can never be otherwise or that this is the unalterable law of all existence. It is at present a fact for certain reasons which are stated, — due to certain mental and physical circumstances — if these are changed, death is not inevitable any longer. Obviously the alteration can only come “if” certain conditions are satisfied — all progress and change by evolution depends upon an “if” which gets satisfied. If the animal mind had not been pushed to develop speech and reason, mental man would never have come into existence, — but the “if”, a stupendous and formidable one, was satisfied. So with the ifs that condition a farther progress.

The Conquest of Death

As for the conquest of death, it is only one of the sequelae of supramentalisation — and I am not aware that I have forsworn my views about the supramental descent. But I never said or thought that the supramental descent would automatically make everybody immortal. The supramental descent can only make the best conditions for anybody who can open to it then or thereafter attaining to the supramental consciousness and its

⁴ Sri Aurobindo is referring to the ambiguity seen by the correspondent in two statements of the Mother: “If this belief [in the necessity of death] could be cast out . . . death would no longer be inevitable” and “Death as a fact has been attached to all life upon earth. . . .” (*The Mother, Questions and Answers 1929-1931, 2003 ed., p. 36*) The correspondent read these statements in French. — Ed.

consequences. But it would not dispense with the necessity of sadhana. If it did, the logical consequence would be that the whole earth, men, dogs and worms, would suddenly wake up to find themselves supramental. There would be no need of an Asram or of Yoga.

What is vital is the supramental change of consciousness — conquest of death is something minor and, as I have always said, the last physical result of it, not the first result of all or the most important — a thing to be added to complete the whole, not the one thing needed and essential. To put it first is to reverse all spiritual values — it would mean that the seeker was actuated not by any high spiritual aim but by a vital clinging to life or a selfish and timid seeking for the security of the body — such a spirit could not bring the supramental change.

Certainly, everything depends on my success. The only thing that could prevent it, so far as I can see, would be my own death or the Mother's. But did you imagine that that [*my success*] would mean the cessation of death on this planet, and that sadhana would cease to be necessary for anybody?

*

There can be no immortality of the body without supramentalisation; the potentiality is there in the Yogic force and Yogis can live for 200 or 300 years or more, but there can be no real principle of it without the Supramental.

Even Science believes that one day death may be conquered by physical means and its reasonings are perfectly sound. There is no reason why the Supramental Force should not do it. Forms on earth do not last (they do in other planes) because these forms are too rigid to grow expressing the progress of the spirit. If they become plastic enough to do that, there is no reason why they should not last.

*

Death is there because the being in the body is not yet developed enough to go on growing in the same body without the need of change and the body itself is not sufficiently conscious. If

the mind and vital and the body itself were more conscious and plastic, death would not be necessary.

*

As for immortality, it cannot come if there is attachment to the body, — for it is only by living in the immortal part of oneself which is unidentifed with the body and bringing down its consciousness and force into the cells that it can come. I speak of course of Yogic means. The scientists now hold that it is (theoretically at least) possible to discover physical means by which death can be overcome, but that would mean only a prolongation of the present consciousness in the present body. Unless there is a change of consciousness and change of functioning, it would be a very small gain.

*

Immortality is one of the possible results of supramentalisation, but it is not an obligatory result and it does not mean that there will be an eternal or indefinite prolongation of life as it is. That is what many think it will be, that they will remain what they are with all their human desires and the only difference will be that they will satisfy them endlessly; but such an immortality would not be worth having and it would not be long before people are tired of it. To live in the Divine and have the divine consciousness is itself immortality and to be able to divinise the body also and make it a fit instrument for divine works and divine life would be its material expression only.

*

It depends on the consciousness [*whether one wants to live a long life*]. As it is, at present, most people do not get tired of life; they die because they must, not because they want to — at least, that is true of the vital; it is only a minority that tire of life and for many of these it is due to the discomforts of old age, continued ill-health, misfortune. Supposing a consciousness descended in the body that got rid of these discomforts, would people get tired of life in the same way merely because of its

length or would they have some source of perpetual interest within as well as without that would keep them on—that is the question. Of course physical immortality would not mean that one is tied down to the body, but that one is not subject to disease and death, but can keep or leave the body at will. I don't know whether Ashwatthaman lives on because he cannot die or because he won't die—whether it is for him a doom or a privilege. There are by the way animals that live for many centuries, but as they have not the philosophic mind the question for them does not arise—probably they take it as a matter of course.

*

What you say about being tired of life, is true. Edison's family was very long lived but his grandfather after a century found it too long and died because he wanted to. On the other hand there are men who are strongly vital and do not get tired of life, like the Turk who died recently at 150, I think, but was still eager to live.

*

The ideal would be not to be subject to Death, but to change the body whenever it is necessary with full consciousness.

The Reproductive Method of the Supramental

The [*reproductive*] method of the supramental is more likely to be psychological than material. But these are things that we leave to the Supermind to arrange when it is there.

*

It is not at all certain that the hereditary method will be used for the reproduction of supermen. If it were used, the seed would have to be very different from what it is now—and the question would not arise.

Part Four

Problems of Philosophy, Science, Religion and Society

Section One

Thought, Philosophy, Science and Yoga

Chapter One

The Intellect and Yoga

Intellectual Truth and Spiritual Experience

Intellectual truths? Do you think that the intellectual truth of the Divine is its real truth? In that case there is no need of Yoga. Philosophy is enough.

*

Philosophy knows nothing about peace and silence or the inner and outer vital. These things are discovered only by Yoga.

*

Yoga is not a thing of ideas but of inner spiritual experience. Merely to be attracted to any set of religious or spiritual ideas does not bring with it any realisation. Yoga means a change of consciousness; a mere mental activity will not bring a change of consciousness, it can only bring a change of mind. And if your mind is sufficiently mobile, it will go on changing from one thing to another till the end without arriving at any sure way or any spiritual harbour. The mind can think and doubt and question and accept and withdraw its acceptance, make formations and unmake them, pass decisions and revoke them, judging always on the surface and by surface indications and therefore never coming to any deep and firm experience of Truth, but by itself it can do no more. There are only three ways by which it can make itself a channel or instrument of Truth. Either it must fall silent in the Self and give room for a wider and greater consciousness; or it must make itself passive to an inner Light and allow that Light to use it as a means of expression; or else it must itself change from the questioning intellectual superficial mind it now is to an intuitive intelligence, a mind of vision fit for the direct perception of the divine Truth.

If you want to do anything in the path of Yoga, you must fix

once for all what way you mean to follow. It is no use setting your face towards the future and then always looking back towards the past; in this way you will arrive nowhere. If you are tied to your past, return to it and follow the way you then choose; but if you choose this way instead, you must give yourself to it single-mindedly and not look back at every moment.

*

My reason for wanting you to get rid of the mental concepts is that they are rigid and keep you tied to the idea and feeling of your incapacity and the impossibility of the sadhana. Get rid of that and a great obstacle disappears.

You would then see that there is no reason for the constant sense of grief and despair that reacts upon your effort and makes it sterile. I simply want you to put yourself, if it is possible, in that state of quietude and openness which is favourable to the higher consciousness and its action; if it is not possible at present, I have still said that I will do my utmost to help you to the experience. That does not mean that the utmost has been yet done or that it can be done in a few days. But (although people are not giving me the freedom of mind and disposal of time which I had asked for), it will be done.

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The point about the intellect's misrepresentation of the "formless" (the result of a merely negative expression of something that is inexpressibly intimate and positive) is very well made and hits the truth in the centre. No one who has had the Ananda of the Brahman can do anything but smile at the charge of coldness; there is an absoluteness of immutable ecstasy in it, a concentrated intensity of silent and inalienable rapture that it is quite impossible even to suggest to anyone who has not had the experience. The eternal Reality is neither cold nor dry nor empty — you might just as well talk of the midsummer sunlight as cold or the ocean as dry or perfect fullness as empty. Even when you enter into it by elimination of form and everything else, it seizes as a miraculous fullness that is truly the Purnam — when it is

entered affirmatively as well as by negation, there can obviously be no question of emptiness or dryness. All is there and more than one could ever dream of as the all. That is why one has to object to the intellect thrusting itself in as the *sabjāntā* judge — if it kept to its own limits, there would be no objection to it. But it makes constructions of words and ideas which have no application to the Truth, babbles foolish things in its ignorance and makes its constructions a wall which refuses to let in the Truth that surpasses its own capacities or scope.

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You can tell him Mother does not discuss these mental problems [*such as the existence of evil in the world*] even with the disciples. It is quite useless trying to reconcile these things with the intellect. For there are two things: the Ignorance from which the struggle and discord come and the secret Light, Unity, Bliss and Harmony. The intellect belongs to the Ignorance. It is only by getting into another consciousness that one can live in the Light and Bliss and Unity and not be touched by the outward discord and struggle. That change of consciousness therefore is the only thing that matters; to reconcile with the intellect could make no difference.

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Yes, you need not listen to the “common sense” of others at least; usually there is much that is common in it but very little that is sense. What your inner being feels is rather to be followed than the superficial reasonings of the outer intelligence.

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How can Reason be the sole arbiter [*in the quest for Truth*]? Whose reason? The reason in different men comes to different, opposite or incompatible conclusions. We cannot say that Reason is infallible, any more than feeling is infallible or the senses are infallible.

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Russell has the doubts because he has no spiritual experience, Rolland because he takes his emotional intellectuality for spirituality, Tagore —

If one is blind, it is quite natural — for the human intelligence which is rather an asinine thing at its best — to deny light; if one's highest natural vision is that of glimmering mists, it is equally natural to believe that all high vision is only a mist or a glimmer. But Light exists for all that — and for all that, spiritual Truth is more than a mist and a glimmer.

Intellectual Arguments against Spirituality

I have read Leonard Woolf's article,¹ but I do not propose to deal with it in my comments on Professor Sorley's letter² — for apart from the ignorant denunciation and cheap satire in which it deals, there is nothing much in its statement of the case against spiritual thought or experience; its reasoning is superficial and springs from an entire misunderstanding of the case for the mystic. There are four main arguments he sets against it and none of them have any value.

Argument number one. Mysticism and mystics have always risen in times of decadence, of the ebb of life and their loud quacking is a symptom of the decadence. This argument is absolutely untrue. In the East the great spiritual movements have arisen in the full flood of a people's life and culture or on a rising tide and they have themselves given a powerful impulse of expansion and richness to its thought and art and life; in Greece the mystics and the mysteries were there at the prehistoric beginning and in the middle (Pythagoras was one of the greatest of mystics) and not only in the ebb and decline; the mystic cults flourished in Rome too when its culture was at high tide; many great spiritual personalities of Italy, France, Spain sprang up

¹ Leonard Woolf, "Quack, Quack! or Having it Both Ways" [a review of C. E. M. Joad, *Counterattack from the East: The Philosophy of Radhakrishnan* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1932)]. "New Statesman and Nation", vol. 6, no. 145 (2 December 1933): pp. 702-4.

² See the letters on pages 357-68. — Ed.

in a life that was rich, vivid and not in the least touched with decadence. This hasty and inept generalisation has no truth in it and therefore no value.

Argument number two. A spiritual experience cannot be taken as a truth (it is a chimaera) unless it is proved just as the presence of a chair in the next room can be proved by showing it to the eye. Of course, a spiritual experience cannot be proved in that way, for it does not belong to the order of physical facts and is not physically visible or touchable. The writer's position would amount to this that only what is or can easily be made evident to everybody without any need of training, development, equipment or personal discovery, is to be taken as true. This is a position which, if accepted, would confine knowledge or truth within very narrow limits and get rid of a great deal of human culture. A spiritual peace, for example, — the peace that passeth all understanding — is a common experience of the mystics all over the world — it is a fact but a spiritual fact, a fact of the invisible; when one enters it or it enters into one, one knows that it is a truth of existence and is there all the time behind life and visible things. But how am I to "prove" these invisible facts to Mr. Leonard Woolf? he will turn away saying that this is the usual decadent quack quack and pass contemptuously on — perhaps to write another cleverly shallow article on some subject of which he has no personal knowledge or experience.

Argument number three. The generalisations based on spiritual experience are irrational as well as unproven. Irrational in what way? Are they merely foolish and inconceivable — infrarational — or do they belong to a suprarational order of experience to which the ordinary intellectual canons do not apply because these are founded on phenomena as they appear to the external mind and sense and not to an inner realisation which surpasses these phenomena? That is the contention of the mystics and it cannot be dismissed by merely saying that as they do not agree with ordinary experience, therefore they are nonsense and false. I would not undertake to defend as unimpeachable all that Joad or Radhakrishnan may have written — such as the formula that "the universe is good", — but for

many or most of the statements marshalled for condemnation by the writer one can surely say that they are not irrational at all. "Integrating the personality" may have no meaning to him, it has a very clear meaning to many, for it is a truth of experience — and, if modern psychology is to be believed, it is not irrational since there is in our being not only a conscious but an unconscious or subconscious or concealed subliminal part and it is not impossible to become aware of both and make some kind of integration. To "transcend both consciousness and unconsciousness" gets at once a rational meaning if we admit that as there is a subconscious so there may be a superconscious part of our being. To reconcile disparate parts of our nature or our perception or experience of things is also not such a ridiculous or meaningless phrase. It is not absurd to say that the doctrine of Karma reconciles determinism and free-willism, since this doctrine supposes that our own past action and therefore our past will determined to a great extent the present results but not so as to exclude a present will modifying them and creating a fresh determinism of our existence yet to be. The phrase about the value of the world is quite intelligible once we see that it refers to a progressive value not determined by the good or bad experience of the moment, a value of existence developing through time and taken as a whole. As for the statement about God, it may have little or no meaning if it is taken in connection with the superficial idea of the Divine current in popular religion, but it is a perfectly logical result of the premiss that there is an Infinite and Eternal which is manifesting in itself Time and things that are phenomenally finite. One may accept or reject this complex idea of the Divine which is founded on a coordination of the data of long spiritual experience passed through by thousands of seekers in all times, but I fail to see why it should be considered unreasonable. If it is because that would mean "to have it not only in both ways but in every way", I do not see why this should be so reprehensible or a complex manifestation of a single Essence, Consciousness or Force should be considered *prima facie* inadmissible. There can be after all a synthetic and global view and consciousness of things which is

not bound by the oppositions and divisions of a more analytical and selective or dissecting intelligence.

Argument number four. The plea of intuition is only a facile cover for an inability to explain or establish by the use of reason — Joad and Radhakrishnan reason, but take refuge in intuition because their reasoning fails. Can the issue be settled in so easy and trenchant a way? The fact is that the mystic stands on an inner knowledge, an inner experience — but if he philosophises, he must try to explain to the reason, though not necessarily always by the abstract reason alone, what he has seen to be the Truth. He cannot but say, “I am explaining a truth which is beyond outer phenomena and the intelligence which depends on phenomena; it is really the outcome of a certain kind of direct experience and the intuitive knowledge which arises from that experience, so it cannot be adequately communicated by symbols appropriate to the world of outer phenomena — yet I am obliged to do as well as I can with these to help me towards some statement which will be intellectually acceptable to you.” There is no wickedness or deceitful cunning therefore in using metaphors and symbols with a cautionary “as it were”, — so objected to by Mr. Woolf in the simile of the focus, which is surely not intended as an argument but as a suggestive image. I may observe that the writer himself takes refuge in metaphor, beginning with the famous “quack quack”, and an adversary might well reply that he does so in order to damn the opposite side while avoiding the necessity of a sound philosophical reply to the ideas he dislikes and repudiates. An intensity of belief is not the measure of truth, but neither is an intensity of unbelief the right measure.

As to the real nature of intuition and its relation to the intellectual mind, that is quite another and very large and complex question which cannot be dealt with in a short space. I have confined myself to pointing out that this article is a quite inadequate and superficial criticism. A case can be made against spiritual experience and spiritual philosophy and its positions, but to deserve a serious reply it must be put forward by a better advocate and it must touch the real centre of the problem which

lies here. As there is a category of facts to which our senses are our best available but very imperfect guide, as there is a category of truths which we seek by the keen but still imperfect light of our reason, so according to the mystic, there is a category of more subtle truths which surpass the reach both of the senses and the reason but can be ascertained by an inner direct knowledge and direct experience. These truths are supersensuous but not the less real for that — they have immense results upon the consciousness changing its substance and movement, bringing especially deep peace and abiding joy, a great light of vision and knowledge, a possibility of the overcoming of the lower animal nature, vistas of a spiritual self-development which without them do not exist. A new outlook on things arises which brings with it, if fully pursued into its consequences, a great liberation, inner harmony, unification — many other possibilities besides. These things have been experienced, it is true, by a small minority of the human race, but still there has been a host of independent witnesses to them in all times, climes and conditions and numbered among them are some of the greatest intelligences of the past, some of the world's most remarkable figures. Must these possibilities be immediately condemned as chimaeras because they are not only beyond the average man in the street but also not easily seizable even by many cultivated intellects or because their method is more difficult than that of the ordinary sense or reason? If there is any truth in them, is not this possibility opened by them worth pursuing as opening a highest range to self-discovery and world-discovery by the human soul? At its best, taken as true, it must be that — at its lowest, taken as only a possibility, as all things attained by man have been only a possibility in their earlier stages, it is a great and may well be a most fruitful adventure.

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I know it is the Russian explanation of the recent trend to spirituality and mysticism that it is a phenomenon of capitalist society in its decadence. But to read an economic cause, conscious or unconscious, into all phenomena of man's history is part of the

Bolshevik gospel born of the fallacy of Karl Marx. Man's nature is not so simple and one-chorded as all that — it has many lines and each line produces a need of his life. The spiritual or mystic line is one of them and man tries to satisfy it in various ways, by superstitions of all kinds, by ignorant religionism, by spiritism, demonism and what not, in his more enlightened parts by spiritual philosophy, the higher occultism and the rest, at his highest by the union with the All, the Eternal or the Divine. The tendency towards the search for spirituality began in Europe with a recoil from the nineteenth century's scientific materialism, a dissatisfaction with the pretended all-sufficiency of the reason and the intellect and a feeling out for something deeper. That was a pre-war phenomenon, and began when there was no menace of Communism and the capitalistic world was at its height of insolent success and triumph, and it came rather as a revolt against the materialistic bourgeois life and its ideals, not as an attempt to serve or sanctify it. It has been at once served and opposed by the post-war disillusionment — opposed because the post-war world has fallen back either on cynicism and the life of the senses or on movements like Fascism and Communism; served because with the deeper minds the dissatisfaction with the ideals of the past or the present, with all mental or vital or material solutions of the problem of life has increased and only the spiritual path is left. It is true that the European mind having little light on these things dallies with vital will-o'-the-wisps like spiritism or theosophy or falls back upon the old religionism; but the deeper minds of which I speak either pass by them or pass through them in search of a greater Light. I have had contact with many and the above tendencies are very clear. They come from all countries and it was only a minority who hailed from England or America. Russia is different — unlike the others it had lingered in mediaeval religionism and not passed through any period of revolt — so when the revolt came it was naturally anti-religious and atheistic. It is only when this phase is exhausted that Russian mysticism can revive and take not a narrow religious but the spiritual direction. It is true that mysticism *à revers*, turned upside down, has made Bolshevism

and its endeavour a creed rather than a political theme and a search for the paradisaical secret millennium on earth rather than the building of a purely social structure. But for the most part Russia is trying to do on the communistic basis all that nineteenth-century idealism hoped to get at — and failed — in the midst of or against an industrial competitive environment. Whether it will really succeed any better is for the future to decide — for at present it only keeps what it has got by a tension and violent control which is not over.

The Valley of the False Glimmer

One feels here [*in the letters of Krishnaprem*] a stream from the direct sources of Truth that one does not meet so often as one could desire. Here is a mind that can not only think but see — and not merely see the surfaces of things with which most intellectual thought goes on wrestling without end or definite issue and as if there were nothing else, but look into the core. The Tantriks have a phrase *paśyantī vāk* to describe one level of the Vak-Shakti, the seeing Word; here is *paśyantī buddhi*, a seeing Intelligence. It might be because the seer within has passed beyond thought into experience, but there are many who have a considerable wealth of experience without its clarifying their eye of thought to this extent; the soul feels, but the mind goes on with mixed and imperfect transcriptions, blurs and confusions in the idea. There must have been the gift of right vision lying ready in this nature.

It is an achievement to have got rid so rapidly and decisively of the shimmering mists and fogs which modern intellectualism takes for Light of Truth. The modern mind has so long and persistently wandered — and we with it — in that Valley of the False Glimmer that it is not easy for anyone to disperse its mists with the sunlight of clear vision so soon and entirely as has here been done. All that is said here about modern humanism and humanitarianism, the vain efforts of the sentimental idealist and the ineffective intellectual, about synthetic eclecticism and other kindred things is admirably clear-minded, it hits the target. It is not by

these means that humanity can get that radical change of its ways of life which is yet becoming so imperative, but only by reaching the bedrock of Reality behind, — not through mere ideas and mental formations, but by a change of the consciousness, an inner and spiritual conversion. But that is a truth for which it would be difficult to get a hearing in the present noise of all kinds of many-voiced clamour and confusion and catastrophe.

A distinction, the distinction very keenly made here, between the plane of phenomenal process, of externalised Prakriti, and the plane of Divine Reality ranks among the first words of the inner wisdom. The turn given to it in these pages is not merely an ingenious explanation; it expresses very soundly one of the clear certainties you meet when you step across the border and look at the outer world from the standing-ground of the inner spiritual experience. The more you go inward or upward, the more the view of things changes and the outer knowledge Science organises takes its real and very limited place. Science, like most mental and external knowledge, gives you only truth of process. I would add that it cannot give you even the whole truth of process; for you seize some of the ponderables, but miss the all-important imponderables; you get, hardly even the how, but the conditions under which things happen in Nature. After all the triumphs and marvels of Science the explaining principle, the rationale, the significance of the whole is left as dark, as mysterious and even more mysterious than ever. The scheme it has built up of the evolution not only of this rich and vast and variegated material world, but of life and consciousness and mind and their workings out of a brute mass of electrons, identical and varied only in arrangement and number, is an irrational magic more baffling than any the most mystic imagination could conceive. Science in the end lands us in a paradox effectuated, an organised and rigidly determined accident, an impossibility that has somehow happened, — it has shown us a new, a material Maya, *aghaṭana-ghaṭana-paṭīyasī*, very clever at bringing about the impossible, a miracle that cannot logically be and yet somehow is there actual, irresistibly organised, but still irrational and inexplicable. And this is evidently because Science

has missed something essential; it has seen and scrutinised what has happened and in a way how it happened, but it has shut its eyes to something that made this impossible possible, something that it is there to express. There is no fundamental significance in things if you miss the Divine Reality; for you remain embedded in a huge surface crust of manageable and utilisable appearance. It is the magic of the Magician you are trying to analyse, but only when you enter into the consciousness of the Magician himself can you begin to experience the true origination, significance and circles of the Lila. I say “begin” because the Divine Reality is not so simple that at the first touch you can know all of it or put it into a single formula; it is Infinite and opens before you an Infinite Knowledge to which all Science put together is a bagatelle. But still you do touch the essential, the eternal behind things and in the light of That all begins to be profoundly luminous, intimately intelligible.

I have once before told you what I think of the ineffective peckings of certain well-intentioned scientific minds on the surface — or apparent surface — of the spiritual Reality behind things and I need not elaborate it. More important is the prognostic of a greater danger coming in the new attack by the adversary, the sceptics, against the validity of spiritual and supraphysical experience, their new strategy of destruction by admitting and explaining it in their own sense. There may well be a strong ground for the apprehension; but I doubt whether, if these things are once admitted to scrutiny, the mind of humanity will long remain satisfied with explanations so ineptly superficial and external, explanations that explain nothing. If the defenders of religion take up an unsound position, easily capturable, when they affirm only the subjective validity of spiritual experience, the opponents also seem to me to be giving away without knowing it the gates of the materialistic stronghold by their consent at all to admit and examine spiritual and supraphysical experience. Their entrenchment in the physical field, their refusal to admit or even examine supraphysical things was their tower of strong safety; once it is abandoned, the human mind pressing towards something less negative, more helpfully positive will pass to it

over the dead bodies of their theories and the broken debris of their annulling explanations and ingenious psychological labels. Another danger may then arise, — not of a final denial of the Truth, but the repetition in old or new forms of a past mistake, on one side some revival of blind fanatical obscurantist sectarian religionism, on the other a stumbling into the pits and quagmires of the vitalistic occult and the pseudo-spiritual — mistakes that made the whole real strength of the materialistic attack on the past and its credos. But these are phantasms that meet us always on the border line or in the intervening country between the material darkness and the perfect Splendour. In spite of all, the victory of the supreme Light even in the darkened earth-consciousness stands firm beyond as the one ultimate certitude.

Art, poetry, music are not Yoga, not in themselves things spiritual any more than philosophy either is a thing spiritual or science. There lurks here another curious incapacity of the modern intellect — its inability to distinguish between mind and spirit, its readiness to mistake mental, moral and aesthetic idealisms for spirituality and their inferior degrees for spiritual values. It is mere truth that the mental intuitions of the metaphysician or the poet for the most part fall far short of a concrete spiritual experience; they are distant flickers, shadowy reflections, not rays from the centre of Light. It is not less true that, looked at from the peaks, there is not much difference between the high mental eminences and the lower climbings of this external existence. All the energies of the Lila are equal in the sight from above, all are disguises of the Divine. But one has to add that all can be turned into a first means towards the realisation of the Divine. A philosophic statement about the Atman is a mental formula, not knowledge, not experience: yet sometimes the Divine takes it as a channel of touch; strangely, a barrier in the mind breaks down, something is seen, a profound change operated in some inner part, there enters into the ground of the nature something calm, equal, ineffable. One stands upon a mountain ridge and glimpses or mentally feels a wideness, a pervasiveness, a nameless Vast in Nature; then suddenly there comes the touch, a revelation, a flooding, the mental loses itself

in the spiritual, one bears the first invasion of the Infinite. Or you stand before a temple of Kali beside a sacred river and see what? — a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a Presence, a Power, a Face that looks into yours, an inner sight in you has regarded the World-Mother. Similar touches can come too through art, music, poetry to their creator or to one who feels the shock of the word, the hidden significance of a form, a message in the sound that carries more perhaps than was consciously meant by the composer. All things in the Lila can turn into windows that open on the hidden Reality. Still so long as one is satisfied with looking through windows, the gain is only initial; one day one will have to take up the pilgrim's staff and start out to journey there where the Reality is for ever manifest and present. Still less can it be spiritually satisfying to remain with shadowy reflections; a search imposes itself for the Light which they strive to figure. But since this Reality and this Light are in ourselves no less than in some high region above the mortal plane, we can in the seeking for it use many of the figures and activities of Life; as one offers a flower, a prayer, an act to the Divine, one can offer too a created form of beauty, a song, a poem, an image, a strain of music, and gain through it a contact, a response or an experience. And when that divine Consciousness has been entered or when it grows within, then too its expression in life through these things is not excluded from Yoga; these creative activities can still have their place, though not intrinsically a greater place than any other that can be put to divine use and service. Art, poetry, music, as they are in their ordinary functioning, create mental and vital, not spiritual values; but they can be turned to a higher end, and then, like all things that are capable of linking our consciousness to the Divine, they are transmuted and become spiritual and can be admitted as part of a life of Yoga. All takes new values not from itself, but from the consciousness that uses it; for there is only one thing essential, needful, indispensable, to grow conscious of the Divine Reality and live in it and live it always.

It seems to me that Krishnaprem has seen very clearly with his usual accuracy and his mind of sight, *paśyantī buddhi*, the truth about yourself and your sadhana. I think that you could not do better than accept his diagnosis and follow entirely his suggested treatment. Especially you should accept his assurance about the final result and give no room in your mind to any doubt on that point or any disposition to give up your own case as hopeless. To my eyes you seem to have been making very good progress in several directions and I have no doubt about your emerging from your difficulties into the light.

I do not think there is any real impasse, I mean no inescapable hold-up on the road from which you cannot get out; it only seems to be to you like that because of the difficulties created for you by your intellect. It is because of its preconceptions and fixed judgments that you cannot make the equation he considers needful for you. The intellect is full of things like that and cannot by itself see truly the things that reveal their meaning fully only in the light of psychic or spiritual truth; the equation he speaks of belongs to that order. The intellect is of use for perceiving material facts and their relations but even these it cannot be relied on to see rightly in their total reality; it may see rightly, but as often wrongly and always only partly and imperfectly. Moreover, as the modern psychologists have discovered, it sees them coloured by the hues supplied from its own individual temperament, its own psychological personality and from its own peculiar angle. It thinks it is seeing quite objectively and impersonally but it does not so see and cannot so see; a dog might as well try to escape from its own pursuing tail: the human intellect's thought and sight cannot escape from its own subjectivity and colouring personality. The deeper and more accurate view of things can be more easily attained by the mind of sight which Krishnaprem has so much developed, *paśyantī buddhi*. You may say that you have got only your intellect to help you with its judgments and opinions: but mental judgments and opinions — well, they are always personal things and one can never be perfectly sure that one's own are correct and the judgments and opinions of others which differ

widely or even diametrically from one's own are mistaken. But you need not be always solely dependent on this fallible and limited instrument; for, although you have not developed the mind of sight as Krishnaprem has done, it is certainly there. I have always seen that when you have been in a psychic condition with bhakti or the higher part of the mind and the vital uppermost in you this mind of sight has come out and your ideas, feelings and judgments have become remarkably clear, right and often luminous. This has only to develop, you will then be able to see more clearly what Krishnaprem sees and many of your difficulties will disappear and the equation you want to make may become clear to you.

As for surrender, you already have it initially in your will to serve for the sake of service without claiming reward or success and without attachment to wealth or fame. If you extend that attitude into your whole sadhana, then realisation is sure. In any case, you should throw away all obsession of the sense of failure or the impossibility of success in your sadhana. Krishnaprem is surely right in telling you, when the Grace is on you and what he names as the Radhashakti is there to give you its unseen help, that the success of your sadhana is sure and the realisation will come. The impasse is a temporary block; your trust will become complete and the road to realisation clear.

Chapter Two

Doubt and Faith

Doubt and Yoga

As to doubts and argumentative answers to them I have long given up the practice as I found it perfectly useless. Yoga is not a field for intellectual argument or dissertation. It is not by the exercise of the logical or the debating mind that one can arrive at a true understanding of Yoga or follow it. A doubting spirit, “honest doubt” and the claim that the intellect shall be satisfied and be made the judge on every point is all very well in the field of mental action outside. But Yoga is not a mental field, the consciousness which has to be established is not a mental, logical or debating consciousness — it is even laid down by Yoga that unless and until the mind is stilled, including the intellectual or logical mind, and opens itself in quietude or silence to a higher and deeper consciousness, vision and knowledge, sadhana cannot reach its goal. For the same reason an unquestioning openness to the Guru is demanded in the Indian spiritual tradition; as for blame, criticism and attack on the Guru, it was considered reprehensible and the surest possible obstacle to sadhana.

If the spirit of doubt could be overcome by meeting it with arguments, there might be something in the demand for its removal by satisfaction through logic. But the spirit of doubt doubts for its own sake, for the sake of doubt; it simply uses the mind as its instrument for its particular dharma and this not the least when that mind thinks it is seeking sincerely for a solution of its honest and irrepressible doubts. Mental positions always differ, moreover, and it is well known that people can argue for ever without one convincing the other. To go on perpetually answering persistent and always recurring doubts such as for long have filled this Asram and obstructed the sadhana, is merely to frustrate the aim of the Yoga and go against its central

principle with no spiritual or other gain whatever. If anybody gets over his fundamental doubts, it is by the growth of the psychic in him or by an enlargement of his consciousness, not otherwise. Questions which arise from the spirit of enquiry, not aggressive or self-assertive, but as a part of a hunger for knowledge can be answered, but the “spirit of doubt” is insatiable and unappeasable.

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I have started writing about Doubt, but even in doing so I am afflicted by the “doubt” whether any amount of writing or of anything else can ever persuade the eternal doubt in man which is the penalty of his native ignorance. In the first place, to write adequately would mean anything from 60 to 600 pages, but not even 6000 convincing pages would convince Doubt. For Doubt exists for its own sake; its very function is to doubt always and, even when convinced, to go on doubting still; it is only to persuade its entertainer to give it board and lodging that it pretends to be an honest truth-seeker. This is a lesson I have learnt from the experience both of my own mind and of the minds of others; the only way to get rid of Doubt is to take Discrimination as one’s detector of truth and falsehood and under its guard to open the door freely and courageously to experience.

All the same I have started writing, but I will begin not with Doubt but with the demand for the Divine as a concrete certitude, quite as concrete as any physical phenomenon caught by the senses. Now, certainly, the Divine must be such a certitude not only as concrete but more concrete than anything sensed by ear or eye or touch in the world of Matter; but it is a certitude not of mental thought but of essential experience. When the Peace of God descends on you, when the Divine Presence is there within you, when the Ananda rushes on you like a sea, when you are driven like a leaf before the wind by the breath of the Divine Force, when Love flows out from you on all creation, when Divine Knowledge floods you with a Light which illumines and transforms in a moment all that was before dark, sorrowful and obscure, when all that is becomes part of the One Reality, when

the Reality is all around you, you feel at once by the spiritual contact, by the inner vision, by the illumined and seeing thought, by the vital sensation and even by the very physical sense, everywhere you see, hear, touch only the Divine. Then you can much less doubt it or deny it than you can deny or doubt daylight or air or the sun in heaven — for of these physical things you cannot be sure that they are what your senses represent them to be; but in the concrete experience of the Divine, doubt is impossible.

As to permanence, you cannot expect permanence of the initial spiritual experiences from the beginning — only a few have that and even for them the high intensity is not always there; for most the experience comes and then draws back behind the veil waiting for the human parts to be prepared and made ready to bear and hold, first, its increase and then its permanence. But to doubt it on that account would be irrational in the extreme. One does not doubt the existence of air because a strong wind is not always blowing or of sunlight because night intervenes between dawn and dusk. The difficulty lies in the normal human consciousness to which spiritual experience comes as something abnormal and is in fact supernormal. This weak limited normality finds it difficult at first even to get any touch of that greater and intenser supernormal or it gets it diluted into its own duller stuff of mental or vital experience, and, when the spiritual does come in its own overwhelming power, very often it cannot bear or, if it bears, cannot hold and keep it. Still once a decisive breach has been made in the walls built by the mind against the Infinite, the breach widens, sometimes slowly, sometimes swiftly, until there is no wall any longer, and then there is the Permanence.

But the decisive experiences cannot be brought, the permanence of a new state of consciousness in which they will be normal cannot be secured if the mind is always interposing its own reservations, prejudgments, ignorant formulas or if it insists on arriving at the Divine certitude as it would at the quite relative truth of a mental conclusion, by reasoning, doubt, enquiry and all the other paraphernalia of Ignorance feeling and fumbling around after Knowledge; these greater things can only be brought by the progressive opening of a consciousness

quieted and turned steadily towards spiritual experience. If you ask why the Divine has so disposed it on this highly inconvenient basis, it is a futile question, — for this is nothing else than a psychological necessity imposed by the very nature of things. It is so because these experiences of the Divine are not mental constructions, not vital movements; they are essential things, not things merely thought but realities, not mentally felt but felt in our very underlying substance and essence. No doubt, the mind is always there and can intervene; it can and does have its own type of mentalisings about the Divine, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, mental reflections of spiritual Truth, even a kind of mental realisation which repeats as well as it can some kind of figure of the higher Truth, and all this is not without value, but it is not concrete, intimate and indubitable. Mind by itself is incapable of ultimate certitude; whatever it believes, it can doubt; whatever it can affirm, it can deny; whatever it gets hold of, it can and does let go. That, if you like, is its freedom, noble right, privilege; it may be all you can say in its praise, but by these methods of mind you cannot hope (outside the realm of physical phenomena and hardly even there) to arrive at anything you can call an ultimate certitude. It is for this very compelling reason that mentalising or enquiring about the Divine cannot by its own right bring the Divine. If the consciousness is always busy with small mental movements, — especially accompanied, as they usually are, by a host of vital movements, desires, pre-possessions and all else that vitiates human thinking, even apart from the native insufficiency of reason, — what room can there be for a new order of knowledge, for fundamental experiences or for those deep and stupendous upsurgings or descents of the Spirit? It is indeed possible for the mind in the midst of its activities to be suddenly taken by surprise, overwhelmed, swept aside while all is flooded with a sudden inrush of spiritual experience. But if afterwards it begins questioning, doubting, theorising, surmising what this might be and whether it is true or not, what else can the spiritual Power do but retire and wait for the bubbles of the mind to cease?

I would ask one simple question of those who would make

the intellectual mind the standard and judge of spiritual experience. Is the Divine something less than Mind or is It something greater? Is mental consciousness with its groping enquiry, endless argument, unquenchable doubt, stiff and unplastic logic something superior or even equal to the Divine Consciousness or is it something inferior in its action and status? If it is greater, then there is no reason to seek after the Divine. If it is equal, then spiritual experience is quite superfluous. But if it is inferior, how can it challenge, judge, make the Divine stand as an accused or a witness before its tribunal, summon It to appear as a candidate for admission before a Board of Examiners or pin It like an insect under its examining microscope? Can the vital animal hold up as infallible the standard of its vital instincts, associations and impulses and judge, interpret and fathom by it the mind of man? It cannot because man's mind is a greater power working in a wider, more complex way which the animal vital consciousness cannot follow. Is it so difficult to see similarly that the Divine Consciousness must be something infinitely wider, more complex than human mind, filled with greater powers and lights, moving in a way which mere Mind cannot judge, interpret or fathom by the standard of its fallible Reason and limited mental half-knowledge? The simple fact is there that spirit and mind are not the same thing and that it is the spiritual consciousness into which the Yogin has to enter (in all this I am not in the least speaking of the supermind) if he wants to be in permanent contact or union with the Divine. It is not then a freak of the Divine or a tyranny to insist on the mind recognising its limitations, quieting itself, giving up its demands and opening and surrendering to a greater Light than it can find on its own obscurer level.

This does not mean that the Mind has no place at all in the spiritual life; but it means that it cannot be even the main instrument, much less the authority to whose judgment all must submit itself, including the Divine. Mind must learn from the greater Consciousness it is approaching and not impose its own standards on it; it has to receive illumination, open to a higher Truth, admit a greater Power that does not work according

to mental canons, surrender itself and allow its half-light half-darkness to be flooded from above till where it was blind it can see, where it was deaf it can hear, where it was insensible it can feel, and where it was baffled, uncertain, questioning, disappointed it can have joy, fulfilment, certitude and peace.

This is the position on which Yoga stands, a position based upon constant experience since men began to seek after the Divine. If it is not true, then there is no truth in Yoga and no necessity for Yoga. If it is true, then it is on that basis, from the standpoint of the necessity of this greater consciousness that we can see whether Doubt is of any utility for the spiritual life. To believe anything and everything is certainly not demanded of the spiritual seeker; such a promiscuous and imbecile credulity would be not only unintellectual, but in the last degree unspiritual. At every moment of the spiritual life until one has got fully into that higher Light, one has to be on one's guard and to be able to distinguish spiritual truth from pseudo-spiritual imitations of it or substitutes for it set up by the mind and by vital desire. A power to distinguish between truth of the Divine and the lies of the Asura is a cardinal necessity for Yoga. The question is whether that can best be done by the negative and destructive method of doubt, which often kills falsehood but rejects truth too with the same impartial blow, or a more positive, helpful and luminously searching power can be found which is not compelled by its inherent ignorance to meet truth and falsehood alike with the stiletto of doubt and the bludgeon of denial. An indiscriminateness of mental belief is not the teaching of spirituality or of Yoga; the faith of which it speaks is not a crude mental belief but the fidelity of the soul to the guiding light within it, a fidelity which has to remain firm till the light leads it into knowledge.

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As for the doubts of which you have written, I cannot write much today for obvious reasons and in any case writing is not the remedy, though it may help and encourage — for these doubts rise not from the intellect but from the vital mind which sees things

according to its condition and mood and needs something else than what the mind asks for to satisfy it. It is perfectly true that these reasonings have no force when the vital is in its true poise of love or joy or active and creative power, and when the vital is depressed then it is hard and seems sometimes impossible, so long as the depression is there, to surmount the trouble. But still the clouds do not last for ever — and even one has a certain power in the mind to shorten the period of these clouds, to reject and dissipate them and not to allow them to remain until they disappear in the course of nature.

By all means use the method of japa and bhakti. I have never insisted on your using the method of dry or hard tapasya — it was some idea or feeling in your own mind that made you lay so much stress on it. There are some to whom it is natural and necessary for a time, but each ought to move in his own way and there is no one rule for all — even if the objective is and must be the same, contact and union and opening to the Divine.

In the end these doubts and depressions and despairs must cease. Where the call of the soul perseveres, the response of the Divine must come.

*Na hi kalyāṅakṛt kaścīd durgatiṁ tāta gacchati.*¹

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There is no reason why your present condition should be more than a passing phase, unless you yourself choose that it should be otherwise. If it is the “imposition” of the rule of Karmayoga on you that is the cause of your doubts, it is unjustified, because there is no imposition or compulsion, and you need only work if you wish to do so; if you think that by sitting in meditation only you will best progress, you are free to do it.

I did not answer to your statement of your doubts, because they seem to repose on certain statements and suppositions about myself (which are quite inaccurate) and I do not usually care to enter into personal matters. I do not know who gave you this information, e.g. that I have not done my sadhana in full

¹ “Never does anyone who practises good, O beloved one, come to woe.” Gita 6.40.
—Ed.

heat of work but have had to lead a very quiet and extremely retired life all the time. I am afraid, whoever he is, he knows nothing about either my past life or my present life or my Yoga. As for the ground put forward that there is no precedent for progress during work or for such a method, nor have people in the past been able to do it, it amounts to a statement that there has never been any such thing as Karmayoga or a Karmayogi, that the Gita was never written or was not founded on any truth of experience and that no Yogi ever did works as part of his sadhana. There seems to be some exaggeration in these statements from whatever quarter they may have been breathed into your mind. I have never said that the Supermind is working in the sadhaks here; I have said the contrary in many letters.

I say so much however only to indicate the quite gratuitous character of the affirmations on which these doubts are founded — from wherever they may come. But a detailed answer is hardly necessary; for meditation is not forbidden in this sadhana. Except for those who prefer to go through work alone, meditation and works and bhakti each in its place make up the foundations of the sadhana. But you are free to follow the way of meditation alone, as some others do, if you think that better.

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I agree with most of what Krishnaprem says, though one or two things I would put from a different angle. Your reasonings about faith and doubt have been of a rather extravagant kind because they came to this that one must either doubt everything or believe everything however absurd that anybody says. I have repeatedly told you that there is not only room for discrimination in Yoga, but a need for it at every step — otherwise you will get lost in the jungle of things that are not spiritual — as for instance the tangle of what I call the intermediate zone. I have also told you that you are not asked to believe everything told you by anybody and that there is no call to put faith in all the miraculous things narrated about Bijoykrishna or another. That, I have said, is a question not of faith but of mental belief — and faith is not mental belief in outward facts, but an intuition of

the inner being about spiritual things. Krishnaprem means the same thing when he says that faith is the light sent down by the higher to the lower personality. As for the epithet “blind” used by Ramakrishna, it means as I said, not ignorantly credulous, but untroubled by the questionings of the intellect and unshaken by outward appearances of fact. E.g. one has faith in the Divine even though the fact seems to be that the world here or at least the human world is driven by undivine forces. One has faith in the Guru even when he uses methods that your intellect cannot grasp or approves things as true of which you have yet no experience (for if his knowledge and experience are not greater than yours, why did you choose him as a Guru?). One has faith in the Path leading to the goal even when the goal is very far off and the way covered by mist and cloud and smitten repeatedly by the thunderbolt. And so on. Even in worldly things man can do nothing great if he has not faith — in the spiritual realm it is still more indispensable. But this faith depends not on ignorant credulity, but on a light that burns inside though not seen by the eyes of the outward mind, a knowledge within that has not yet taken the form of an outer knowledge.

One thing however — I make a distinction between doubt and discrimination. If doubt meant a discriminant questioning as to what might be truth of this or that matter, it would be a part of discrimination and quite admissible; but what is usually meant now by doubt is a negation positive and peremptory which does not stop to investigate, to consider in the light, to try, to inquire, but says at once, “Oh, no, I am never going to take that as possibly true.” That kind of doubt may be very useful in ordinary life, it may be practically useful in battering down established things or established ideas or in certain kinds of external controversy to undermine a position that is too dogmatically positive; but I do not think it is of any positive use in matters even of intellectual inquiry. There is nothing it can do there that impartial discrimination cannot do much better. In spiritual matters discrimination has a huge place, but negating doubt simply stops the path to Truth with its placard “No entry” or its dogmatic “This far and no farther.”

As for the intellect it is indispensable to man up to a certain point; after that it becomes an inferior instrument and often misleading and obstructive. It is what I meant when I wrote, "Reason was the helper; reason is the bar."² Intellect has done many things for man; it has helped to raise him high above the animal; at its best it has opened a first view on all great fields of knowledge. But it cannot go beyond that; it cannot get at Truth itself, only at some reflections, forms, representations of it. I myself cannot remember to have ever arrived at anything in the spiritual field by the power of the intellect — I have used it only to help the expression of what I have known and experienced, but even there it is only certain forms that it provided, they were used by another Light and a larger Mind than the intellect. When the intellect tried to decide things in this field, it always delayed matters. I suppose what it can do sometimes is to stir up the mind, plough it or prepare — but the knowledge comes only when one gets another higher than intellectual opening. Even in Mind itself there are things higher than the intellect, ranges of activity that exceed it. Spiritual knowledge is easier to those than to the reasoning intelligence.

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The abnormal abounds in this physical world; the supernormal is there also. In these matters, apart from any question of faith, any truly rational man with a free mind (not tied up like the rationalist's or so-called freethinker's at every point with triple cords of *a priori* irrational disbelief) must not cry out at once, "Humbug! falsehood!", but suspend judgment until he has the necessary experience and knowledge. To deny in ignorance is no better than to affirm in ignorance.

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As for the faith-doubt question you evidently give to the word faith a sense and a scope I do not attach to it. I will have to

² Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, volume 13 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO*, p. 199.

write not one but several letters to clear up the position. It seems to me that you mean by faith a mental belief in an alleged fact put before the mind and senses in the doubtful form of an unsupported asseveration. I mean by it a dynamic intuitive conviction in the inner being of the truth of supersensible things which cannot be proved by any physical evidence but which are a subject of experience. My point is that this faith is a most desirable preliminary (if not absolutely indispensable — for there can be cases of experience not preceded by faith) to the desired experience. If I insist so much on faith — but even less on positive faith than on the throwing away of *a priori* doubt and denial — it is because I find that this doubt and denial have become an instrument in the hands of the obstructive forces and clog your steps whenever I try to push you to an advance. If you can't or won't get rid of it, ("won't" out of respect for the reason and fear of being led into believing things that are not true, "can't" because of contrary experience) then I shall have to manage for you without it, only it makes a difficult instead of a straight and comparatively easy process.

Why I call the materialist's denial an *a priori* denial is because he refuses even to consider or examine what he denies, but *starts* by denying it, like Leonard Woolf with his "quack quack", on the ground that it contradicts his own theories, so it can't be true. On the other hand the belief in the Divine and the Grace and Yoga and the Guru etc. is not *a priori*, because it rests on a great mass of human experience which has been accumulating through the centuries and millenniums as well as the personal intuitive perception. Therefore it is an intuitive perception which has been confirmed by the experience of hundreds and thousands of those who have tested it before me.

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Go on the path of Yoga without doubt of the ultimate success — surely you cannot fail! Doubts — they are nothing; keep the fire of aspiration burning, it is that that conquers.

Faith in Spiritual Things

I do not ask “undiscriminating faith” from anyone, all I ask is fundamental faith, safeguarded by a patient and quiet discrimination — because it is these that are proper to the consciousness of a spiritual seeker and it is these that I have myself used and found that they removed all necessity for the quite gratuitous dilemma of “either you must doubt everything supraphysical or be entirely credulous”, which is the stock-in-trade of the materialist argument. Your doubt, I see, constantly returns to the charge with a repetition of this formula in spite of my denial — which supports my assertion that Doubt cannot be convinced, because by its very nature it does not want to be convinced; it keeps repeating the old ground always.

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X upbraids you for losing your reason in blind faith, but what is his view of things except a reasoned faith; you believe according to your faith, which is quite natural, he believes according to his opinion, which is natural also but no better so far as the likelihood of getting at the true truth of things is in question. . . . Each reasons according to his view of things, his opinion, that is, his mental constitution and mental preference. So what’s the use of running down faith which after all gives something to hold on to amidst the contradictions of an enigmatic universe? If one can get at a knowledge that knows, it is another matter; but so long as we have only an ignorance that argues, well, there is a place still left for faith — even, faith may be a glint from the knowledge that knows, however far off, and meanwhile there is not the slightest doubt that it helps to get things done. There’s a bit of reasoning for you! just like all other reasoning too, convincing to the convinced, but not to the unconvincible, i.e., who don’t agree with the ground upon which the reasoning dances. Logic after all is only a measured dance of the mind, nothing else.

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Your dream was certainly not moonshine; it was an inner experience and can be given its full value. As for the other questions, they are full of complications and I do not feel armed to cut the Gordian knot with a sentence. Certainly, you are right to follow directly the truth for yourself and need not accept X's or anybody else's proposition or solution. Man needs both faith and reason so long as he has not reached a surer insight and greater knowledge. Without faith he cannot walk certainly on any road, and without reason he might very well be walking, even with the staff of faith to support him, in the darkness. X himself finds his faith, if not on reason, yet on reasons; and the rationalist, the rationaliser or the reasoner must have some faith even if it be faith only in reason itself as sufficient and authoritative, just as the believer has faith in his faith as sufficient and authoritative. Yet both are capable of error, as they must be since both are instruments of the human mind whose nature is to err, and they share that mind's limitations. Each must walk by the light he has even though there are dark spots in which he stumbles.

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The faith in spiritual things that is asked of the sadhak is not an ignorant but a luminous faith, a faith in light and not in darkness. It is called blind by the sceptical intellect because it refuses to be guided by outer appearances or seeming facts, — for it looks to the truth behind, — and does not walk on the crutches of proof and evidence. It is an intuition, — an intuition not only waiting for experience to justify it, but leading towards experience. If I believe in self-healing, I shall after a time find out the way to heal myself — if I have faith in transformation, I can end by laying my hand on and unravelling the whole process of transformation. But if I begin with doubt and go on with more doubt, how far am I likely to go on the journey?

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The faith is there, not in your mind, not in your vital, but in your psychic being. It was this faith that flung you out of the world and brought you to Pondicherry; it is this faith that keeps

you to what the soul wills and refuses to go back on what it has decided. Even the mind's questionings have been a groping after some justification by which it can get an excuse for believing in spite of its difficulties. The vital's eagerness and its vairagya are shadows of this faith, forms which it has taken in order to keep the vital from giving up in spite of the pressure of despondency and struggle. Even in the mind and vital of the man of strongest mental and vital faith there are periods when the knowledge in the psychic gets covered up — but it persists behind the veil. In you the eclipse has been strong and long because, owing to certain mental and vital formations, the assent of the mind and vital got clouded over and could only take negative forms. But there is always the knowledge or intuition in the soul that started you on the way. I have been pressing on you the need of faith because the assent has again to take a positive form so as to give free way to the Divine Force; but the persistent drive in the soul (which is a hidden and externally suppressed faith) is itself sufficient to warrant the expectation of the Grace to come.

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The sense of calm and light and divine guidance can never be an illusion. It is the dark state which is the state of Ignorance, of Maya — if faith fails then, it is because the darkness of the Ignorance shuts the mind to the Truth, obscuring the buddhi. What is thought when the buddhi is obscured cannot be the Truth; it is not darkness but the Light that brings Truth. Therefore you must take what you feel when you are in the light to be true, not what you feel when you are in the darkness.

Chapter Three

Philosophical Thought and Yoga

Metaphysical Thinkers, East and West

European metaphysical thought — even in those thinkers who try to prove or explain the existence and nature of God or of the Absolute — does not in its method and result go beyond the intellect. But the intellect is incapable of knowing the supreme Truth; it can only range about seeking for Truth and catching fragmentary representations of it, not the thing itself, and trying to piece them together. Mind cannot arrive at Truth; it can only make some constructed figure that tries to represent it or a combination of figures. At the end of European thought, therefore, there must always be Agnosticism, declared or implicit. Intellect, if it goes sincerely to its own end, has to return and give this report: “I cannot know; there is or at least it seems to me that there may be or even must be Something beyond, some ultimate Reality, but about its truth I can only speculate; it is either unknowable or cannot be known by me.” Or, if it has received some light on the way from what is beyond it, it can say too: “There is perhaps a consciousness beyond Mind, for I seem to catch glimpses of it and even to get intimations from it. If that is in touch with the Beyond or if it is itself the consciousness of the Beyond and you can find some way to reach it, then this Something can be known but not otherwise.”

Any seeking of the supreme Truth through intellect alone must end either in Agnosticism of this kind or else in some intellectual system or mind-constructed formula. There have been hundreds of these systems and formulas and there can be hundreds more, but none can be definitive. Each may have its value for the mind, and different systems with their contrary conclusions can have an equal appeal to intelligences of equal power and competence. All this labour of speculation has its utility in training the human mind and helping to keep before

it the idea of Something beyond and Ultimate towards which it must turn. But the intellectual Reason can only point vaguely or feel gropingly towards it or try to indicate partial and even conflicting aspects of its manifestation here; it cannot enter into and know it. As long as we remain in the domain of the intellect only, an impartial pondering over all that has been thought and sought after, a constant throwing up of ideas, of all the possible ideas, and the formation of this or that philosophical belief, opinion or conclusion is all that can be done. This kind of disinterested search after Truth would be the only possible attitude for any wide and plastic intelligence. But any conclusion so arrived at would be only speculative; it could have no spiritual value; it would not give the decisive experience or the spiritual certitude for which the soul is seeking. If the intellect is our highest possible instrument and there is no other means of arriving at supraphysical Truth, then a wise and large Agnosticism must be our ultimate attitude. Things in the manifestation may be known to some degree, but the Supreme and all that is beyond the Mind must remain for ever unknowable.

It is only if there is a greater consciousness beyond Mind and that consciousness is accessible to us that we can know and enter into the ultimate Reality. Intellectual speculation, logical reasoning as to whether there is or is not such a greater consciousness cannot carry us very far. What we need is a way to get the experience of it, to reach it, enter into it, live in it. If we can get that, intellectual speculation and reasoning must fall necessarily into a very secondary place and even lose their reason for existence. Philosophy, intellectual expression of the Truth may remain, but mainly as a means of expressing this greater discovery and as much of its contents as can at all be expressed in mental terms to those who still live in the mental intelligence.

This, you will see, answers your point about the Western thinkers, Bradley and others, who have arrived through intellectual thinking at the idea of an "Other beyond Thought" or have even, like Bradley, tried to express their conclusions about it in terms that recall some of the expressions in the *Arya*. The idea in

itself is not new; it is as old as the Vedas. It was repeated in other forms in Buddhism, Christian Gnosticism, Sufism. Originally, it was not discovered by intellectual speculation, but by the mystics following an inner spiritual discipline. When, somewhere between the seventh and fifth centuries B.C., men began both in the East and West to intellectualise knowledge, this Truth survived in the East; in the West, where the intellect began to be accepted as the sole or highest instrument for the discovery of Truth, it began to fade. But still it has there too tried constantly to return; the Neo-Platonists brought it back, and now, it appears, the Neo-Hegelians and others (e.g., the Russian Ouspensky and one or two German thinkers, I believe) seem to be reaching after it. But still there is a difference.

In the East, especially in India, the metaphysical thinkers have tried, as in the West, to determine the nature of the highest Truth by the intellect. But, in the first place, they have not given mental thinking the supreme rank as an instrument in the discovery of Truth, but only a secondary status. The first rank has always been given to spiritual intuition and illumination and spiritual experience; an intellectual conclusion that contradicts this supreme authority is held invalid. Secondly, each philosophy has armed itself with a practical way of reaching to the supreme state of consciousness, so that even when one begins with Thought, the aim is to arrive at a consciousness beyond mental thinking. Each philosophical founder (as also those who continued his work or school) has been a metaphysical thinker doubled with a Yogi. Those who were only philosophic intellectuals were respected for their learning but never took rank as truth discoverers. And the philosophies that lacked a sufficiently powerful means of spiritual experience died out and became things of the past because they were not dynamic for spiritual discovery and realisation.

In the West it was just the opposite that came to pass. Thought, intellect, the logical reason came to be regarded more and more as the highest means and even the highest end; in philosophy, Thought is the be-all and the end-all. It is by intellectual thinking and speculation that the truth is to be discovered; even

spiritual experience has been summoned to pass the tests of the intellect, if it is to be held valid—just the reverse of the Indian position. Even those who see that mental Thought must be overpassed and admit a supramental “Other”, do not seem to escape from the feeling that it must be through mental Thought, sublimating and transmuting itself, that this other Truth must be reached and made to take the place of the mental limitation and ignorance. And again Western thought has ceased to be dynamic; it has sought after a theory of things, not after realisation. It was still dynamic amongst the ancient Greeks, but for moral and aesthetic rather than spiritual ends. Later on, it became yet more purely intellectual and academic; it became intellectual speculation only without any practical ways and means for the attainment of the Truth by spiritual experiment, spiritual discovery, a spiritual transformation. If there were not this difference, there would be no reason for seekers like yourself to turn to the East for guidance; for in the purely intellectual field, the Western thinkers are as competent as any Eastern sage. It is the spiritual way, the road that leads beyond the intellectual levels, the passage from the outer being to the inmost Self, which has been lost by the over-intellectuality of the mind of Europe.

In the extracts you have sent me from Bradley and Joachim, it is still the intellect thinking about what is beyond itself and coming to an intellectual, a reasoned speculative conclusion about it. It is not dynamic for the change which it attempts to describe. If these writers were expressing in mental terms some realisation, even mental, some intuitive experience of this “Other than Thought”, then one ready for it might feel it through the veil of the language they use and himself draw near to the same experience. Or if, having reached the intellectual conclusion, they had passed on to the spiritual realisation, finding the way or following one already found, then in pursuing their thought, one might be preparing oneself for the same transition. But there is nothing of the kind in all this strenuous thinking. It remains in the domain of the intellect and in that domain it is no doubt admirable; but it does not become dynamic for spiritual experience.

It is not by “thinking out” the entire reality, but by a change of consciousness that one can pass from the ignorance to the Knowledge — the Knowledge by which we become what we know. To pass from the external to a direct and intimate inner consciousness; to widen consciousness out of the limits of the ego and the body; to heighten it by an inner will and aspiration and opening to the Light till it passes in its ascent beyond Mind; to bring down a descent of the supramental Divine through self-giving and surrender with a consequent transformation of mind, life and body — this is the *integral* way to the Truth.¹ It is this that we call the Truth here and aim at in our Yoga.

World-Circumstances and the Divine

The whole world knows, spiritual thinker and materialist alike, that this world for the created or naturally evolved being in the ignorance or the inconscience of Nature is neither a bed of roses nor a path of joyous Light. It is a difficult journey, a battle and struggle, an often painful and chequered growth, a life besieged by obscurity, falsehood and suffering. It has its mental, vital, physical joys and pleasures, but these bring only a transient taste — which yet the vital self is unwilling to forego — and they end in distaste, fatigue or disillusionment. What then? To say the Divine does not exist is easy, but it leads nowhere — it leaves you where you are with no prospect or issue — neither Russell nor any materialist can tell you where you are going or even where you ought to go. The Divine does not manifest himself so as to be recognised in the external world-circumstances — admittedly so. These are not the works of an irresponsible autocrat somewhere — they are the circumstances of a working out of Forces according to a certain nature of being, one might say a certain proposition or problem of being into which we have all really consented to enter and cooperate. The work is painful,

¹ I have said that the idea of the Supermind was already in existence from ancient times. There was in India and elsewhere the attempt to reach it by rising to it; but what was missed was the way to make it integral for the life and to bring it down for transformation of the whole nature, even of the physical nature.

dubious, its vicissitudes impossible to forecast? There are either of two possibilities then, — to get out of it into Nirvana by the Buddhist or illusionist way or to get inside oneself and find the Divine there since he is not discoverable on the surface. For those who have made the attempt, and there were not a few but hundreds and thousands, have testified through the ages that he is there and that is why there exists the Yoga. It takes long? The Divine is concealed behind a thick veil of his Maya and does not answer at once or at any early stage to our call? Or he gives only a glimpse uncertain and passing and then withdraws and waits for us to be ready? But if the Divine has any value, is it not worth some trouble, time and labour to follow after him and must we insist on having him without any training or sacrifice or suffering or trouble? It is surely irrational to make a demand of such a nature. It is positive that we have to get inside, behind the veil, to find him, — it is only then that we can see him outside and the intellect be not so much convinced as forced to admit his presence by experience — just as when a man sees what he has denied and can no longer deny it. But for that the means must be accepted and the persistence in the will and patience in the labour.

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I cannot very well answer the strictures of Russell or Vivekananda (in one of his moods), for the conception of the Divine as an external omnipotent Power who has created the world and governs it like an absolute and arbitrary monarch, the Christian or Semitic conception, the popular religious notion, has never been mine; it contradicts too much my seeing and experience during thirty years of sadhana. When I speak of the Divine Will I mean something different, — something that has descended here into an evolutionary world of Ignorance, standing at the back of things, pressing on the Darkness with its Light, leading things presently towards the best possible in the conditions of a world of Ignorance and leading it eventually towards a descent of a greater Power of the Divine which will be not an omnipotence held back and conditioned by the Law of the world as

it is, but a full action and therefore bringing the reign of light, peace, harmony, joy, love, beauty and Ananda, for these are the Divine Nature. The Divine Grace is there, ready to act at every moment, but it manifests as one grows out of the Law of the Ignorance into the Law of Light and it is meant, not as an arbitrary caprice, however miraculous often its intervention, but as a help in that growth and a Light that leads and eventually delivers. If we take the facts of the world as they are and the facts of spiritual experience as a whole, neither of which can be denied or neglected, then I do not see what other Divine there can be. This Divine may lead us often through darkness, because the darkness is there in us and around us, but it is to the Light he is leading and not to anything else.

Intellectual Expression of Spiritual Experience

In reference to what Prof. Sorley has written on *The Riddle of This World*,² the book of course was not meant as a full or direct statement of my thought and, as it was written to sadhaks mostly, many things were taken for granted there. Most of the major ideas — e.g. Overmind — were left without elucidation. To make the ideas implied clear to the intellect, they must be put with precision in an intellectual form — so far as that is possible with supra-intellectual things. What is written in the book can be clear to those who have gone far enough in experience, but for most it can only be suggestive.

I do not think, however, that the statement of supra-intellectual things necessarily involves a making of distinctions in the terms of the intellect. For, fundamentally, it is not an expression of ideas arrived at by speculative thinking. One has to arrive at spiritual knowledge through experience and a consciousness of things which arises directly out of that experience or else underlies or is involved in it. This kind of knowledge, then, is fundamentally a consciousness and not a

² A small book of letters by Sri Aurobindo in which he discusses various questions of philosophy and spiritual experience. It was first published in 1933. — Ed.

thought or formulated idea. For instance, my first major experience — radical and overwhelming, though not, as it turned out, final and exhaustive — came after and by the exclusion and silencing of all thought — there was, first, what might be called a spiritually substantial or concrete consciousness of stillness and silence, then the awareness of some sole and supreme Reality in whose presence things existed only as forms, but forms not at all substantial or real or concrete; but this was all apparent to a spiritual perception and essential and impersonal sense and there was not the least concept or idea of reality or unreality or any other notion, for all concept or idea was hushed or rather entirely absent in the absolute stillness. These things were known directly through the pure consciousness and not through the mind, so there was no need of concepts or words or names. At the same time this fundamental character of spiritual experience is not absolutely limitative; it can do without thought, but it can do with thought also. Of course, the first idea of the mind would be that the resort to thought brings one back at once to the domain of the intellect — and at first and for a long time it may be so; but it is not my experience that this is unavoidable. It happens so when one tries to make an intellectual statement of what one has experienced; but there is another kind of thought that springs out as if it were a body or form of the experience or of the consciousness involved in it — or of a part of that consciousness — and this does not seem to me to be intellectual in its character. It has another light, another power in it, a sense within the sense. It is very clearly so with those thoughts that come without the need of words to embody them, thoughts that are of the nature of a direct seeing in the consciousness, even a kind of intimate sense or contact formulating itself into a precise expression of its awareness (I hope this is not too mystic or unintelligible); but it might be said that directly the thoughts turn into words they belong to the kingdom of intellect — for words are a coinage of the intellect. But is it so really — or inevitably? It has always seemed to me that words came originally from somewhere else than the thinking mind, although the thinking mind secured hold

of them, turned them to its use and coined them freely for its purposes. But even otherwise, is it not possible to use words for the expression of something that is not intellectual? Housman contends that poetry is perfectly poetical only when it is non-intellectual, when it is nonsense. That is too paradoxical, but I suppose what he means is that if it is put to the strict test of the intellect it appears extravagant because it conveys something that expresses and is real to some other kind of seeing than that which intellectual thought brings to us. Is it not possible that words may spring from, that language may be used to express — at least up to a certain point and in a certain way — the supra-intellectual consciousness which is the essential power of spiritual experience? This however is by the way — when one tries to explain spiritual experience to the intellect itself, then it is a different matter.

The interpenetration of the planes is indeed for me a capital and fundamental part of spiritual experience without which Yoga as I practise it and its aim could not exist. For that aim is to manifest, reach or embody a higher consciousness upon earth and not to get away from earth into a higher world or some supreme Absolute. The old Yogas (not quite all of them) tended the other way — but that was, I think, because they found the earth as it is a rather impossible place for any spiritual being and the resistance to change too obstinate to be borne; earth-nature looked to them in Vivekananda's simile like the dog's tail which every time you straighten it goes back to its original curl. But the fundamental proposition in this matter was proclaimed very definitely in the Upanishads which went so far as to say that the Earth is the foundation and all the worlds are on the earth and to imagine a clean-cut or irreconcilable difference between them is ignorance: here and not elsewhere, not by going to some other world, the divine realisation must come. This statement was used to justify a purely individual realisation, but it can equally be the basis of a wider endeavour.

About polytheism, I certainly accept the truth of the many forms and personalities of the One which since the Vedic times has been the spiritual essence of Indian polytheism —

a secondary aspect in the seeking for the one and only Divine. But the passage referred to by Professor Sorley³ is concerned with something else — the little godlings and Titans spoken of there are supraphysical beings of other planes. It is not meant to be suggested that they are real Godheads and entitled to worship — on the contrary it is indicated that to accept their influence is to move towards error and confusion or a deviation from the true spiritual way. No doubt they have some power to create, they are makers of forms in their own way and in their limited domain, but so are men too creators of outward and of inward things in their own domain and limits — and even man's creative powers can have a repercussion on the supraphysical levels.

I agree that asceticism can be overdone. It has its place as one means — not the only one — of self-mastery; but asceticism that cuts away life is an exaggeration, though one that had many remarkable results which perhaps could hardly have come otherwise. The play of forces in this world is enigmatic, escaping from any rigid rule of the reason, and even an exaggeration like that is often employed to bring about something needed for the full development of human achievement and knowledge and experience. But it was an exaggeration all the same and not, as it claimed to be, the indispensable path to the true goal.

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I find nothing either to add or to object to in Prof. Sorley's comment on the still, bright and clear mind; it adequately indicates the process by which the mind makes itself ready for the reflection of the higher Truth in its undisturbed surface or substance. But one thing perhaps needs to be kept in view — that this pure stillness of the mind is indeed always the required condition, the desideratum, but for bringing it about there are more ways than one. It is not, for instance, only by an effort of the mind itself to get clear of all intrusive emotion or passion, to quiet its own

³ *"for these intermediate planes are full of little Gods or strong Daityas . . ."*. The Riddle of This World (1973), p. 38.

characteristic vibrations, to resist the obscuring fumes of a physical inertia which brings about a sleep or a torpor of the mind instead of its wakeful silence, that the thing can be done. This is indeed an ordinary process of the Yogic path of knowledge; but the same end can be brought about or automatically happen by other processes — for instance, by the descent from above of a great spiritual stillness imposing silence on the mind and heart, on the life stimuli, on the physical reflexes. A sudden descent of this kind or a series of descents accumulative in force and efficacy is a well-known phenomenon of spiritual experience. Or again one may start a mental process of one kind or another for the purpose which would normally mean a long labour and yet may pull down or be seized midway, or even at the outset, by an overmind influx, a rapid intervention or manifestation of the higher Silence, with an effect sudden, instantaneous, out of all proportion to the means used at the beginning. One commences with a method, but the work is taken up by a Grace from above, by a response from That to which one aspires or by an irruption of the infinitudes of the Spirit. It was in this last way that I myself came by the mind's absolute silence, unimaginable to me before I had the actual experience.

There is another question of some importance — what is the exact nature of this brightness, clearness, stillness, of what is it constituted, more precisely, is it merely a psychological condition or something more? Professor Sorley says these epithets are after all metaphors and he wants to express and succeeds in expressing — though not without the use of metaphor — the same thing in a more abstract language. But I was not conscious of using metaphors when I wrote the phrase though I am aware that the words could to others have that appearance. I think even that they would seem to one who had gone through the same experience, not only a more vivid, but a more realistic and accurate description of this inner state than any abstract language could give. It is true that metaphors, symbols, images are constant auxiliaries summoned by the mystic for the expression of his vision or his experience. It is inevitable because he has to express in a language made or at least developed and manipulated

by the mind the phenomena of a consciousness other than the mental and at once more complex and more subtly concrete. It is this subtly concrete, this supersensuously sensible reality of the phenomena of the spiritual — or the occult — consciousness to which the mystic arrives that justifies the use of metaphor and image as a more living and accurate transcription than the abstract terms which intellectual reflection employs for its own characteristic process. If the images used are misleading or not descriptively accurate, it is because the writer has a paucity, looseness or vagueness of language inadequate to the intensity of his experience. Apart from that, all new phenomenon, new discovery, new creation calls for the aid of metaphor and image. The scientist speaks of light waves or of sound waves and in doing so he uses a metaphor, but one which corresponds to the physical fact and is perfectly applicable — for there is no reason why there should not be a wave, a limited flowing movement of light or of sound as well as of water.

But still when I speak of the mind's brightness, clearness, stillness, I have no idea of calling metaphor to my aid; it is meant to be a description quite precise and positive — as precise, as positive as if I were describing in the same way an expanse of air or a sheet of water. For the mystic's experience of mind, especially when it falls still, is not that of an abstract condition or impalpable activity of the consciousness; it is rather an experience of a substance — an extended subtle substance in which there can be and are waves, currents, vibrations not physically material but still as definite, as perceptible, as tangible and controllable by an inner sense as any movement of material energy or substance by the physical senses. The stillness of the mind means, first, the falling to rest of the habitual thought movements, thought formations, thought currents which agitate this mind-substance. That repose, vacancy of movement, is for many a sufficient mental silence. But, even in this repose of all thought movements and all movements of feeling, one sees, when one looks more closely at it, that the mind-substance is still in a constant state of very subtle formless but potentially formative vibration — not at first easily observable, but afterwards quite

evident — and that state of constant vibration may be as harmful to the exact reflection or reception of the descending Truth as any formed thought movement or emotional movement; for these vibrations are the source of a mentalisation which can diminish or distort the authenticity of the higher Truth or break it up into mental refractions. When I speak of a still mind, I mean then one in which these subtler disturbances too are no longer there. As they fall quiet one can feel an increasing stillness which is not the lesser quietude of repose and also a resultant clearness as palpable as the stillness and clearness of a physical atmosphere.

This positiveness of experience is my justification for these epithets “still, clear”; but the other epithet, “bright”, links itself to a still more sensible phenomenon of the subtly concrete. For in the brightness I describe there is another additional element that is connected with the phenomenon of Light well known and common to mystic experience. That inner Light of which the mystics speak is not a metaphor, as when Goethe called for more light in his last moments; it presents itself as a very positive illumination actually seen and felt by the inner sense. The brightness of the still and clear mind is a reflection of this Light that comes even before the Light itself manifests — and, even without any actual manifestation of the Light, is sufficient for the mind’s openness to the greater consciousness beyond mind — just as we can see by the dawn-light before the sunrise; for it brings to the still mind, which might otherwise remain just still and at peace and nothing more, a capacity of penetrability to the Truth it has to receive and harbour. I have emphasised this point at a little length because it helps to bring out the difference between the abstract mental and the concrete mystic perception of supraphysical things which is the source of much misunderstanding between the spiritual seeker and the intellectual thinker. Even when they speak the same language it is a different order of perceptions to which the language refers. The same word in their mouths may denote the products of two different grades of consciousness. This ambiguity in the expression is a cause of much non-understanding and disagreement, while even a surface

agreement may be a thin bridge or crust over a gulf of difference.

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I come now to the question raised by Professor Sorley, what is the relation — or rather the position — of the intellect in regard to mystic or spiritual experience. Is it true as it is often contended that the mystic must, whether as to the validity of his experience itself or the validity of his expression of it, accept the intellect as the judge? It ought to be very plain that in the search, the discovery, the getting of the experience itself the intellect cannot claim to put its limits or its law on an endeavour whose very aim, first principle, constant method is to go beyond the domain of the ordinary earth-ruled and sense-ruled mental intelligence. It would be as if you were to ask me to climb a mountain with a rope around me attaching me to the terrestrial level — or as if I were permitted to fly but only on condition that I kept my feet on the earth or near enough to the safety of the ground while I do it. It may indeed be the securest thing to walk on earth, to be on the firm ground of terrestrial reason always; to attempt to ascend on wings to the Beyond-Mind ether may be to risk mental confusion and collapse and all possible accidents of error, illusion, extravagance, hallucination or what not — the usual charges of the positive earth-walking intellect against mystic experience; but I have to take the risk if I want to do it at all. The reasoning intellect bases itself on man's normal consciousness, it proceeds by the workings of a mental perception and conception of things; it is at its ease only when founded on a logical basis formed by terrestrial experience and its accumulated data. The mystic goes beyond into a region where the everyday mental basis falls away; the terrestrial data on which the reason finds itself are exceeded, there is even another law and canon of perception and knowledge. His entire business is to break out or upward or widen into a new consciousness which looks at things in a very different way, and if this new consciousness may include, though viewed with quite another vision, the data of the ordinary external intelligence, yet it cannot be limited by them, cannot bind itself to see from the intellectual standpoint or

conform to its manner of conceiving, reasoning, its established interpretation of experience. A mystic entering the domain of the occult or of the spirit with the intellect as his only or his supreme light or guide would risk to see nothing, or see according to his preconceived mental idea of things or else he would arrive only at a subtly “positive” mental realisation of perceptions already laid down for him by the abstract speculations of the intellectual thinker.

There is a strain of spiritual thought in India which compromises with the modern intellectual demand and admits Reason as a supreme judge, — but it must be a Reason which in its turn is prepared to compromise and accept the data of spiritual experience as valid *per se*. That is to do what the Indian philosophers have always done; for they have tried to establish by the light of metaphysical reasoning generalisations drawn from spiritual experience; and it was always on the basis of that experience that they proceeded and with the evidence of the spiritual seekers as a supreme proof ranking higher than intellectual speculation or inference. In that way they preserved the freedom of spiritual and mystic experience and allowed the reasoning intellect to come in only on the second line as a judge of the generalised metaphysical statements drawn from the experience, but not of the experience itself. This is, I presume, something akin to Professor Sorley’s own position — for he concedes that the experience itself is of the domain of the ineffable, but he suggests that as soon as I begin to interpret it, to state it, I fall back inevitably into the domain of the thinking mind; I am using its terms and ways of thought and expression and must accept the intellect as judge. If I do not, I knock away the ladder by which I have climbed — through mind to Beyond-Mind — and I am left unsupported in the air. It is not quite clear whether the truth of my experience itself is supposed to be invalidated by this unsustained position, but at any rate it remains something aloof and incommunicable without support or any consequences for thought or life. There are three propositions, I suppose, which I can take as laid down or admitted in this contention and joined together. First, the spiritual experience is itself of the Beyond-Mind, ineffable and,

it should be presumed, unthinkable. Next, — in the expression, the interpretation of the experience, you are obliged to fall back into the domain of the consciousness you have left and so you must abide by its judgments, accept the terms and the canons of its law, submit to its verdict; for you have abandoned the freedom of the Ineffable and are no longer your own master. Last, spiritual truth may be true in itself, in its own self-experience, but any statement of it is liable to error and here the intellect is the sole possible arbiter.

I do not think I am prepared to accept any of these affirmations completely just as they are. It is true that spiritual and mystic experience carries one first into domains of Other-Mind or All-Mind (and also Other-Life and All-Life and I would add Other-Substance and All-Substance) and then emerges into the Beyond-Mind; it is true also that the ultimate Truth has been described as unthinkable, ineffable, unknowable — “speech cannot reach there, mind cannot arrive to it.” But I may observe that it is so to human mind, but not to itself, since it is not an abstraction, but a superconscious (not unconscious) Existence, — for it is described as to itself self-evident and self-luminous, — therefore in some direct supramental or at least overmind way knowable and known, eternally self-aware. But here the question is not of an ultimate realisation of the ultimate Ineffable which according to many can only be reached in a supreme trance withdrawn from all outer mental or other awareness; we are speaking rather of an experience in a luminous silence of the mind and any such experience presupposes that before there is any last unspeakable experience of the Ultimate or disappearance into it, there is possible a reflection or descent of at least some Power or Presence of the identical Reality into the mind-substance. Along with it there is a modification of mind-substance, an illumination of it, — and of this experience an expression of some kind, a rendering into thought ought to be possible. Moreover an immense mass of well-established spiritual experience would have been impossible unless we suppose that the Ineffable and Unknowable has truths of itself, aspects, revealing presentations of it to our consciousness which are not utterly unthinkable and ineffable.

If it were not so, indeed, all account of spiritual truth and experience would be impossible. At most one could speculate about it, but that would be an activity very much indeed in the air and even a movement in a void, without support or data. At best, there could be a mere manipulation of all the possible ideas of what conceivably might be the Supreme and Ultimate. For we would have nothing before us to go upon other than the bare fact of a certain unaccountable translation by one way or another from consciousness to an incommunicable Supraconscience. That is indeed what much mystical seeking actually held up as the one thing essential both in Europe and India. Many Christian mystics spoke of a total darkness through which one must pass into the Ineffable Light and Rapture, a falling away of all mental lights and all that belongs to the ordinary activity of the nature; they aimed not only at a silence but a darkness of the mind protecting an inexpressible illumination. The Indian Sannyasins sought by silence, by concentration inwards, to shed mind altogether and pass into a thought-free trance from which, if one returns, no communication or expression could be brought back of what was there except a remembrance of ineffable existence and bliss. But still even here there were previous glimpses or contacts and results of contact of That which is Beyond; there were contacts of the Highest or of the occult universal Existence, which were held to be spiritual truths and on the basis of which the seers and mystics did not hesitate to formulate their experience and the thinkers to build on it numberless philosophies, theologies, books of exegesis or of creed and dogma. All then is not ineffable; there is a possibility of communication and expression, and the only question is of the nature of this transmission of the facts of a different order of consciousness to the mind and whether it is feasible for the intellect or must be left for something else than intellect to determine the validity of the expression or, even, of the original experience. If no valid account were possible there could be no question of the judgment of the intellect — only the violent contradiction of mind sitting down to judge a Beyond-Mind of which it can know nothing, starting to speak of the Ineffable,

think of the Unthinkable, comprehend the Incommunicable.

Comments on Thoughts of J. M. E. McTaggart

I have heard of McTaggart as a philosopher but am totally unacquainted with his thought and his writings, so it is a little difficult for me to answer you with any certitude. Isolated thoughts or sentences may easily be misunderstood if they are not read against the background of the thinker's way of looking at things taken as a whole. There is always, too, the difference of standpoint and approach between the spiritual seeker or mystic who (sometimes) philosophises and the intellectual thinker who (sometimes or partly) mysticises. The one starts from a spiritual or mystic experience or at the least an intuitive realisation and tries to express it and its connection with other spiritual or intuitive truth in the inadequate and too abstract language of the mind; he looks behind thought and expression for some spiritual or intuitive experience to which it may point and, if he finds none, he is apt to feel the thought, however intellectually fine, or the expression, however intellectually significant, as something unsubstantial because without spiritual substance. The intellectual thinker starts from ideas and mentalised feelings and other mental or external phenomena and tries to reach the essential truth in or behind them; generally, he stops short at a mental abstraction or only a derivative mental realisation of something that is in its own nature other than mental. But if he has the true mystic somewhere in him, he will sometimes get beyond to at least flashes and glimpses. Is it not the compulsion of this approach (I mean the inadequacy of the method of intellectual philosophy, its fixation to the word and idea, while to the complete mystic word and idea are useful symbols only or significative flashlights) that kept McTaggart, as it keeps many, from the unfolding of the mystic within him? If the reviewer is right, that would be why he is abstract and dry, while what is beautiful and moving in his thought might be some light that shines through in spite of the inadequate means of expression to which philosophical thinking condemns us. However, subject to

this rather lengthy caveat, I will try to deal with the extracted sentences or summarised thoughts you have placed before me in your letter.

“Love the main occupation of the selves in absolute reality.” This seems to me a little excessive. If instead of “the main occupation” it were said “an essential power”, that might pass. I would myself say that bliss and oneness are the essential condition of the absolute reality and love as the most characteristic dynamic power of bliss and oneness must support fundamentally and colour their activities; but the activities themselves may be not of one main kind but manifold in character.

Benevolence and sympathy. In mental experience benevolence and sympathy have to be distinguished from love; but it seems to me that beyond the dividing mind, where the true sense of oneness begins, these become at a higher intensity of their movement characteristic values of love. Benevolence becomes an intense compulsion imposed by love to seek always the good of the loved, sympathy becomes the feeling out of love to contain, participate in and take as part of one’s own existence all the movements of the loved and all that concerns him.

“Love is authentic and justifies itself completely whether its cause be great or trivial.” That is not often true in human practice; for there the destiny of love and its justification depend very much as a rule (though not always) on the nature of the cause or object. For if the object of love is trivial in the sense of his being an inadequate instrument for the dynamic realisation of the sense of oneness which McTaggart says is the essence of love, then love is likely to be balked of its fulfilment. Unless, of course, it is satisfied with existing, with spending itself in its own fundamental way on the loved without expecting any return for its self-expenditure, any mutual unification. Still, of Love in its essence the statement may be true; but then it would point to the fact that Love at its origin is a self-existent force, an absolute, a transcendent (as I have put it), which does not depend upon the objects, — it depends only on itself or only on the Divine, — for it is a self-existent power of the Divine. If it were not self-existent, it would hardly be independent of the nature or reaction of its

object. It is partly what I mean when I speak of transcendent Love — though this is only one aspect of its transcendence. That self-existent transcendent Love spreading itself over all, turning everywhere to contain, embrace, unite, help, upraise towards love and bliss and oneness, becomes cosmic divine Love; intensely fixing itself on one or others to find itself, to achieve a dynamic unification or to reach here towards the union of the soul with the Divine, it becomes the individual divine Love. But there are unhappily its diminutions in the human mind, human vital, human physical; there the divine essence of Love may easily become mixed with counterfeits, dimmed, concealed or lost in the twisted movements born of division and ignorance.

Love and self-reverence. It sounds very high, but also rather dry; this “emotion” in the lover does not seem to be very emotional, it is a hill-top syllogising far above the flow of any emotional urges. Self-reverence in this sense or in a deeper sense can come from Love, but it *can* come equally from a participation in Knowledge, in Power or anything else that one feels to be the highest good or else of the essence of the Highest. But the passion of love, the adoration of love, can bring in a quite different, even an opposite emotion. Especially in love for the Divine or for one whom one feels to be divine, the Bhakta feels an intense reverence for the Loved, a sense of something of immense greatness, beauty or value and for himself a strong impression of his own comparative unworthiness and a passionate desire to *grow* into likeness with that which one adores. What does come very often with the inrush of Love is an exaltation, a feeling of a greatening within, of new powers and high or beautiful possibilities in one’s nature or of an intensification of the nature; but that is not exactly self-reverence. There is a deeper self-reverence possible, a true emotion, a sense of the value and even the sacredness of the soul, even the mind, life, body as an offering or itself the temple for the inner presence of the Beloved.

These reactions are intimately connected with the fact that Love, when it is worthy of the name, is always a seeking for union, for oneness, but also in its secret foundation it is a seeking, if sometimes only a dim groping for the Divine. Love

in its depths is a contact of the Divine Possibility or Reality in oneself with the Divine Possibility or Reality in the loved. It is the inability to affirm or keep this character that makes human love either transient or balked of its full significance or condemned to sink into a less exalted movement diminished to the capacity of the human receptacle. But there McTaggart brings in his saving clause, “When I love, I see the other not as he is now (and therefore really is not), but as he really is (that is, as he will be).” The rest of it, that “the other with all his faults is somehow infinitely good — at least for his friend”, seems to me too mental to convey anything very definite from the standpoint of the spiritual inner values. But the formula quoted also is not overclear. It means, I suppose, something like Vivekananda’s distinction between the apparent Man and the real Man; or it coincides up to a point with the saying of one of the early teachers of Vedanta, Yajnavalkya, “Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear” (or, the friend — for the wife is only the first of a list), “but for the sake of the Self (the greater Self, the Spirit within) is she dear.” But Yajnavalkya, a seeker of the one (not the plural) Absolute, would not have accepted the implication in McTaggart’s phrase; he would have said that one must go beyond and eventually seek the Self not in the wife or friend — even though sought or glimpsed there for a time, but in its own self-existence. In any case there seems to be here an avowal that it is not the human being (what he now is), but the Divine or a portion of the Divine within (call it God if you will or call it Absolute) that is the object of the love. But the mystic would not be satisfied like McTaggart with that “will be”, — would not consent to remain in love with the finite for the sake of an unrealised Infinite. He would insist on pushing on towards full realisation, towards finding the Divine in Itself or the Divine Manifest; he would not rest satisfied with the Divine unconscious of itself, unmanifested or only distantly *in posse*.

There is where the parallel with the Ishta Devata which you suggest would not hold; for the Ishta Devata on whom the seeker concentrates is a *conscious* Personality of the Divine answering to the needs of his own personality and showing to

him as in a representative image what the Divine is or at least pointing him through itself to the Absolute. On the other side, when I spoke of the self-absorption of the Divine Force in its energising, I was trying to explain the possibility in a Divine or cosmic manifestation of this apparently inconscient Matter. I said that in the frontal movement there was something of the Divine that had thrown itself into material form with so much concentration that it became the motion and the form which the motion of Force creates and put all that was not that behind it, — even, but in a greater degree and more permanently, as a man can concentrate and forget his own existence in what he is doing, seeing or making. In man himself, who is not inconscient, this appears in a different way; his frontal being is unaware of what is behind the surface personality and action, like the part of the actor's being which becomes the role and forgets entirely the other more enduring self behind the actor. But in either case there is a larger self behind, "a Conscient in things inconscient", which is aware both of itself and of the self-forgetting frontal form seen as the creature. Does McTaggart recognise this conscious Divine within? He makes too little of this Absolute or Real Self which, as he yet sees, is within the unreal or less real appearance. His denial of the Divine comes from the insistence of his mind and vital temperament on the friend as he is, even though his higher mind may try to escape from that by the idea of what his friend will be; otherwise it is difficult to understand the stupendous exaggeration of his thesis that the love for friends is the *only* real thing in life and his unwillingness to give God a chance, lest that should take away the friend and leave the Divine in his place.

I do not quite seize what is his conception of the Absolute. How can it be said that a society (?) of distinct selves are collectively the Absolute? If it is meant that where there is a union of conscious liberated selves there is the presence of the Divine and a certain manifestation is possible, — that is intelligible. Or if by society is meant only that the sum or totality of all distinct selves is the Divine and these distinct individual selves are portions of the Divine, that would be an intelligible (pantheistic) solution.

Only, it would be a Divine All or some kind of Cosmic Self or Spirit rather than the Absolute. For if there is an Absolute — which intellectually one is not bound to believe, except that something in the higher mind seems imperatively to ask for it or feel that it is there, — it must surely exist in its own absolute right, not constituted, not dependent for its being on a collectivity of distinct selves, but self-existent. To the intellect such an Absolute may seem an undefinable x which it cannot grasp; but mystic or spiritual experience pushed far enough ultimately leads to it, and whatever may be the gate of experience through which one gets the first glimpse of it, it is there even though not fully grasped in that opening experience.

Your own experience of it was, you say, that of an irruption of the Infinite into the finite — of a greater Power descending upon you or uplifting you to itself. That indeed is what it is always to the spiritual experience — and that is why I speak of it as the Transcendent. It reveals itself as such a descending and uplifting Power or a descending and uplifting Love — or Light, Peace, Bliss, Consciousness, Presence; it is not limited by its manifestation in the finite, — one feels it, the Peace, the Power, Love, Light or Bliss or the Presence in which all these are, to be a self-existent infinity, not something constituted by or limited to our first sight of it here. McTaggart's love of friends remained the *only* real thing for him; I must suppose that he had not this glimpse. But once this irruption has taken place, this descent and uplifting, that is bound to become in the end the one thing real, for by that alone can the rest find its own lasting greater reality. It is the descent of the Divine Consciousness and the ascent or uplifting into it of which we speak in our Yoga. All else can only hold, make good, fulfil itself if it can lift itself to be a part of this divine realisation or of its manifestation, and, to do that, it must accept a great transformation and perfection. But the central realisation must be the one central aim, and it is that realisation only which will make other things, all that is intended to be made part of it, divinely possible.

Comments on Terms Used by Henri Bergson⁴

I have not read him [*Bergson*] sufficiently to pronounce. So far as I know, he seems to have some perception of the dynamic creative intuition involved in Life, but none of the truly supra-rational intuition above. If so, his Intuition which he takes to be the sole secret of things is only a secondary manifestation of something transcendent which is itself only the “rays of the Sun”.

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Instinct and intuition as described by him [*Bergson*] are vital, but it is possible to develop a corresponding mental intuition, and that is probably what he suggests — and which depends not on thought but a sort of mental direct contact with things. This is not exactly mysticism, though it is a first step towards it.

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No, it [*Bergson's élan vital*] is not the Supramental. But Bergson's “intuition” seems to be a Life Intuition which is of course the Supramental fragmented and modified to act as a Knowledge in “Life-in-Matter”. I can't say definitively yet, but that is the impression it gave me.

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[*Bergson's élan vital*:] Not Sachchidananda but Chit-shakti in the disguise of Pranashakti. Bergson is, I believe, a vitalist (as opposed to a materialist on one side and an idealist on the other) with a strong perception of Time (in Upanishadic times they speculated whether Time was not the Brahman and some schools held that idea). So for him Brahman = Consciousness-Force = Time-Force = Life-Force. But the last two he sees vividly, while the first which is the real thing behind creation he sees very dimly.

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⁴ The six replies in this group were written to a correspondent who quoted sentences from Bergson's writings, commented on them and then asked Sri Aurobindo for his views. — Ed.

He [*Bergson*] sees Consciousness (Chit) not in its essential truth but as a creative Force = a sort of transcendent Life-Energy descending into Matter and acting there.

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I suppose *Bergson* must already know what the “mystics” say about the matter and has put his own interpretation or value upon it. So he would not at all be impressed by your suggestion.⁵ He would say, “I know all about that already.”

Metaphysics, Science and Spiritual Experience

I do not find it easy to answer the few brief and casual sentences in *X's* letter, — precisely because they are so brief and casual.⁶ Not knowing him or the turns of his mind, I do not exactly seize what is behind this passage in his letter. It would be easier to reply if I had some notion of the kind of thought or experience on which he takes his stand when he dismisses so cavalierly the statement of spiritual truth put forward in the *Arya*. As it is, I am obliged to answer to what *may* be behind his sentences and, as there is much that possibly stands behind them, the reply becomes long and elaborate and is in danger of seeming long and discursive. I could of course answer easily myself by a few brief and trenchant sentences of the same calibre, but in that kind of discussion there is no profit.

Let me say that he makes an initial mistake — quite natural for him, since he has not read the *Arya*, — when he describes the extract sent to him as a “theological fragment”. I must insist that there is no theology in the *Arya*. Nothing there is written to support or to develop any kind of religious belief or dogma or to confirm or enunciate the credo of any old or new religion. No less does he miss the mark when he describes as a scholastic distinction the substance of the passage. The teaching there is not

⁵ *The correspondent asked whether he should write to Bergson in order to explain the true meaning of intuition and how to develop it.* — Ed.

⁶ *The paragraphs that follow are from the draft of a letter that was not revised or sent in this form to the correspondent.* — Ed.

taken from books, nor, although put in philosophic language, is it based upon abstract thought or any formal logic. It expresses a fundamental spiritual experience, dynamic for the growth of the being, confirmed and enlarged and filled with detail by almost thirty years of continuous sadhana, and, as such, it cannot be seriously challenged or invalidated by mere intellectual question or reasoning, but, if at all, then only by a greater and wider spiritual experience. Moreover, it coincides (not in expression, it may be, but in substance) with the experience of hundreds of spiritual seekers in many paths and in all parts of the world since the days of the Upanishads — and of Plotinus and the Gnostics and Sufis — to the present time. It is hardly admissible then to put it aside as the thought of a tyro or beginner in spiritual knowledge making his first clumsy potshots at a solution of the crossword enigma of the universe. That description seems to show that he has missed the point of the passage altogether and that also makes it difficult to reply; for where there is no meeting point of minds, discussion is likely to be sterile.

I was a little surprised at first by this entire lack of understanding, shown still more in his cavil at the two Divines — for I had somehow got the impression that X was a Christian and the recognition of “two Divines” — the Divine Transcendent and the Divine Immanent — is, I have read, perfectly familiar to Christian ideas and to Christian experience. The words themselves in fact — transcendent and cosmic — are taken from the West. I do not know that there is anything exactly corresponding to them in the language of Indian spiritual thinking, although the experiences on which the distinction rests are quite familiar. On another side, Christianity insists not only on a double but a triple Divine. It even strikes me that this triple Godhead or Trinity is not very far off at bottom from my trinity of the individual, cosmic and transcendent Divine — as far at least as one can judge who has not himself followed the Christian discipline. Christ, whether as the human Incarnation or the Christos in men or the Godhead proceeding from the Father, seems to me to be quite my individual Divine. The Father has very much the appearance of the One who overstands and is immanent in the cosmos. And

although this is more obscure, yet if one can be guided by the indications in the Scripture, the Holy Ghost looks very much like a rather mysterious and inexpressible Transcendence and its descent very much like what I would call the descent of Light, Purity, Peace — that passeth all understanding — or Power of the supramental Spirit. In any case these Christian and Western ideas show surely that my affirmation of a double or a triple Divine is not anything new and ought not to be found startling or upsetting and I do not see why it should be treated as (in itself) obscure and unintelligible.

Again, are these or similar distinctions very positively made in the Christian, Sufi or other teachings mere theoretical abstractions, scholastic distinctions, theological cobwebs, or metaphysical puzzles? I had always supposed that they corresponded to very living, very dynamic, almost — for the paths to which they relate — indispensable experiences. No doubt, for those who follow other ways or no way at all or for those who have not yet had the illuminating and vivifying experience, they may seem at first a little difficult or unseizable. But that is true of most spiritual truth — and not of spiritual truth alone. There are many very highly intelligent and cultured people to whom a scientific explanation of even so patent and common a fact as electricity and electric light (this is a reminiscence of an article by Y. Y. in the *New Statesman and Nation*) seems equally difficult to seize by the mind or to fix either in the memory or the intelligence. And yet the distinction between positive and negative electricity, both necessary for the existence of the light, — like that of the passive and active Brahman (another scholastic distinction?) both necessary for the existence of the universe, — cannot be dismissed for that reason as something academic or scholastic, but is a very pertinent statement of things quite dynamic and real. No doubt the non-scientific man does not and perhaps need not trouble about these things and can be content to enjoy the electric light (when he is allowed to do so by the grace of the Pondicherry Municipality), without enquiring into the play of the forces behind it: but for the seeker after scientific truth or for the practical electrician it is a different matter. Now these

distinctions in the spiritual field are a parallel case; they seem theoretical or abstract only so long as experience has not made them concrete, but once experienced they become living stuff of the consciousness and, after a certain stage, even the basis of action and growth in the spiritual life.

Here I am driven to a rather lengthy digression from the main theme—for I am met by X's rather baffling appeal to Whitham's *History of Science*. What has Whitham or Science to do with spiritual truth or spiritual experience? I can only suppose that he condemns all intrusion of anything like metaphysical thought into the spiritual field—a position excessive but not altogether untenable—and even perhaps proposes to bring the scientific method and the scientific mentality into spiritual experience as the sole true way of arriving at or judging the truth of things. I should like to make my view clear as to that point, because here much confusion has been created about it, and more is possible. And the first thing I would say is that if metaphysics has no right to intervene in spiritual experience, neither has Science. There are here three different domains of knowledge and experience each with its own instrumentation, its own way of approach and seeing, suited for its own task, but not to be imposed or substituted in these other fields of knowledge,—at least unless and until they meet by some kind of supreme reconciling transmutation in something that is at the source of all knowledge. For knowledge may be essentially one, but like the one Divine, it manifests differently in different fields of its play and to abolish their distinctions is not the way to arrive at true understanding of experience.

Science deals effectively with phenomena and process and the apparent play of forces which determine the process. It cannot deal even intellectually in any adequate way with ultimate truths, that is the province of the higher, less external mind—represented up till now by metaphysics, though metaphysics is not its only possible power. If Science tries to fix metaphysical truth by forcing on this domain its own generalisations in the physical field, as people have been doing for almost the last century, it makes a mess of thought by illegitimately extended

conclusions and has in the end to retire from this usurpation as it is now beginning to retire. Its discoveries may be used by philosophy, but on the grounds proper to philosophy and not on the grounds proper to Science. The philosopher must judge the scientific conceptions of relativity or discontinuity or space-time, for instance, by his own processes and standards of evidence. So too, Science has no instrumentation or process of knowledge which can enable it to discover spiritual truth or to judge or determine the results of spiritual experience. There is a field of knowledge of process in the spiritual and the occult domain, in the discovery of a world of inner forces and their way of action and even of their objective dynamisation in the mind and life and the functioning of the body. But the mathematical exactitudes and rigid formulas of physical Science do not apply here and the mentality created by them would hamper spiritual experience.

Chapter Four

Science and Yoga

Science, Yoga and the Agnostic

I do not think anything can be said that would convince one who starts from exactly the opposite viewpoint to the spiritual, the way of looking at things of a Victorian agnostic. His points of doubt about the value — other than subjective and purely individual — of Yoga experience are that it does not aim at scientific truth and cannot be said to achieve ultimate truth because the experiences are coloured by the individuality of the seer. One might ask whether Science itself has arrived at any ultimate truth; on the contrary, ultimate truth even on the physical plane seems to recede as Science advances. Science started on the assumption that the ultimate truth must be physical and objective — and the objective Ultimate (or even less than that) would explain all subjective phenomena. Yoga proceeds on the opposite view that the ultimate Truth is spiritual and subjective and it is in that ultimate Light that we must view objective phenomena. It is the two opposite poles and the gulf is as wide as it can be.

Yoga, however, is scientific to this extent that it proceeds by subjective experiment and bases all its findings on experience; mental intuitions are admitted only as a first step and are not considered as realisation — they must be confirmed by being translated into and justified by experience. As to the value of the experience itself, it is doubted by the physical mind because it is subjective, not objective. But has the distinction much value? Is not all knowledge and experience subjective at bottom? Objective external physical things are seen very much in the same way by human beings because of the construction of the mind and senses; with another construction of mind and sense quite another account of the physical world would be given — Science itself has made that very clear. But your friend's point is that the Yoga experience is individual, coloured by the individuality of

the seer. It may be true to a certain extent of the precise form or transcription given to the experience in certain domains; but even here the difference is superficial. It is a fact that Yogic experience runs everywhere on the same lines. Certainly, there are, not one line, but many; for, admittedly, we are dealing with a many-sided Infinite to which there are and must be many ways of approach; but yet the broad lines are the same everywhere and the intuitions, experiences, phenomena are the same in ages and countries far apart from each other and systems practised quite independently from each other. The experiences of the mediaeval European bhakta or mystic are precisely the same in substance, however differing in names, forms, religious colouring etc., as those of the mediaeval Indian bhakta or mystic — yet these people were not corresponding with one another or aware of each other's experiences and results as are modern scientists from New York to Yokohama. That would seem to show that there is something there identical, universal and presumably true — however the colour of the translation may differ because of the difference of mental language.

As for ultimate Truth, I suppose both the Victorian agnostic and, let us say, the Indian Vedantin may agree that it is veiled but there. Both speak of it as the Unknowable; the only difference is that the Vedantin says it is unknowable by the mind and inexpressible by speech, but still attainable by something deeper or higher than the mental perception, while even mind can reflect and speech express the thousand aspects it presents to the mind's outward and inward experience. The Victorian agnostic would, I suppose, cancel this qualification; he would pronounce for the doubtful existence and, if existent, for the absolute unknowableness of this Unknowable.

Science and Spirituality

I do not think the two questions you put are of much importance from the viewpoint of spiritual sadhana.

The question about science and spirituality would have been of some moment some twenty years ago and it filled the minds

of men in the earlier years of the twentieth century, but it is now out of date. Science itself has come to the conclusion that it cannot, as it once hoped, determine what is the truth of things or their real nature or what is behind physical phenomena; it can only deal with the process of physical things and how they come about or on what lines men can deal with and make use of them. In other words, the field of physical science has been now definitely marked off and limited and questions about God or the ultimate reality or other metaphysical or spiritual problems are outside it. This is at least the case all over continental Europe and it is only in England and America that there is still some attempt to reason about these things on the basis of physical science. The so-called sciences which try to deal with the mind and men (psychology etc.) are so much dependent on physical science that they cannot go beyond narrow limits. If science is to turn her face towards the Divine it must be a new science not yet developed which deals directly with the forces of the Life-world and of Mind and so arrives at what is beyond Mind, but present-day science cannot do that.

From the spiritual point of view such temporary phenomena as the turn of educated Hindus towards materialism are of little importance. There have always been periods when the mind of nations, continents, cultures turned towards materialism and away from all spiritual belief. Such periods came in ancient Europe in the first century A.D., in western Europe in the nineteenth century, but they are usually of short duration. Western Europe has already lost its faith in materialism and is seeking for something else, either turning back to old religion or groping for something new. Russia and Asia are now going through the same materialistic wave. These waves come because of a certain necessity in human development — to destroy the bondage of old forms and leave a free field for new truth and new forms of truth and action in life as well as of what is behind life.

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You ask me whether you have to give up your predilection for testing before accepting and to accept everything in Yoga *a priori*

— and by testing you mean testing by the ordinary reason. The only answer I can give to that is that the experiences of Yoga belong to an inner domain and go according to a law of their own, have their own method of perception, criteria and all the rest of it which are neither those of the domain of the physical senses nor of the domain of rational or scientific enquiry. Just as scientific enquiry passes beyond that of the physical senses and enters the domain of the infinite and the infinitesimal about which the senses can say nothing and test nothing — for one cannot see or touch an electron or know by the evidence of the sense-mind whether it exists or not or decide by that evidence whether the earth really turns round the sun and not rather the sun round the earth as our senses and all our physical experience daily tell us — so the spiritual search passes beyond the domain of scientific or rational enquiry and it is impossible by the aid of the ordinary positive reason to test the data of spiritual experience and decide whether those things exist or not or what is their law and nature. As in science, so here you have to accumulate experience on experience following faithfully the methods laid down by the Guru or by the systems of the past, you have to develop an intuitive discrimination which compares the experiences, see what they mean, how far and in what field each is valid, what is the place of each in the whole, how it can be reconciled or related with others that at first sight seem to contradict it, etc. etc. until you can move with a secure knowledge in the vast field of spiritual phenomena. That is the only way to test spiritual experience. I have myself tried the other method and found it absolutely incapable and inapplicable. On the other hand if you are not prepared to go through all that yourself — as few can do except those of extraordinary spiritual stature — you have to accept the leading of a Master, as in science you accept a teacher instead of going through the whole field of science and its experimentation all by yourself — at least until you have accumulated sufficient experience and knowledge. If that is accepting things *a priori*, well, you have to accept *a priori*. For I am unable to see by what valid tests you propose to make the ordinary reason the judge of what is beyond it.

You quote the sayings of Vivekananda and Kobiraj Gopinath. Is this Kobiraj the disciple of the Jewel Sannyasi or is he another? In any case, I would like to know before assigning a value to these utterances what they actually did for the testing of their spiritual perceptions and experiences. How did Vivekananda test the value of his spiritual experiences — some of them not more credible to the ordinary mind than the translation through the air of Bijoy Goswami's wife to Lake Manas or of Bijoy Goswami himself by a similar method to Benares? I know nothing of Kobiraj Gopinath, but what were his tests and how did he apply them? What were his methods? his criteria? It seems to me that no ordinary mind could accept the apparition of Buddha out of a wall or the half hour's talk with Hayagriva as valid facts by any kind of testing. It would either have to accept them *a priori* or on the sole evidence of Vivekananda which comes to the same thing or to reject them *a priori* as hallucinations or mere mental images accompanied in one case by an auditive hallucination. I fail to see how it could "test" them. Or how was I to test by the ordinary mind my experience of Nirvana? To what conclusion could I come about it by the aid of the ordinary positive reason? How could I test its validity? I am at a loss to imagine. I did the only thing I could — to accept it as a strong and valid truth of experience, let it have its full play and produce its full experiential consequences until I had sufficient Yogic knowledge to put it in its place. Finally, how without inner knowledge or experience can you or anyone else test the inner knowledge and experience of others?

I have often said that discrimination is not only perfectly admissible but indispensable in spiritual experience. But it must be a discrimination founded on knowledge, not a reasoning founded on ignorance. Otherwise you tie up your mind and hamper experience by preconceived ideas which are as much *a priori* as any acceptance of a spiritual truth or experience can be. Your idea that surrender can only come by love is a point in instance. It is perfectly true in Yogic experience that surrender by true love which means psychic and spiritual love is the most powerful, simple and effective of all, but one cannot, putting

that forward as a dictum arrived at by the ordinary reason, shut up the whole of possible experience of true surrender into that formula or announce on its strength that one must wait till one loves perfectly before one can surrender. Yogic experience shows that surrender can also be made by the mind and will, a clear and sincere mind seeing the necessity of surrender and a clear and sincere will enforcing it on the recalcitrant members. Also experience shows that not only can surrender come by love, but love also can come by surrender or grow with it from an imperfect to a perfect love. One starts by an intense idea and will to know or reach the Divine and surrenders more and more one's ordinary personal ideas, desires, attachments, urges to action or habits of action so that the Divine may take up everything. Surrender means that, to give up our little mind and its mental ideas and preferences into a divine Light and a greater knowledge, our petty personal troubled blind stumbling will into a great calm tranquil luminous Will and Force, our little restless tormented feelings into a wide intense divine Love and Ananda, our small suffering personality into the one Person of which it is an obscure outcome. If one insists on one's own ideas and reasonings, the greater Light and Knowledge cannot come or else is marred and obstructed in the coming at every step by a lower interference; if one insists on one's own desires and fancies, that great luminous Will and Force cannot act in its own true power — for you ask it to be the servant of your desires; if one refuses to give up one's petty ways of feeling, eternal Love and supreme Ananda cannot descend or is mixed and is spilt from the effervescing crude emotional vessel. No amount of ordinary reasoning can get rid of that necessity of surmounting the lower in order that the higher may be there.

Science and the Supernormal

Scientific laws only give a schematic account of material processes of Nature — as a valid scheme they can be used for reproducing or extending at will a material process, but obviously they cannot give an account of the thing itself. Water

for instance is not merely so much oxygen and hydrogen put together—the combination is simply a process or device for enabling the materialisation of a new thing called water; what that new thing really is is quite another matter. In fact there are different planes of substance, gross, subtle and more subtle going back to what is called causal (*kāraṇa*) substance. What is more gross can be reduced to the subtle state and the subtle brought into the gross state; that accounts for dematerialisation and materialisation and rematerialisation. These are occult processes and are vulgarly regarded as magic. Ordinarily the magician knows nothing of the why and wherefore of what he is doing, he has simply learned the formula or process or else controls elemental beings of the subtler states (planes or worlds) who do the thing for him. The Tibetans indulge widely in occult processes; if you see the books of Madame David-Neel who has lived in Tibet you will get an idea of their expertness in these things. But also the Tibetan Lamas know something of the laws of occult (mental and vital) energy and how it can be made to act on physical things. That is something which goes beyond mere magic. The direct power of mind-force or life-force upon Matter can be extended to an almost illimitable degree. It must be remembered that Energy is fundamentally one in all the planes, only taking more and more dense forms, so there is nothing *a priori* impossible in mind-energy or life-energy acting directly on material energy and substance; if they do they can make a material object do things or rather can do things with a material object which would be to that object in its ordinary poise or “law” unhabitual and therefore apparently impossible.

I do not see how cosmic rays can explain the origination of Matter; it is like Sir Oliver Lodge’s explanation of life on earth that it comes from another planet; it only pushes the problem one step farther back—for how do the cosmic rays come into existence? But it is a fact that Agni is the basis of forms as the Sankhya pointed out long ago, i.e. the fiery principle in its three powers radiant, electric and gaseous (the Vedic trinity of Agni) is the agent in producing liquid and solid forms of what is called matter.

Obviously a layman can't do these things, unless he has a native "psychic" (that is, occult) faculty and even then he will have to learn the law of the thing before he can use it at will. It is always possible to use spiritual force or mind-power or will-power or a certain kind of vital energy to produce effects in men, things and happenings; but knowledge and much practice is needed before this possibility ceases to be occasional and haphazard and can be used quite consciously, at will or to perfection. Even then to have "a control over the whole material world" is too big a proposition; a local and partial control is more possible or, more widely, certain kinds of control over matter.

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The desire [*of occultists and spiritists*] to satisfy the physical scientists is absurd and illogical. The physical scientists have their own field with its own instruments and standards. To apply the same tests to phenomena of a different kind is as foolish as to apply physical tests to spiritual truth. One can't dissect God or see the soul under a microscope. So also the subjection of disembodied spirits or even of psycho-physical phenomena to tests and standards valid only for material phenomena is a most false and unsatisfactory method. Moreover the physical scientist is for the most part resolved not to admit what cannot be neatly packed and labelled and docketed in his own system and its formulas. Dr. Jules Romain, himself a scientist as well as a great writer, makes experiments to prove that men can see and read with the eyes blindfolded, the scientists refuse even to admit or record the results. Khuda Baksh comes along and proves it patently, indubitably, under all legitimate tests, the scientists are quite unwilling to cede and record the fact even though his results are undeniable. He walks on fire unhurt and disproves all hitherto suggested explanations, — they simply cast about for another and still more silly explanation! What is the use of trying to convince people who are determined not to believe?

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These theosophic and other modern attempts to square physical

Science with Yoga (Yogis formerly did not bother to differentiate spiritual functions from grey matter and white matter) make me always suspicious. It looks like manufacture of the mind, pseudo-science.

Science and Superstition

It is quite true that the word “superstition” has been habitually used as a convenient club to beat down any belief that does not agree with the ideas of the materialistic reason, that is to say, of the physical mind dealing with the apparent law of physical process and seeing no farther. It has also been used to dismiss ideas and beliefs not in agreement with one’s own idea of what is the rational norm of supraphysical truths as well. For many ages man cherished beliefs that implied a force behind which acted on principles unknown to the physical mind and beyond the witness of the outward reason and the senses. Science came in with a method of knowledge which extended the evidence of this outer field of consciousness and thought that by this method all existence would become explicable. It swept away at once without examination all the ancient beliefs as so many “superstitions” — true, half true or false, all went into the dust-bin in one impartial sweep, because they did not rely on the method of physical Science and lay outside its data or were or seemed incompatible with its standpoint. Even in the field of supraphysical experience only so much was admitted as could give a mentally rational explanation of itself according to a certain range of ideas — all the rest, everything that seemed to demand an occult, mystic or below-the-surface origin to explain it, was put aside as so much superstition. Popular beliefs that were the fruit sometimes of imagination but sometimes also of a traditional empirical knowledge or of a right instinct shared naturally the same fate. That all this was a hasty and illegitimate operation, itself based on the “superstition” of the all-sufficiency of the new method which really applies only to a limited field, is now becoming more and more evident. I agree with you that the word superstition is one which should be used either not at

all or with great caution. It is evidently an anachronism to apply it to beliefs not accepted by the form of religion one happens oneself to follow or favour.

The growing reversal of opinion with regard to many things that were then condemned but are now coming into favour once more, is very striking. In addition to the instances you quote a hundred others might be added. One does not quite know why a belief in graphology should be condemned as irrational or superstitious; it seems to me quite rational to believe that a man's handwriting is the result of or consistent with his temperament and nature and, if so, it may very well prove on examination to be an index of character. It is now a known fact that each man is an individual by himself with his own peculiar formation different from others and made by minute variations in the general human plan, — this is true of small physical characteristics, it is evidently equally true of psychological characteristics; it is not unreasonable to suppose a correlation between the two. On that basis cheiromancy too may very well have a truth in it, for it is a known fact that the lines in an individual hand are different from the lines in others and that this as well as differences of physiognomy may carry in it psychological indications is not impossible. The difficulty for minds trained under rationalistic influences becomes greater when these lines or the data of astrology are interpreted as signs of destiny, because modern rationalism resolutely refused to admit that the future was determined or could be determinable. But this looks more and more like one of the "superstitions" of the modern mind, a belief curiously contradictory of the fundamental notions of Science. For Science has believed, at least until yesterday, that everything is determined in Nature and it attempts to find the law of that determination and to predict future physical happenings on that basis. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that there are unseen connections determining human events in the world and that future events may therefore be predictable. Whether it can be done on the lines of astrology or cheiromancy is a matter for enquiry and one does not get any farther by dismissing the possibility with a summary denial. The case for astrology is fairly

strong; a case seems to exist for cheiromancy also.

On the other hand it is not safe to go too hastily in the other direction. There is the opposite tendency to believe everything in these fields and not keep one's eyes open to the element of limitation or error in these difficult branches of knowledge — it was this excess of belief that helped to discredit them, because their errors were patent. It does not seem to me established that the stars determine the future — though that is possible, but it does look as if they indicate it — or rather some certitudes and many potentialities of the future. Even the astrologers admit that there is another element of determination in man himself which limits the field of astrological prediction and may even alter many of its ascertained results. There is a very tangled and difficult complex of forces making up any determination of things in the world and when we have disentangled one thread of the skein and follow it we may get many striking results, but we cannot rely on it as the one wholly reliable clue. The mind's methods are too rigid and conveniently simple to unravel the true or whole truth whether of the Reality or of its separate phenomena.

I would accept your statement about the possibility of knowing much about a man from an observation of a small part of his being, physical or psychological, but I think it is to go too far to say that one can reconstruct a whole man from one minute particle of a hair. I should say from my knowledge of the complexity and multiplicity of elements in the human being that such a procedure would be hazardous and would leave a large part of the Unknown overshadowing the excessive certitude of this inferential structure.

I suppose we cannot go so far as to deny that there is such a thing as superstition — a fixed blind belief without any ground in something that is quite unsound and does not hang together. The human mind readily claps on such beliefs to things which can be or are in themselves true, and this is a mixture which very badly confuses the search for knowledge. But precisely because of that mixture, because somewhere behind the superstition or not far off from it there is very usually some real truth, one ought to be cautious in using the word or sweeping away with it as a

convenient broom the true, the partly true and the unfounded together and claiming that the bare ground left is the only truth of the matter.

*

When I wrote that sentence [*about a "fixed blind belief"*] I was not thinking really of religious beliefs, but of common popular ideas and beliefs. Your feeling about the matter, in any case, is quite sound. One can and ought to believe and follow one's own path without condemning or looking down on others for having beliefs different from those one thinks or sees to be the best or the largest in truth. The spiritual field is many-sided and full of complexities and there is room for an immense variety of experiences. Besides, all mental egoism, — and spiritual egoism — has to be surmounted and this sense of superiority should therefore not be cherished.

P.S. A sincere, whole-hearted and one-pointed following of this Yoga should lead to a level where these rigid mental divisions do not exist for they are mental walls put round one part of Truth and Knowledge so as to cut it off from the rest, but this view from above the mind is comprehensive and everything falls into its place in the whole.

The Limitations of Science

I think what you write is unexceptionable as a statement of the necessary limitations of physical Science to its own field. It is only in the occult sciences that one can find the necessary connection or bridge between the spiritual and material which X is demanding from the physical sciences. X's attitude is a sort of reaction against the old error of the materialism which used science to discredit not only the mistakes of religion, but all spiritual truth — but that phase is now over and one can be content with recording its passing without trying to reverse the process by using science to support or establish spiritual truth — spiritual truth can exist in itself and needs no such buttressing from outside.

*

I think *X* bases his ideas on the attempt of Jeans, Eddington and other English scientists to thrust metaphysical conclusions into scientific facts; it is necessary that he should appreciate fully the objections of more austere scientific minds to such a mixture. Moreover, spiritual seeking has its own accumulated knowledge which does not depend in the least on the theories or discoveries of science in the purely physical sphere. *X*'s attempt like that of Jeans and others is a reaction against the illegitimate attempts of some scientific minds in the nineteenth century and of many others who took advantage of the march of scientific discovery to discredit or abolish as far as possible the religious spirit and to discredit also metaphysics as a cloudy verbiage, exalting science as the only clue to the truth of the universe. But I think that attitude is now dead or moribund; the scientists recognise, as you point out, the limits of their sphere. I may observe that the conflict between religion and science never arose in India (until the days of European education) because religion did not interfere with scientific discovery and scientists did not question religious or spiritual truth because the two things were kept on separate but not opposing lines.

*

The defect in what *X* writes about Science seems to be that he is insisting vehemently on the idea that Science is still materialistic or at least that scientists, Jeans and Eddington excepted, are still fundamentally materialists. This is not the fact. Most continental scientists have now renounced the idea that Science can explain the fundamentals of existence. They hold that Science is only concerned with process and not with fundamentals. They declare that it is not the business of Science nor is it within its means to decide anything about the great questions which concern philosophy and religion. This is the enormous change which the latest developments of Science have brought about. Science itself nowadays is neither materialistic nor idealistic. The rock on which materialism was built and which in the 19th century seemed unshakeable has now been shattered. Materialism has now become a philosophical speculation just like any other

theory; it cannot claim to found itself on a sort of infallible Biblical authority, based on the facts and conclusions of Science. This change can be felt by one like myself who grew up in the heyday of absolute rule of scientific materialism in the 19th century. The way which had been almost entirely barred except by rebellion now lies wide open to spiritual truths, spiritual ideas, spiritual experiences. That is the real revolution. Mentalism is only a halfway house but mentalism and vitalism are now perfectly possible as hypotheses based on the facts of existence, scientific facts as well as any others. The facts of Science do not compel anyone to take any particular philosophical direction. They are now neutral and can even be used on one side or another though most scientists do not consider such a use as admissible. Nobody here ever said that the new discoveries of physics supported the ideas of religion or churches; they merely contended that Science had lost its old materialistic dogmatism and moved away by a revolutionary change from its old moorings.

It is this change which I expected and prophesied in my poems in the first *Ahana* volume, "A Vision of Science" and "In the Moonlight".¹

*

Psychologists of course having to deal with mental movements more easily recognise that there can be no real equation between them and physiological processes and at the most mind and body react on each other as is inevitable since they are lodging together. But even a great physical scientist like Huxley recognised that mind was something quite different from matter and could not possibly be explained in the terms of matter. Only since then physical Science became very arrogant and presumptuous and tried to subject everything to itself and its processes. Now in theory it has begun to recognise its limitations in a general way, but the old mentality is still too habitual in most scientists to shake off yet.

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¹ These two poems are currently published in *Collected Poems, volume 2 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO*, pp. 204-6 and 237-44. — Ed.

The minds of these people [*scientists*] are too much accustomed to deal with physical things and things measurable by instruments and figures to be much good for any other provinces. Einstein's views outside his domain are crude and childish, a sort of unsubstantial commonplace idealism without grasp on realities. As a man can be a great scholar and yet simple and foolish, so a man can be a great scientist but his mind and ideas negligible in other things.

*

There is nothing superior in the scientist's brain except a faculty of observing and analysing and drawing conclusions. It is the intellectual plane.

*

The scientific mind refuses to leave anything unclassified. Has it not classified the Divine also?

*

How does Sir James Jeans or any other scientist know that it was by a "mere accident" that life came into existence or that there is no life anywhere else in the universe or that life elsewhere must either be exactly the same as life here under the same conditions or not existent at all? These are mere mental speculations without any conclusiveness in them. Life can be an accident only if the whole world also is an accident — a thing created by Chance and governed by Chance. It is not worth while to waste time on this kind of speculation, for it is only the bubble of a moment.

The material universe is only the façade of an immense building which has other structures behind it and it is only if one knows the whole that one can have some knowledge of the truth of the material universe. There are vital, mental and spiritual ranges behind which give the material its significance. If the earth is the only field of the spiritual evolution in Matter — (assuming that) — then it must be as part of the total design. The idea that all the rest must be a waste is a human idea which

would not trouble the vast Cosmic Spirit — whose consciousness and life are everywhere, in the slime and dust as much as in the human intelligence. But this is a speculative question which is quite alien to our practical purpose. For us it is the development of the spiritual consciousness in the human body that matters.

In this development there are stages — the whole truth cannot be known till all are passed and the final stage is there. The stage in which you are is one in which the Self is beginning to be realised, the Self free from all embodiment and not depending on embodiment for its perpetual existence. It is therefore natural that you should feel the embodiment to be something quite subordinate and like the earth-life of Jeans almost accidental. It is because of this stage that the Mayavadins, taking it for final, thought the world to be an illusion. But this is only a stage of the journey. Beyond this Self which is static, separate, formless, there is a greater consciousness in which the Silence and the Cosmic Activity are united but in another knowledge than the walled-in ignorance of the embodied human being. This Self is only one aspect of the Divine Reality. It is when one gets to that greater Consciousness that cosmic existence and form and life and mind no longer appear to be an accident but find their significance. Even there there are two stages, the overmental and the supramental, and it is not till one gets to the last that the full truth of existence can become entirely real to the consciousness. Observe what you experience and know that it has its value and is indispensable as a stage, but do not take the experience as the final knowledge.

Physics and Metaphysics

The difficulty is that you are a non-scientist trying to impose your ideas on the most difficult because most material field of science — physics. It is only if you were a scientist yourself basing your ideas on universally acknowledged scientific facts or else your own discoveries — though even then with much difficulty — that you could get a hearing or your opinion have any weight. Otherwise you open yourself to the accusation of pronouncing in

a field where you have no authority, just as the scientist himself does when he pronounces on the strength of his discoveries that there is no God. When the scientist says that “scientifically speaking God is a hypothesis which is no longer necessary” he is talking arrant nonsense — for the existence of God is not and cannot be and never was a scientific hypothesis or problem at all, it is and always has been a spiritual or a metaphysical problem. You cannot speak scientifically about it at all either pro or con. The metaphysician or the spiritual seeker has a right to point out that it is nonsense; but if you lay down the law to the scientist in the field of science, you run the risk of having the same objection turned against you.

As to the unity of all knowledge, that is a thing *in posse*, not yet *in esse*. The mechanical method of knowledge leads to certain results, the higher method leads to certain others, and they at many points fundamentally disagree. How is the difference to be bridged — for each seems valid in its own field: it is a problem to be solved, but you cannot solve it in the way you propose. Least of all in the field of physics. In psychology one can say that the mechanical or physiological approach takes hold of the thing by the blind end and is the least fruitful of all — for psychology is not primarily a thing of mechanism and measure, it opens to a vast field beyond the physical instrumentalities of the body consciousness. In biology one can get a glimpse of something beyond mechanism, because there is from the beginning a stir of consciousness progressing and organising itself more and more for self-expression. But in physics you are in the very domain of the mechanical law where process is everything and the driving consciousness has chosen to conceal itself with the greatest thoroughness — so that, “scientifically speaking”, it does not exist there. One can discover it there only by occultism and Yoga, but the methods of occult science and of Yoga are not measurable or followable by the means of physical science — so the gulf remains still in existence. It may be bridged one day, but the physicist is not likely to be the bridge builder, so it is no use asking him to try what is beyond his province.

The Isha Upanishad passage² is of course a much larger statement of the nature of universal existence than the Einstein theory which is confined to the physical universe. You can deduce too a much larger law of relativity from the statement in the verse. What it means from this point of view — for it contains much more in it — is that the absolute Reality exists but it is immovable and always the same, the universal movement is a motion of consciousness in this Reality of which only the Transcendent itself can seize the truth, which is self-evident to It, while the apprehension of it by the Gods (the mind, senses etc.) must necessarily be imperfect and relative since they can try to follow but none can really overtake (apprehend or seize) that Truth, each being limited by its own view-point,³ lesser instrumentality or capacity of consciousness etc. This is the familiar attitude of the Indian or at least the Vedantic mind which held that our knowledge, perception and experience of things in the world and of the world itself must be *vyāvahārika*, relative, practical or pragmatic only, — so declared Shankara, — it is in fact an illusory knowledge, the real Truth of things lying beyond our mental and sensory consciousness. Einstein's relativity is a scientific, not a metaphysical statement. The form and field of it are different — but, I suppose, if one goes back from it and beyond it to its essential significance, the real reason for its being so, one can connect it with the Vedantic conclusion. But to justify that to the intellect, you would have to go through a whole process to show how the connection comes — it does not self-evidently follow.

As for Jeans, many would say that his conclusions are not at all legitimate. Einstein's law is a scientific generalisation based upon certain relations proper to the domain of physics and, if valid, valid there in the limits of that domain, or, if you like, in the general domain of scientific observation and measurement of physical processes and motions; but how can you transform

² "One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run." Isha Upanishad, verse 4. Sri Aurobindo's translation. See Isha Upanishad, volume 17 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 6.

³ The Gods besides are in and subject to Space and Time, part of the motion in Space and Time, not superior to it.

that at once into a metaphysical generalisation? It is a jump over a considerable gulf — or a forceful transformation of one thing into another, of a limited physical result into an unlimited all-embracing formula. I don't quite know what Einstein's law really amounts to, but does it amount to more than this that our scientific measurements of time and other things are, in the conditions under which they have to be made, relative because subject to the unavoidable drawback of these conditions? What metaphysically follows from that — if anything at all does follow — it is for the metaphysicians, not the scientists to determine. The Vedantic position was that the Mind itself (as well as the senses) is a limited power making its own representations, constructions, formations and imposing them on the Reality. That is a much bigger and more intricate affair shooting down into the very roots of our existence. I think myself there are many positions taken by modern Science which tend to be helpful to that view — though in the nature of things they cannot be sufficient to prove it.

I state the objections only; I myself see certain fundamental truths underlying all the domains and the one Reality everywhere. But there is a great difference in the instruments used and the ways of research followed by the seekers in these different ways (the physical, the occult and the spiritual) and for the intellect at least the bridge between them has still to be built. One can point out analogies but it can be maintained very well that Science cannot be used for yielding or buttressing results of spiritual knowledge. The other side can be maintained also and it is best that both should be stated — so this is not meant to discourage your thesis.

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The article [*on metaphysics and science*] reads as if it had been written by a professor rather than a philosopher. What you speak of⁴ is, I suppose, a survival of the nineteenth-century scientific contempt for metaphysics; all thinking must be based on

⁴ *The correspondent said that the author of the article assumed that metaphysics is "one among the experimental sciences and has a darkened séance room for its laboratory".*
— Ed.

scientific *facts* and the generalisations of science, often so faulty and ephemeral, must be made the basis for any sound metaphysical thinking. That is to make philosophy the handmaid of science, metaphysics the camp-follower of physics and to deny her her sovereign rights in her own city. It ignores the fact that the philosopher has his own domain and his own instruments; he may use scientific discoveries as material just as he may use any other facts of existence, but whatever generalisations science offers he must judge by his own standards — whether they are valid for transference to the metaphysical plane and, if so, how far. Still in the heyday of physical science before it discovered its own limitations and the shakiness of its scheme of things floating precariously in a huge infinity or boundless Finite of the Unknown, there was perhaps some excuse for such an attitude. But spiritualism glorified under the name of psychical research? That is not a science; it is a mass of obscure and ambiguous documents from which you can draw only a few meagre and doubtful generalisations. Moreover, so far as it belongs to the occult, it touches only the inferior regions of the occult — what we would call the lowest vital worlds — where there is as much falsehood and fake and confused error as upon the earth and even more. What is a philosopher to do with all that obscure and troubled matter? I do not catch the point of many of his remarks. Why should a prediction of a future event alter our conception — at least any philosophic conception — of Time? It can alter one's ideas of the relation of events to each other or of the working out of forces or of the possibilities of consciousness, but Time remains the same as before.

The dream⁵ is, of course, the rendering of an attempt at

⁵ *A dream in which the correspondent had a long-distance telephone conversation. He commented: "Is there not something very symbolic about the emergence of telephony and cinematography just at an epoch when human behaviour and relationship is breaking down? Owing to falsehood and callousness and self-centred indifference to others, each person is to every other more and more a meaningless shadow and a deceptive voice." He also spoke about the decline of nobility and tenderness in art: "I fail to see any further need for human beings either as creators or enjoyers of such 'art'; perhaps in an Asuric civilisation, men are anyhow superfluous and only 'incarnated Asuras' are required?" — Ed.*

communication on the subtle plane. As for the telephone and cinema, there is something of what you say, but it seems to me that these and other modern things could have taken on a different character if they had been accepted and used in a different spirit. Mankind was not ready for these discoveries, in the spiritual sense, nor even, if the present confusions are a sign, intellectually ready. The aesthetic downfall is perhaps due to other causes, a disappointed idealism in its recoil generating its opposite, a dry and cynical intellectualism which refuses to be duped by the ideal, the romantic or the emotional or anything that is higher than the reason walking by the light of the senses. The Asuras of the past were after all often rather big beings; the trouble about the present ones is that they are not really Asuras, but beings of the lower vital world, violent, brutal and ignoble, but above all narrow-minded, ignorant and obscure. But this kind of cynical narrow intellectualism that is rampant now, does not last — it prepares its own end by increasing dryness — men begin to feel the need of new springs of life.

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I am afraid I have lost all interest in these speculations [*about subjectivism in modern physics*]; things are getting too serious for me to waste time on these inconclusive intellectualities. I do not at all mind your driving your point triumphantly home and replacing a dogmatism from materialistic Science on its throne of half a century ago from which it could victoriously ban all thought surpassing its own narrow bounds as mere wordy metaphysics and mysticism and moonshine. Obviously, if material energies alone can exist in the material world, there can be no possibility of a life divine on the earth. A mere metaphysical “sleight of mind”, as one might call it, could not justify it against the objections of scientific negation and concrete common sense. I had thought that even many scientific minds on the Continent had come to admit that Science could no longer claim to decide what was the reality of things, that it had no means of deciding it and could only discover and describe the how and process of the operations of material Force in the physical front of things.

That left the field open to higher thought and speculation, spiritual experience and even to mysticism, occultism and all those greater things which almost everybody had come to disbelieve as impossible nonsense. That was the condition of things when I was in England. If that is to return or if Russia and her dialectical materialism are to lead the world, well, fate must be obeyed and life divine must remain content to wait perhaps for another millennium. But I do not like the idea of one of our periodicals⁶ being the arena for a wrestle of that kind. That is all. I am writing under the impression of your earlier article on this subject, as I have not gone carefully through the later ones; I dare say these later ones may be entirely convincing and I would find after reading them that my own position was wrong and that only an obstinate mystic could still believe in such a conquest of Matter by the Spirit as I had dared to think possible. But I am just such an obstinate mystic; so, if I allowed your exposition of the matter to be published in one of our own periodicals, I would be under the obligation of returning to the subject in which I have lost interest and therefore the inclination to write, so as to reestablish my position and would have to combat the claim of materialistic Science to pronounce anything on these matters on which it has no means of enquiry nor any possibility of arriving at a valid decision. Perhaps I would have practically to rewrite *The Life Divine* as an answer to the victorious “negation of the materialist”! This is the only explanation which I can give, apart from sheer want of time to tackle the subject, for my long and disappointing silence.

Space and Time

You are reasoning on the analogy of our own very cabined and limited sense-consciousness and its rather clumsy relations with the happenings in material space. What is space after all but an extension of conscious being in which Consciousness-Force builds its own surroundings? In the subtle physical plane there

⁶ Mother India, a journal published in Mumbai at that time. — Ed.

are not one, but many layers of consciousness and each moves in its own being, that is to say, in its own space. I have said that each subtle plane is a conglomeration or series of worlds. Each space may at any point meet, penetrate or coincide with another; accordingly at one point of meeting or coincidence there might be several subtle objects occupying what we might rather arbitrarily call the same space, and yet they may not be in any actual relation with each other. If there is a relation created, it is the multiple consciousness of the seer in which the meeting-place becomes apparent that creates it.

On the other hand, there may be a relation between objects in different regions of space correlated to each other as in the case of the gross physical object and its subtle counterpart. There you can more easily reason of relations between one space and another.

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The objection⁷ is founded on human three-dimensional ideas of Space and division in spaces, which are again founded upon the limited nature of the human senses. To some beings space is one-dimensional, to others two-dimensional, to others three-dimensional — but there are other dimensions also. It is well recognised in metaphysics that the Infinite can be in a point and not only in extension of space — just as there is an eternity of extension in Time but also an Eternity which is independent of Time so that it can be felt in the moment — one has not to think of millions and millions of years in order to realise it. So too the rigid distinction of One against Many, a One that cannot be many or of an All that is made up by addition and not self-existent are crude mental notions of the outer finite mind that cannot be applied to the Infinite. If the All were of this material and unspiritual character, tied down to a primary arithmetic and geometry, the realisation of the universe in oneself, of the

⁷ *The correspondent asked: "How can the Divine, who is All or Omnipresent, incarnate in the small space of a human body? I believe it is because this seems impossible to the mind that the Arya Samajists do not accept the possibility of incarnation."* — Ed.

all in each and each in all, of the universe in the Bindu would be impossible. Your Arya Samajists are evidently innocent of the elements of metaphysical thinking or they would not make such objections.

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Time and Space are not limited, they are infinite — they are the terms of an extension of consciousness in which things take place or are arranged in a certain relation, succession, order. There are again different orders of Time and Space; that too depends on the consciousness. The Eternal is extended in Time and Space, but he is also beyond all Time and Space. Timelessness and Time are two terms of the eternal existence. The Spaceless Eternal is not one indivisible infinity of Space, there is in it no near or far, no here or there — the Timeless Eternal is not measurable by years or hours or aeons, the experience of it has been described as the eternal moment. But for the mind this state cannot be described except by negatives, — one has to go beyond and to realise it.

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Time is to the Intuition an extension of consciousness in which happenings are arranged and has not the same rigidity that it has to the intellect.

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The idea of time may be a mental construction, but the sense of it may not be. Savages have the idea of time but it is in connection with the sun and stars and the lapse of day and night and the seasons, not perhaps a separate construction — but one is not sure for they have metaphysical conceptions of their own. Animals are not, I think, so limited in their consciousness — they have not only sensations, but an acute memory of certain things, observation, clear associations, an intelligence that plans, a very accurate sense of place and memory of place, an initial power of reasoning (not reflectively as the human mind does, but practically as any vital mind can do). I have seen a young

kitten observing, arriving at a correct conclusion, proceeding to do what was necessary for her purpose, a necessity imposed by that conclusion, just as a human child might do. We cannot therefore say that animals have no ideas. No clear measure of yesterday and tomorrow, perhaps, but the perception of past and future needs is there and of right times and seasons also — all vital, practical, not reflectively mental in the human way.

But it is true that when one gets beyond the mind, this sense of time changes into timelessness, into the eternal present.

*

No doubt, the physical regulated time consciousness belongs mainly to the waking state but it can be subliminal as well as of the mental waking consciousness. E.g. sometimes one wills at night to get up at a fixed time in the morning and wakes exactly at that hour and minute — it is something in the subliminal being that recorded the time and vigilantly executed it.

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When one begins to feel the inner being and live in it (the result of the experience of peace and silence) the ordinary time sense disappears or becomes purely external.

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The present is a convention or only a constant movement out of the past into the future.

Matter

As for what you write about your experience and your ideas, it looks as if it were simply the old thoughts and movements rising, as they often do, to interfere with the straight course of the sadhana. Mental realisations and ideas of this kind are at best only half-truths and not always even that; once one has taken up a sadhana that goes beyond the mind, it is a mistake to give them too much importance. They can easily become by misapplication a fruitful ground for error.

If you examine the ideas that have come to you, you will see that they are quite inadequate. For example:

1. Matter is *jaḍa* only in appearance. As even modern Science admits, Matter is only energy in action, and, as we know in India, energy is force of consciousness in action.

2. Prakriti in the material world seems to be *jaḍa*, but this too is only an appearance. Prakriti is in reality the conscious power of the Spirit.

3. A bringing down of the Spirit into Matter cannot lead to a *laya* in *jaḍa prakṛti*. A descent of the Spirit could only mean a descent of light, consciousness and power, not a growth of unconsciousness and inertia which is what is meant by the *jaḍa laya*.

4. The Spirit is there already in Matter as everywhere else; it is only a surface apparent unconsciousness or involved consciousness which veils its presence. What we have to do is to awake Matter to the spiritual consciousness concealed in it.

5. What we aim at bringing down into the material world is the supramental consciousness, light and energy, because it is this alone that can truly transform it.

If there is at any time a growth of unconsciousness and inertia, it is because of the resistance of the ordinary nature to the spiritual change. But this is usually raised up in order to be dealt with and eliminated. If it is allowed to remain concealed and not raised up, the difficulty will never be grappled with and no real transformation will take place.

*

If there were no creative power in the material energy, there would be no material universe. Matter is not unconscious or without dynamism—only it is an involved Force and Consciousness that work in it. It is what the psychologists call the Inconscient from which all comes—but it is not really Inconscient.

Animals

The satisfaction of their emotions and desires and their bodily needs [*is what animals desire*] — mostly. Animals are predominantly the vital creation on earth — the mind in them also is a vital mind — they act according to the push of the forces and have a vital but not a mental will.

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Even the animal is more in touch with a certain harmony in things than man. Man's only superiority is a more complex consciousness and capacity (but terribly perverted and twisted by misuse of Mind) and the ability (not much used as yet) of reaching towards higher things.

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Human life and mind are neither in tune with Nature like the animals nor with Spirit — it [*human nature*] is disturbed, incoherent, conflicting with itself, without harmony and balance. We can then regard it as diseased, if not itself a disease.

*

Yes, it is a more simple and honest consciousness — that of the animal. Of course it expects something, but even if it does not get, the affection remains. Many animals, even if ill-treated, do not lose their love which means a remarkable psychic development in the vital.

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The emotional being of animals is often much more psychic than that of men who can be very insensitive. There were recently pictures of the tame tigress kept by a family and afterwards given by them to a Zoo. The look of sorrow on the face of the tigress in her cage at once gentle and tragically poignant is so intense as to be heartbreaking.

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A very strong time sense [*in animals*] — at least some of them — but usually it works only in connection with strong desires or habits, e.g. food.

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Cats have a very sure vital perception.

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Most animals do not usually attack unless they are menaced or frightened or somehow made angry — and they can feel the atmosphere of people.

*

There are people who can move the ears without doing Yoga at all or calling upon the resources of the Kundalini. I suppose it is simply a movement that man has lost through disuse, not having had like the animals to prick up his ear at every moment to listen to sounds that might indicate danger. I suppose he could revive the faculty if it were of any use.

*

Yes — to watch the animals with the right perception of their consciousness helps to get out of the human mental limitations and see the Cosmic Consciousness on earth individualising itself in all forms — plant, animal, man and growing towards what is beyond man.

Plants

It is true that the plant world — even the animals if one takes them the right way — can be much better than human beings. It is the mental distortion that makes men worse.

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

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Form, colour, scent + something else which is indefinable [*constitute the beauty of flowers*].

*

The rose is not the only beautiful flower, there are hundreds of others; most flowers are beautiful. The rose is among the first of flowers because of the richness of its colour, the intensity of sweetness of its scent and the grace and magnificence of its form.

Life on Other Planets

As for the other question, there is no reason to suppose that there is not life in any part of the material cosmic system except earth. No doubt the suns and nebulae cannot harbour material life because there is not the necessary basis, but wherever there is a formed world, Life can exist. It used formerly to be supposed that life could not exist except in conditions identical with the earth, but it is now being discovered that even man and the animals can adapt themselves to atmospheric conditions deficient in oxygen such as exist in the stratosphere — this proves that all depends on adaptation. There are animals that can exist only in the sea, yet sea-animals have become amphibious or turned into land animals — so animals on earth can by habit of the adaptation live only in a certain range of atmosphere and need oxygen, but they could adapt themselves to other conditions — it is a law of habit of Nature, not a law of inevitable necessity of Nature. It is therefore quite possible for life to exist on other planets in our and other systems, though the beings there may not be quite like earthly humanity or life quite the same.

Section Two

Religion, Idealism, Morality and Yoga

Chapter One

Religion and Yoga

Religion and the Truth

The Divine Truth is greater than any religion or creed or scripture or idea or philosophy — so you must not tie yourself to any of these things.

*

I regard the spiritual history of mankind and especially of India as a constant development of a divine purpose, not a book that is closed, the lines of which have to be constantly repeated. Even the Upanishads and the Gita were not final though everything may be there in seed. In this development the recent spiritual history of India is a very important stage and the names I mentioned [*Ramakrishna and Vivekananda*] had a special prominence in my thought at the time — they seemed to me to indicate the lines from which the future spiritual development had most directly to proceed, not staying but passing on. I do not know that I would put my meaning exactly in the language you suggest. I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion new or old for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded, is my conception of the matter.

*

It is news to me that I have excluded Mahomedans from the Yoga. I have not done it any more than I have excluded Europeans or Christians. As for giving up one's past, if that means giving up the outer forms of the old religions, it is done as much by the Hindus here as by the Mahomedans. The Hindus here — even those who were once orthodox Brahmins and have grown old in it, — give up all observance of caste, take food from Pariahs and are served by them, associate and eat with Mahomedans, Christians, Europeans, cease to practise temple worship or

Sandhya (daily prayer and mantras), accept a non-Hindu from Europe as their spiritual director. These are things people who have Hinduism as their aim and object would not do — they do it because they are obliged here to look to a higher ideal in which these things have no value. What is kept of Hinduism is Vedanta and Yoga, in which Hinduism is one with Sufism of Islam and with the Christian mystics. But even here it is not Vedanta and Yoga in their traditional limits (their past), but widened and rid of many ideas that are peculiar to the Hindus. If I have used Sanskrit terms and figures, it is because I know them and do not know Persian and Arabic. I have not the slightest objection to anyone here drawing inspiration from Islamic sources if they agree with the Truth as Sufism agrees with it. On the other hand I have not the slightest objection to Hinduism being broken to pieces and disappearing from the face of the earth, if that is the Divine Will. I have no attachment to past forms; what is Truth will always remain; the Truth alone matters.

Religion in India

Religion is always imperfect because it is a mixture of man's spirituality with the errors that come in trying to sublimate ignorantly his lower nature. Hindu religion appears to me as a cathedral temple half in ruins, noble in the mass, often fantastic in detail, but always fantastic with a significance — crumbled and overgrown in many places, but a cathedral temple in which service is still done to the Unseen and its real presence can be felt by those who enter with the right spirit. The outer social structure which it built for its approach is another matter.

*

If it is meant by the statement [*of Mahatma Gandhi*]¹ that the

¹ “*But religion is not like a house or a cloak, which can be changed at will. It is more an integral part of one's self than of one's body. Religion is the tie that binds one to one's Creator and whilst the body perishes, as it has to, religion persists even after death.*” M. K. Gandhi, on a statement by B. R. Ambedkar concerning change of religion, in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 62 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1975), p. 37.* — Ed.

form of religion is something permanent and unchangeable, then that cannot be accepted. But if religion here means one's way of communion with the Divine, then it is true that that is something belonging to the inner being and cannot be changed like a house or a cloak for the sake of some personal, social or worldly convenience. If a change is to be made, it can only be for an inner spiritual reason, because of some development from within. No one can be bound to any form of religion or any particular creed or system, but if he changes the one he has accepted for another, for external reasons, that means he has inwardly no religion at all and both his old and his new religion are only an empty formula. At bottom that is, I suppose, what the statement drives at. Preference for a different approach to the Truth or the desire of inner spiritual self-expression are not the motives of the recommendation of change to which objection is made by the Mahatma here; the object proposed is an enhancement of social status and consideration which is no more a spiritual motive than conversion for the sake of money or marriage. If a man has no religion in himself, he can change his credal profession for any motive; if he has, he cannot; he can only change it in response to an inner spiritual need. If a man has a bhakti for the Divine in the form of Krishna, he can't very well say, "I will swap Krishna for Christ so that I may become socially respectable."

*

You can write to him not to be depressed by his failures but to go on aspiring and trust in the Divine Grace. He should not allow himself to be impeded by narrow caste ideas. Always in India the Brahmins have bowed down before a man of spiritual realisation, who becomes by that very fact of realisation above caste. He should open himself more to the help from here. Man is a mass of imperfections — it is only by the divine Grace that he reaches the Divine.

Religious Ceremonies

It is correct, religions at best modify only the surface of the

nature. Moreover they degenerate very soon into a routine of ceremonial habitual worship and fixed dogmas.

*

If you feel no enthusiasm for the *śrāddha* it is better definitely to stop it. Once on this path there is no meaning in it any longer, — for the reason you yourself give.² The *śrāddha* is, besides, entirely on the vital plane and if help has to be given to those who have passed into other worlds of consciousness, there are better ways of doing it.

*

Replace the *śrāddha* by a long meditation with X on the father praying that he may have all the rest and illumination that the departed can have.

*

I only said what was originally *meant* by the ceremonies — the rites. I was not referring to the feeding of the caste or the Brahmins which is not a rite or ceremony. Whether the *śrāddha* as performed is actually effective is another matter — for those who perform it have not either the knowledge or the occult power.

*

The old traditions [*stotras, homas, aradhanas, recitations, etc.*] are still strong with many — let them satisfy this tendency in this way so long as it does not drop from them.

*

Useless and therefore inadvisable [*to sacrifice animals to Kali*]. External sacrifices of this kind have no longer any meaning — as so many saints have said, sacrifice ego, anger, lust etc. to Kali, not goats or cocks.

² The correspondent said that a *sadhak* is expected to forget all conventional family relationships and live only for the Divine. — Ed.

Religious Fanaticism

There is nothing noble in fanaticism — there is no nobility of motive though there may be a fierce enthusiasm of motive. Religious fanaticism is something psychologically low-born and ignorant — and usually in its action fierce, cruel and base. Religious ardour like that of the martyr who sacrifices himself only is a different thing.

Chapter Two

Idealism and Spirituality

Human Perfection and Spirituality

I would not describe the perfections you describe in your letter, fine though they are, as spiritual in the proper sense of the word — for they lack the essential condition of spirituality. Perfection of all kinds is indeed good, as it is the sign of the pressure of the consciousness in the material world towards full self-expression in this or that limit, on this or that level. In a certain sense it is an urge of the Divine itself hidden in forms that tends in the lesser degrees of consciousness towards its own increasing self-revelation. Perfection of an object or a scene in inanimate Nature, animate perfection of strength, speed, physical beauty, courage or animal fidelity, affection, intelligence, perfection of art, music, poetry, literature, — perfection of the intellect in any kind of mental activity, the perfect statesman, warrior, artist, craftsman, — perfection in vital force and capacity, perfection in ethical qualities, character, temperament, — all have their high value, their place as rungs in the ladder of evolution, the seried steps of the spirit's emergence. If one likes to call that spiritual because of this hidden urge behind it one can do so; it can at least be regarded as a preparation for the secret spirit's emergence. But thought and knowledge can only proceed by making the necessary distinctions. Much confusion is created by neglecting them. This mental idealism, ethical development, religious piety and fervour, occult powers and feats have all been taken as spirituality and the spiritual evolution kept tied to the moorings of the planes of lesser consciousness which do indeed prepare the soul by experience for the spiritual consciousness but are not themselves that. For perfection can only become truly spiritual when it is founded on the awakened spiritual consciousness and takes on its peculiar essence. We are told by Europeans that the lined and ravaged face of the Greek bust of Homer is

far more spiritual than the empty ecstatic smile of the Buddha. We are told often nowadays that to earn for one's family and carry out our domestic duties, to be a good and moral man, a perfect citizen, patriot, worker for the country, is far more spiritual than to sit in idle meditation seeking for a remote and invisible Deity. Philanthropy, altruism, service to mankind are represented as the true spiritual things. Mental idealisms, ethical strivings, aesthetic finenesses are put forward by the modern mind as things spiritual. All this is represented as the best and highest we can achieve — though an increasing disillusionment, dissatisfaction, feeling of emptiness in them is also growing at the same time. All this has had its use, for everything has its own value in its own place and those who are satisfied with them are entitled to give them their full value and hold them as the great good and the thing to be done, *kartavyam karma*. But spirituality stands on its own basis and does not depend on these things nor does it even include them so long as they are based on some other than the spiritual consciousness and not transformed on the inner spiritual basis. So also people speak of religious men as spiritual, but one may be a very religious man yet not spiritual. The popular idea confuses great feats of occult power, ascetic feats, miracles, astonishing performances like those of your Jewel Sannyasi as the works of a spiritual achievement and the signs of a great Yogi. But one may be a powerful occultist or do marvels of asceticism and yet be not spiritual at all — for in any true sense of the word, in its proper and native significance it means one who has attained to the spiritual consciousness, the realisation of the inner or higher Self, the contact or union with the Divine or that which is eternal or is striving after and approaching these things. Spiritual perfection can only come by a life based on that search and that achievement.¹

The Collapse of Twentieth-Century Idealism

Tagore, of course, belonged to an age which had faith in its

¹ *This is the draft of a letter reproduced in a thoroughly rewritten form on pages 424–27. — Ed.*

ideas and whose very denials were creative affirmations. That makes an immense difference. Your strictures on his later development may or may not be correct, but this mixture even was the note of the day and it expressed a tangible hope of a fusion into something new and true — therefore it could create. Now all that idealism has been smashed to pieces by the immense adverse Event and everybody is busy exposing its weakness, but nobody knows what to put in its place. A mixture of scepticism and slogans, “Heil Hitler” and the Fascist salute and Five-Year Plan and the beating of everybody into one amorphous shape, a disabused denial of all ideals on one side and on the other a blind shut-my-eyes and shut-everybody’s-eyes plunge into the bog in the hope of finding some firm foundation there, will not carry us very far. And what else is there? Until new spiritual values are discovered, no great enduring creation is possible.

*

It is queer these intellectuals go on talking of creation while all they stand for is collapsing into the *Néant* without their being able to raise a finger to save it. What the devil are they going to create and from what material? and of what use if a Hitler with his cudgel or a Mussolini with his castor oil can come and wash it out or beat it into dust in a moment?

*

If there are such great spiritual men in Europe [*as a book reviewer claimed*], they seem to have the gift of invisibility. Or perhaps he means intellectuals like Romain Rolland or else Roman Catholic priests and cardinals or the Reverend Holmes or pacifists like Lord Robert Cecil or in the past Tolstoy who spent his whole life trying in vain to live according to his ideals. Idealising intellectualism and religionism are all that is left of spirituality in Europe.

Chapter Three

Morality and Yoga

The Spiritual Life and the Ordinary Life

The spiritual life (*adhyātma jīvana*), the religious life (*dharmā jīvana*) and the ordinary human life of which morality is a part are three quite different things and one must know which one desires and not confuse the three together. The ordinary life is that of the average human consciousness separated from its own true self and from the Divine and led by the common habits of the mind, life and body which are the laws of the Ignorance. The religious life is a movement of the same ignorant human consciousness, turning or trying to turn away from the earth towards the Divine but as yet without knowledge and led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of some sect or creed which claims to have found the way out of the bonds of the earth-consciousness into some beatific Beyond. The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue. The spiritual life, on the contrary, proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and from God, to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker this change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else matters.

Morality is a part of the ordinary life; it is an attempt to govern the outward conduct by certain mental rules or to form the character by these rules in the image of a certain mental ideal. The spiritual life goes beyond the mind; it enters into the deeper consciousness of the Spirit and acts out of the truth of the Spirit. As for the question about the ethical life and the need to realise God, it depends on what is meant by fulfilment of the

objects of life. If an entry into the spiritual consciousness is part of it, then mere morality will not give it to you.

Politics as such has nothing to do with the spiritual life. If the spiritual man does anything for his country, it is in order to do the will of the Divine and as part of a divinely appointed work and not from any other common human motive. In none of his acts does he proceed from the common mental and vital motives which move ordinary men but acts out of the truth of the Spirit and from an inner command of which he knows the source.

The kind of worship (*pūjā*) spoken of in the letter belongs to the religious life. It can, if rightly done in the deepest religious spirit, prepare the mind and heart to some extent but no more. But if worship is done as part of meditation or with a true aspiration to the spiritual reality and the spiritual consciousness and with the yearning for contact and union with the Divine, then it can be spiritually effective.

If you have a sincere aspiration to the spiritual change in your heart and soul, then you will find the way and the Guide. A mere mental seeking and questioning are not enough to open the doors of the Spirit.

*

In the ordinary life, people accept the vital movements, anger, desire, greed, sex etc. as natural, allowable and legitimate things, part of the human nature. Only so far as society discourages them or wishes to keep them within fixed limits or subject to a decent restraint or measure, people try to control them so as to conform to the social standard of morality or rule of conduct. Here on the contrary as in all spiritual life, the conquest and complete mastery of these things is demanded. That is why the struggle is more felt, not because these things rise more strongly in sadhaks than in ordinary men, but because of the intensity of the struggle between the spiritual mind which demands control and the vital movements which rebel and wish to continue in the new as they did in the old life. As for the idea that the sadhana raises up things of the kind, the only truth in that is this that,

first, there are many things in the ordinary man of which he is not conscious because the vital hides them from the mind and gratifies them without the mind realising what is the force that is moving the action — thus things that are done under the plea of altruism, philanthropy, service etc. are largely moved by ego which hides itself behind these justifications; in Yoga the secret motive has to be pulled out from behind the veil, exposed and got rid of. Secondly, some things are suppressed in the ordinary life and remain lying in the nature, suppressed but not eliminated; they may rise up any day or they may express themselves in nervous forms or other disorders of the mind or vital or body without it being evident what is their real cause. This has been recently discovered by European psychologists and much emphasised, even exaggerated in a new science called psychoanalysis. Here again in sadhana one has to become conscious of these suppressed impulses and eliminate them — this may be called raising up, but that does not mean that they have to be raised up into action but only raised up before the consciousness so as to be cleared out of the being.

As for some men being able to control themselves and others being swept away, that is due to difference of temperament. Some men are sattvic and control comes easy to them, up to a certain point at least; others are more rajasic and find control difficult and often impossible. Some have a strong mind and mental will and others are vital men in whom the vital passions are stronger or more on the surface. Some do not think control necessary and let themselves go. In sadhana the mental or moral control has to be replaced by the spiritual mastery — for the mental control is only partial and it controls but does not liberate; it is only the psychic and spiritual that can do that. That is the main difference in this respect between the ordinary and the spiritual life.

*

Everything depends upon the aim you put before you. If for the realisation of one's spiritual aim it is necessary to give up the ordinary life of the Ignorance (*samsāra*), it must be done; the

claim of the ordinary life cannot stand against that of the spirit.

If a Yoga of works alone is chosen as the path, then one may remain in the *samsāra*, but it will be freely, as a field of action and not from any sense of obligation; for the Yogin must be free inwardly from all ties and attachments. On the other hand there is no necessity to live the family life — one can leave it and take any kind of works as a field of action.

In the Yoga practised here the aim is to rise to a higher consciousness and to live out of the higher consciousness alone, not with the ordinary motives. This means a change of life as well as a change of consciousness. But all are not so circumstanced that they can cut loose from the ordinary life; they accept it therefore as a field of experience and self-training in the earlier stages of the sadhana. But they must take care to look at it as a field of experience only and to get free from the ordinary desires, attachments and ideas which usually go with it; otherwise it becomes a drag and hindrance on their sadhana. When one is not compelled by circumstances there is no necessity to continue the ordinary life.

One becomes tamasic by leaving the ordinary actions and life only if the vital is so accustomed to draw its motives of energy from the ordinary consciousness and its desires and activities that if it loses them, it loses all joy and charm and energy of existence. But if one has a spiritual aim and an inner life and the vital part accepts them, then it draws its energies from within and there is no danger of one's being tamasic.

Morality

The principle of life which I seek to establish is spiritual. Morality is a question of man's mind and vital, it belongs to a lower plane of consciousness. A spiritual life therefore cannot be founded on a moral basis, it must be founded on a spiritual basis. This does not mean that the spiritual man must be immoral — as if there were no other law of conduct than the moral. The law of action of the spiritual consciousness is higher, not lower than the moral — it is founded on union with

the Divine and living in the Divine Consciousness and its action is founded on obedience to the Divine Will.

*

The beliefs you speak of with regard to right and wrong, beauty and ugliness etc. are necessary for the human being and for the guidance of his life. He cannot do without the distinctions they involve. But in a higher consciousness when he enters into the Light or is touched by it, these distinctions disappear, for he is then approaching the eternal and infinite good and right which he reaches perfectly when he is able to enter into the Truth Consciousness or Supermind. The belief in the guidance of God is also justified by spiritual experience and is very necessary for the sadhana; this also rises to its highest and completest truth when one enters into the Light.

*

It [*the reason people remain calm and self-controlled in ordinary life*] is social pressure accompanied by a certain habit of mental control born of the social pressure. It is not from peace at all. Remove the social pressure even partly and as in England and America recently people let themselves go and do according to the vital impulses instead of controlling them — except of course those who stick to the religious and moral ideas of the past even when society drifts away from these ideas.

Vice and Virtue

Vice and virtue have nothing to do with darkness or light, truth and falsehood. The spiritual man rises above vice and virtue, he does not rise above truth and light, unless you mean by truth and light, human truth and mental light. They have to be transcended, just as virtue and vice have to be transcended.

*

Are you in a position to make a judgment as to what will or will not help God's work? You seem to have very elementary

ideas in these matters. What is your idea of divinisation, — to be a virtuous man, a good husband, son, father, a good citizen etc.? In that case I myself am most undivine, — for I have never been these things. Men like X or Y would then be the great Transformed Divine Men.

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Many sinners are people who are preparing to turn to the Divine and many virtuous people have a long run of lives yet to go through before they will think of it.

*

Vices are simply an overflow of energy in unregulated channels.

The Sattwic Man and the Spiritual Man

The passage through sattwa is the ordinary idea of Yoga, it is the preparation and purification by the yama-niyama of Patanjali or by other means in other Yogas, e.g., saintliness in the bhakti schools, the eightfold path in Buddhism etc., etc. In our Yoga the evolution through sattwa is replaced by the cultivation of equanimity, *samatā*, and by the psychic transformation.

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It is a very beautiful character that you describe in your letter, a perfect type of the sattwic man, a fine and harmonised ethical nature supported and vivified by a fine and developed psychic being. But still, although it may be regarded as an excellent preparation for the spiritual life, it cannot by itself be called spirituality — unless indeed we reduce the meaning of the word to the connotation ordinarily given to it in the West where mental ideation, ethical striving, a flowering of fine character, altruism, self-sacrifice, self-denial, philanthropy, service to men or mankind are considered the height of spiritual aspiration or spiritual attainment. Obviously if that is to be the last word of earthly achievement, there is no need for anything farther; the close and vivid discovery of soul or self, the straining towards

that which is behind life and above mind, the passion for the Eternal or the Infinite, the hunger for a freedom and wideness of consciousness and existence not limited by the narrow moulds of intellect, character and the past life-aims of humanity, the thirst for union with the Divine or for the pure bliss and beauty of spiritual existence not tied down to mental and vital values must be dismissed as a superfluous dream for which there is neither place nor necessity here. Yet these things have been not only dreamed of and hungered after but reached and tasted by beings born in a mortal and human body. Spirituality lies there; its essence consists in a bursting of the human mental, moral, aesthetic, vital moulds in order to reach beyond them and enter into a consciousness of which these things are the very stuff, to which these experiences are native. Anything less than that, than a striving after it or at least a partial realisation of it is not spirituality. The spiritual man is one who has realised something of it even if only in one aspect out of many; one who is striving after it is the spiritual seeker. All else however magnificently intellectual, ethical, aesthetically beautiful and harmonious, vitally splendid, great and forceful or physically perfect is a valuable achievement on the way, but not yet that, for one has not passed the Rubicon of mind into a new empire.

Owing to the nature of the past evolution of consciousness and of spirituality itself, there has been much confusion on this point and there is still more today because of the present domination of the Western ideal. On one side or another mental idealism, ethical development, altruistic character and action, religious piety and fervour, occult powers, feats of ascetic endurance have been put forward as the essence of spirituality or the test or proof of achievement or the signposts of the journey to spiritual perfection. It is ignored that any of these things may be there and yet there need not be any spiritual life behind it, any rebirth into a new consciousness or any remoulding of either the inner or the outer consciousness no longer in a higher or richer power of mind and life and body only, the instruments, but in the direct light and force of the hitherto veiled user of the instrument, the now revealed and directly active soul, self, spirit or of the

Divine or Eternal whose representatives or aspects they are.

This confusion meets us at every point and in all sorts of forms whose common error is to ignore the essence and core of the matter. The Western intellect presents us with the strivings of the mind, life, emotions, passions, moral will and tells us these are the real spiritual things, man's highest aim and endeavour and all else is vain mysticism, asceticism, evasion of life. It appears that the lined and ravaged face of a Greek bust of Homer is a thousand times more spiritual than the empty calm or the ecstatic smile of the Buddha! We are told by others that to care for the family and carry out our social and domestic duties, to be a good man, a perfect citizen, patriot, worker for the community, to serve mankind are the real things far more spiritual than to sit in idle meditation seeking for some remote and invisible transcendental Reality — or unreality. Philanthropy, altruism, service, selfless labour for humankind, these are the spiritual summits. True selflessness lies there, to sacrifice or offer one's life to the good of others, to the community, to the race. To seek one's own inner spiritual growth, to draw back from ordinary life in order to reach something beyond, to search after the Divine above humanity is mere egoism, not true spirituality, but an aberration, a misdirection of the will and life.

All that might be admirable and true — as certainly all the things thus eulogised have their place in the human evolution, if the premiss on which it were founded were true — that the seeking for something behind, something beyond, something of which the evolution of mind, life and body was only a veil or a preparation is an illusion and a chimaera. But if these things are real, if the seeking is a lasting and major drive in Nature, then all these objections and recommendations are futile. For this drive will fulfil itself, this hidden reality will draw and draw us till we achieve it. Those who feel its call, cannot do otherwise than follow and strive, even if need be leave all else for it, hold all other greatness, splendour, nobility, beauty as cheaper minor things compared with this other Light and Greatness and Beauty of which they have had the vision, the intimation, the formless attraction or else the passing touch or glimpse. Ever since Mind

itself reached a certain development, there has been at first dimly and gropingly, then more and more clearly and intimately this drive in man towards something behind and beyond Man, towards the discovery or the expression of something hidden in his being and a world existence which is more real than his surface self even at its best, greater, fuller, truer, more divine. To arrive at that can come only by a change of consciousness, a reversal of consciousness, a new basis of consciousness which is not the lower instrumental consciousness of mind, life and body.

At each step of evolution we have this change, reversal, new base. Matter is bound in an involved consciousness which is in practice an inconstancy; life in the plant in a still involved consciousness struggling for growth, expansion, persistence, seeking after movement and sensation and conscious living without yet reaching them; life in the animal in a vital consciousness possessed of these things, already emotional, possessed of a mind, but a mind still involved in life-movement, not reflective, not subjective and turning upon life to understand, master and control it. Mind is based on a consciousness that has attained this emergence, this reflective and controlling power, this growing understanding, mastery, self-awareness. But mind is still aware only of life and of itself, it is not aware of the person, the reality behind, the user of the instrument; it is seeking for these things and it is this search that constitutes the drive for a new evolution; for mind is a twilight preparing for light, an ignorance seeking after knowledge, a bondage to Nature groping after freedom and mastery over Nature. It is not on mind, on its self-modifying ignorance and bondage or even on its half-light, half-mastery, half-knowledge that the next step can base itself. It must base itself on soul consciousness, consciousness of the spirit and self — for so only can there be the full light, the spontaneous mastery, the intimate and real knowledge.

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Obviously [*in sadhana*] the rajasic movements are likely to create more trouble than the sattvic ones. The greatest difficulty of the sattvic man is the snare of virtue and self-righteousness, the

ties of philanthropy, mental idealisms, family affections etc., but except the first, these are, though difficult, still not so difficult to overpass or else transform. Sometimes however these things are as sticky as the rajasic difficulties.

Selfishness and Unselfishness

Selfishness and the reaction of unselfishness of which you speak are both of them things that have to be put aside — both are obstacles or movements leading off from the true and straight path. For both these things belong to the mind and vital, they are different forms of the ego. The mind in its attempt to get away from the rajasic selfish ego tries to do just the opposite of what selfishness usually does and serve others, sacrifice itself for others, but in doing so it is only constructing another kind of egoism that prides itself on its own unselfishness and altruism and makes human service its mental ideal instead of spiritual service of the Divine. That it is a misleading movement you saw yourself; for it wanted to sacrifice your sadhana, that is, your seeking for the Divine to this new ego of altruistic self-righteousness; it was prepared to do things without permission of the Mother or rather avoiding asking for permission. One has to get rid of selfishness and ego, not in this way, but by selfless service of the Divine and by merging the ego in the Divine Consciousness, submitting the personal will to the Divine Will, calling into the being the Divine Peace, Purity, Oneness, Knowledge, Light, Ananda, replacing the ego by the psychic being devoted and surrendered to the Divine. It is the love of the Divine that saves, not a love turned towards human beings. When the Divine Consciousness is there, then there comes based on the love of the Divine a true love and oneness for all beings. But that does not act separately from the Divine but only according to the Divine Mother's will and in her service.

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Unselfishness is not the only thing to be aimed at — by itself it would be only a moral, not a spiritual attainment.

Humility

A spiritual humility within is very necessary, but I do not think an outward one is very advisable (absence of pride or arrogance or vanity is indispensable of course in one's outer dealings with others) — it often creates pride, becomes formal or becomes ineffective after a time. I have seen people doing it to cure their pride, but I have not found it producing a lasting result.

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It [*to feel like doing namaskar to everyone*] is a feeling which some have who either want to cultivate humility (X used to do it, but I never saw that it got rid of his innate self-esteem) or who have or are trying to have the realisation of Narayan in all with a Vaishnava turn in it. To feel the One in all is right, but to bow down to the individual who lives still in his ego is good neither for him nor for the one who does it. Especially in this Yoga it tends to diffuse what should be concentrated and turned towards a higher realisation than that of the cosmic feeling which is only a step on the way.

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It is only this habit of the nature — self-worrying and harping on the sense of deficiency — that prevents you from being quiet. If you threw that out, it would be easy to be quiet. Humility is needful, but constant self-depreciation does not help; excessive self-esteem and self-depreciation are both wrong attitudes. To recognise any defects without exaggerating them is useful but, once recognised, it is no good dwelling on them always; you must have the confidence that the Divine Force can change everything and you must let the Force work.

*

The view taken by the Mahatma in these matters [*of caste*] is Christian rather than Hindu — for the Christian, self-abasement, humility, the acceptance of a low status to serve humanity or the Divine are things which are highly spiritual and the noblest

privilege of the soul. This view does not admit any hierarchy of castes; the Mahatma accepts castes but on the basis that all are equal before the Divine; a Bhangi doing his dharma is as good as the Brahmin doing his, there is division of function but no hierarchy of functions. That is one view of things and the hierarchic view is another, both having a standpoint and logic of their own which the mind takes as wholly valid but which only corresponds to a part of the reality. All kinds of work are equal before the Divine and all men have the same Brahman within them, is one truth, but that development is not equal in all is another. The idea that it needs special punya to be born as a Bhangi is of course one of those forceful exaggerations of an idea which are common with the Mahatma and impress greatly the mind of his hearers. The idea behind is that his function is an indispensable service to the society, quite as much as the Brahmin's, but that being disagreeable it would need a special moral heroism to choose it voluntarily and he thinks as if the soul freely chose it as such a heroic service and as a reward of righteous acts—that is hardly likely. The service of the scavenger is indispensable under certain conditions of society, it is one of those primary necessities without which society can hardly exist and the cultural development of which the Brahmin life is part could not have taken place. But obviously the cultural development is more valuable than the service of the physical needs for the progress of humanity as opposed to its first static condition and that development can even lead to the minimising and perhaps the eventual disappearance by scientific inventions of the need for the functions of the scavenger. But that I suppose the Mahatma would not approve of as it is machinery and a departure from the simple life. In any case it is not true that the Bhangi life is superior to the Brahmin life and the reward of especial righteousness. On the other hand the traditional conception that a man is superior to others because he is born a Brahmin is not rational or justifiable. A spiritual or cultured man of Pariah birth is superior in the divine values to an unspiritual and worldly-minded or a crude and uncultured Brahmin. Birth counts, but the basic value is in the man himself, the soul behind,

and the degree to which it manifests itself in his nature.

*

As for the sense of superiority, that too is a little difficult to avoid when greater horizons open before the consciousness, unless one is already of a saintly and humble disposition. There are men like Nag Mahashoy in whom spiritual experience creates more and more humility, there are others like Vivekananda in whom it erects a giant sense of strength and superiority — European critics have taxed him with it rather severely; there are others in whom it fixes a sense of superiority to men and humility to the Divine. Each position has its value. Take Vivekananda's famous answer to the Madras Pundit who objected to one of his assertions, "But Shankara does not say so." To which Vivekananda replied, "No, Shankara does not say so, but I, Vivekananda, say so", and the Pundit sank back amazed and speechless. That "I, Vivekananda" stands up to the ordinary eye like a Himalaya of self-confident egoism. But there was nothing false or unsound in Vivekananda's spiritual experience. This was not mere egoism, but the sense of what he stood for and the attitude of the fighter who, as the representative of something very great, could not allow himself to be put down or belittled. This is not to deny the necessity of non-egoism and of spiritual humility, but to show that the question is not so easy as it appears at first sight. For if I have to express my spiritual experiences, I must do it with truth — I must record them, their *bhāva*, the thoughts, feelings, extensions of consciousness which accompany them. What can I do with the experience in which one feels the whole world in oneself or the force of the Divine flowing in one's being and nature or the certitude of one's faith against all doubts and doubters or one's oneness with the Divine or the smallness of human thought and life compared with this greater knowledge and existence? And I have to use the word "I" — I cannot take refuge in saying "this body" or "this appearance", — especially as I am not a Mayavadin. Shall I not inevitably fall into expressions which will make X shake his head at my assertions as full of pride and ego? I imagine it would be difficult to avoid it.

Another thing, it seems to me that you identify faith very much with mental belief — but real faith is something spiritual, a knowledge of the soul. The assertions you quote in your letter are the hard assertions of a mental belief leading to a great vehement assertion of one's creed and god because they are one's own and must therefore be greater than those of others — an attitude which is universal in human nature. Even the atheist is not tolerant, but declares his credo of Nature and Matter as the only truth and on all who disbelieve it or believe in other things he pours scorn as unenlightened morons and superstitious half-wits. I bear him no grudge for thinking me that; but I note that this attitude is not confined to religious faith but is equally natural to those who are free from religious faith and do not believe in Gods or Gurus.

*

Perhaps one could say that it [*spiritual humility*] is to be aware of the relativity of what has been done compared with what is still to be done — and also to be conscious of one's being nothing without the Divine Grace.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice has a moral and psychological value always. This value is the same no matter what may be the cause for which the sacrifice is made, provided the one who makes it believes in the truth or justice or other worthiness of his cause. If one makes the sacrifice for a cause one knows to be wrong or unworthy, all depends on the motive and spirit of the sacrifice. Bhishma accepting death in a cause he knew to be unjust, obeyed the call of loyalty to what he felt to be his personal duty. Many have done that in the past, and the moral and psychic value of their act lies, irrespective of the nature of the cause, in the nobility of the motive.

As to the other question, in this sense of the word sacrifice there is none for the man who gives up something which he does not value, except in so far as he undergoes loss, defies social ban

or obloquy or otherwise pays a price for his liberation. I may say, however, that without being cold and unloving a man may be so seized by a spiritual call or the call of a great human cause that the family or other ties count for nothing beside it, and he leaves all joyfully, without a pang, to follow the summoning Voice.

In the spiritual sense, however, sacrifice has a different meaning — it does not so much indicate giving up what is held dear as an offering of oneself, one's being, one's mind, heart, will, body, life, actions to the Divine. It has the original sense of "making sacred" and is used as an equivalent of the word Yajna. When the Gita speaks of the "sacrifice of knowledge", it does not mean a giving up of anything, but a turning of the mind towards the Divine in the search for knowledge and an offering of oneself through it. It is in this sense, too, that one speaks of the offering or sacrifice of works. The Mother has written somewhere that the spiritual sacrifice is joyful and not painful in its nature. On the spiritual path, very commonly, if a seeker still feels the old ties and responsibilities strongly, he is not asked to sever or leave them, but to let the call in him grow till all within is ready. Many, indeed, come away earlier because they feel that to cut loose is their only chance, and these have to go sometimes through a struggle. But the pain, the struggle, is not the essential character of the spiritual self-offering.

*

It [*pain and struggle in offering oneself to the Divine*] simply means that your sacrifice is still mental and has not yet become spiritual in its character. When your vital being consents to give up its desires and enjoyments, when it offers itself to the Divine, then the yajna will have begun. What I meant was that the European sense of the word is not the sense of the word "yajna" or the sense of "sacrifice" in such phrases as "the sacrifice of works". It does not mean that you give up all works for the sake of the Divine — for then there would be no sacrifice of works at all. Similarly the sacrifice of knowledge does not mean that you painfully and resolutely make yourself a fool for the sake of the

Lord. Sacrifice means an inner offering to the Divine and the real spiritual sacrifice is a very joyful thing. Otherwise, one is only trying to make oneself fit and has not yet begun the real yajna. It is because your mind is struggling with your vital, the unwilling animal, and asking it to allow itself to be immolated that there is the pain and struggle. If the spiritual will (or psychic) were more in the front then you would not be lamenting over the loss of the ghee and butter and curds thrown into the Fire or trying to have a last lick at it before casting it. The only difficulty would be about bringing down the gods fully enough (a progressive labour), not about lamentations over the ghee. By the way, do you think that the Mother or myself or others who have taken up the spiritual life had not enjoyed life and that it is therefore that the Mother was able to speak of a joyous sacrifice to the Divine as the true spirit of spiritual sacrifice? Or do you think we spent the preliminary stages in longings for the lost fleshpots of Egypt and that it was only later on we felt the joy of the spiritual sacrifice? Of course we did not; we and many others had no difficulty on the score of giving up anything we thought necessary to give up and no hankerings afterwards. Your rule is as usual a stiff rule that does not at all apply generally.

*

Sacrifice depends on the inner attitude. If one has nothing outward to sacrifice, one has always oneself to give.

Ahimsa, Destruction and Violence

The doctrines of Ahimsa and non-violence and altruism are early steps on the road to spiritual knowledge — but once advanced on the road what is true behind them takes its place, as a thread in the complex weft of spiritual truth and feeling, not as a rigid ethical rule or all-swallowing dogma. The Manifestation here is too complex in its concealed Unity for such mental or emotional formulas to be unerring guides.

*

The impersonal Truth, precisely because it is impersonal, can contain quite opposite things. There is a truth in Ahimsa, there is a truth in Destruction also. I do not teach that you should go on killing everybody every day as a spiritual dharma. I say that destruction can be done when it is part of the Divine work commanded by the Divine. Non-violence is better than violence as a rule, and still sometimes violence may be the right thing. I consider dharma as relative; unity with the Divine and action from the Divine Will the highest way. Buddha did not aim at action in the world, but at cessation from the world-existence. For that he found the eightfold Path a necessary preparatory discipline and so proclaimed it.

It [*Ahimsa*] had nothing to do with the Yuga [*at the time of Buddha*], but with the path towards liberation found by Buddha. There are many paths and all need not be one and the same in their teaching.

*

Destruction in itself is neither good nor evil. It is a fact of Nature, a necessity in the play of forces as things are in this world. The Light destroys the Darkness and the Powers of Darkness, and that is not a movement of Ignorance!

It all depends on the character of the destruction and the forces that enter into it. All dread of fire or other violent forces should be overcome. For dread shows a weakness — the free spirit can stand fearless before even the biggest forces of Nature.

*

This world is so arranged that it is not possible to live without some destruction of life — so for this there need be no remorse. Only one should not destroy life wantonly or inflict needless suffering on animals or any living things.

*

I feel inclined to back out of the arena¹ or take refuge in the

¹ *The correspondent asked whether the violence done to animals by medical researchers was justifiable; their experiments with animals, he said, sometimes led to the saving of human lives. — Ed.*

usual saving formula, “There is much to be said on both sides.” Your view is no doubt correct from the common-sense or what might be called the “human” point of view. Krishnaprem takes the standpoint that we must not only consider the temporary good to humanity, but certain inner laws. He thinks the harm, violence or cruelty to other beings is not compensated and cannot be justified by some physical good to a section of humanity or even to humanity as a whole; such methods awake, in his opinion, a sort of Karmic reaction apart from the moral harm to the men who do these things. He is also of the opinion that the cause of disease is psychic, that is to say, subjective and the direction should be towards curing the inner causes much more than patching up by physical means. These are ideas that have their truth also. I fully recognise the psychic law and methods and their preferability, but the ordinary run of humanity is not ready for that rule and, while it is so, doctors and their physical methods will be there. I have also supported justifiable violence on justifiable occasions, e.g., Kurukshetra and the war against Hitler and all he means. The question then, from this middle point of view, about the immediate question is whether this violence is justifiable and the occasion justifiable. I back out.

War and Conquest

War and conquest are part of the economy of vital Nature, it is no use blaming this or that people for doing it — everybody does it who has the power and the chance. China who now complains was herself an imperialist and colonising country through all the centuries in which Japan kept religiously within her own borders. If it were not profitable, I suppose nobody would do it. England has grown rich on the plundered wealth of India. France depends for many things on her African colonies. Japan needs an outlet for her overabundant population and safe economic markets nearby. Each is pushed by forces that use the minds of rulers and peoples to fulfil themselves — unless human nature changes no amount of moralising will prevent it.

There has been almost continuous war in the world — it is as in the history of the Roman Republic when the gates of the temple of Janus were closed only once or twice in its many centuries — a sign that the Republic was at peace with all the world. There have been in modern times long intervals between long wars, but small ones have been generally going on somewhere or another. Man is a quarrelling and fighting animal and so long as he is so how can there be peace?

Poverty

It is a world which has emerged from the Inconscient and these things [*poverty and misery*] are results of the imperfect working of the human mind which, being born into the ignorant life and matter, has to learn by effort and experience. Ignorance and ego have to be outgrown before there can be a true utilisation of the resources of Nature.

Natural Calamities

Why should earthquakes occur by some wrong movement of man? When man was not there, did not earthquakes occur? If he were blotted out by poison gas or otherwise, would they cease? Earthquakes are a perturbation in Nature due to some pressure of forces; frequency of earthquakes may coincide with a violence of upheavals in human life but the upheavals of earth and human life are both results of a general clash or pressure of forces, one is not the cause of the other.

Chapter Four

Social Duties and the Divine

Family, Society, Country and the Divine

Family, society, country are a larger ego — they are not the Divine. One can work for them and say that one is working for the Divine only if one is conscious of the Divine Adesh to act for that purpose or of the Divine Force working within one. Otherwise it is only an idea of the mind identifying country etc. with the Divine.

*

I suppose each man makes or tries to make his own organisation of life out of the mass of possibilities the forces present to him. Self (physical self) and family are the building most make — to earn, to create a family and maintain it, perhaps to get some position in the present means of life one chooses, in business, the profession etc., etc. Country or humanity are usually added to that by a minority. A few take up some ideal and follow it as the mainstay of their life. It is only the very religious who try to make God the centre of their life — that too rather imperfectly, except for a few. None of these things are secure or certain, even the last being certain only if it is followed with an absoluteness which only a few are willing to give. The life of the Ignorance is a play of forces through which man seeks his way and all depends on his growth through experience to the point at which he can grow out of it into something else. That something else is in fact a new consciousness — whether a new consciousness beyond the earthly life or a new consciousness within it.

*

I don't remember the context; but I suppose he [*the writer of Yogic Sadhan*] means that when one has to escape from the lower dharma, one has often to break it so as to arrive at a

larger one. E.g. social duties, paying debts, looking after family, helping to serve your country, etc. etc. The man who turns to the spiritual life, has to leave all that behind him often and he is reproached by lots of people for his Adharma. But if he does not do this Adharma, he is bound for ever to the lower life — for there is always some duty there to be done — and cannot take up the spiritual dharma or can do it only when he is old and his faculties impaired.

*

Idealising is a pastime of the mind — except for the few who are passionately determined to make the ideal real. Buddha is in Nirvana and his wife and child are there too perhaps, so it is easy to praise his spiritual greatness and courage — but for living people with living relatives a similar action is monstrous. They ought to be satisfied with praising Buddha and take care not to follow his example.

*

The tendency you speak of, to leave the family and social life for the spiritual life, has been traditional in India for the last 2000 years and more — chiefly among men, it touches only a very small number of women. It must be remembered that Indian social life has subordinated almost entirely the individual to the family. Men and women do not marry according to their free will; their marriages are mostly arranged for them while they are still children. Not only so, but the mould of society has been long of an almost iron fixity putting each individual in his place and expecting him to conform to it. You speak of issues and a courageous solution, but in this life there are no problems and issues and no call for a solution — a courageous solution is only possible where there is freedom of the personal will; but where the only solution (if one remains in this life) is submission to the family will, there can be nothing of that kind. It is a secure life and can be happy if one accommodates oneself to it and has no unusual aspirations beyond it or is fortunate in one's environment; but it has no remedy for or escape from

incompatibilities or any kind of individual frustration; it leaves little room for initiative or free movement or any individualism. The only outlet for the individual is his inner spiritual or religious life and the recognised escape is the abandonment of the *samsāra*, the family life, by some kind of Sannyasa. The Sannyasi, the Vaishnava Vairagi or the Brahmachari are free; they are dead to the family and can live according to the dictates of the inner spirit. Only if they enter into an order or asram, they have to abide by the rules of the order, but that is their own choice, not a responsibility which has been laid on them without their choice. Society recognised this door of escape from itself; religion sanctioned the idea that distaste for the social or worldly life was a legitimate ground for taking up that of the recluse or religious wanderer. But this was mainly for men; women, except in old times among the Buddhists who had their convents and in later times among the Vaishnavas, had little chance of such an escape unless a very strong spiritual impulse drove them which would take no denial. As for the wife and children left behind by the Sannyasi, there was little difficulty, for the joint family was there to take up or rather to continue their maintenance.

At present what has happened is that the old framework remains, but modern ideas have brought a condition of inadaptation, of unrest, the old family system is breaking up and women are seeking in more numbers the same freedom of escape as men have always had in the past. That would account for the cases you have come across — but I don't think the number of such cases can be as yet at all considerable, it is quite a new phenomenon; the admission of women to Asrams is itself a novelty. The extreme unhappiness of a mental and vital growth which does not fit in with the surroundings, of marriages imposed that are unsuitable and where there is no meeting-point between husband and wife, of an environment hostile and intolerant of one's inner life and on the other hand the innate tendency of the Indian mind to seek a refuge in the spiritual or religious escape will sufficiently account for the new development. If society wants to prevent it, it must itself change. As to individuals, each case must be judged on its own merits; there is too much

complexity in the problem and too much variation of nature, position, motives for a general rule.

Philanthropy

Whatever one does must be from the highest spontaneous inner urge in oneself. So long as the urge is towards philanthropy, Gandhism etc., he has to follow that — to follow the way of spiritual endeavour he must have the need, the distinct call in himself — not merely a mental recognition but the soul's call.

*

Perhaps you could write (in Bengali)¹ something to him about the true object of the Yoga — especially on two points:

(1) The object is not philanthropy but to find the Divine, to enter into the Divine Consciousness and find one's true being (which is not the ego) in the Divine. (2) The *ripus* cannot be conquered by *damana*; even if it succeeds to some extent, it only keeps them down but does not destroy them, often compression only increases their force. It is by purification through the Divine Consciousness entering into the egoistic nature and changing it that the thing can be done.

As for accepting him, it depends on his capacity to open himself to the Influence and receive it. If he likes to try, he can, but he will not succeed unless he is entirely in earnest. There is something in him that can turn to the Divine, but there is also much in his nature that may resist. It is only if he gives himself from deep within and is absolutely persevering in the Way that he can succeed.

Give him some idea of the central process of the Yoga, especially opening to the working of the Divine Power and rejection of all that is of the lower nature.

Humanitarianism

The idea of usefulness to humanity is the old confusion due

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote this reply to his secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta, who replied to the correspondent. — Ed.

to secondhand ideas imported from the West. Obviously, to be “useful” to humanity there is no need of Yoga; everyone who leads the human life is useful to humanity in one way or another.

Yoga is directed towards God, not towards man. If a divine supramental consciousness and power can be brought down and established in the material world, that obviously would mean an immense change for the earth including humanity and its life. But the effect on humanity would only be one result of the change; it cannot be the object of the sadhana. The object of the sadhana can only be to live in the divine consciousness and to manifest it in life.

*

As to the extract about Vivekananda, the point I make there² does not seem to me humanitarian. You will see that I emphasise there the last sentences of the passage quoted from Vivekananda, not the words about God the poor and sinner and criminal. The point is about the Divine in the World, the All, *sarva-bhūtāni* of the Gita. That is not merely humanity, still less only the poor or the wicked; surely even the rich or the good are part of the All and those also who are neither good nor bad nor rich nor poor. Nor is there any question (I mean in my own remarks) of philanthropic service; so neither *daridra* nor *sevā* is the point. I had formerly not the humanitarian but the humanity view — and something of it may have stuck to my expressions in the *Arya*. But I had already altered my viewpoint from the “Our Yoga for the sake of humanity” to “Our Yoga for the sake of the Divine”. The Divine includes not only the supracosmic but the cosmic and the individual — not only Nirvana or the Beyond but Life and the All. It is that I stress everywhere. But I shall keep the extracts for a day or two and see what there is, if anything, that smacks too much of a too narrow humanistic standpoint. I stop here for today.

*

² In The Synthesis of Yoga Sri Aurobindo wrote: “Often, we see this desire of personal salvation overcome by another attraction which also belongs to the higher turn of our nature and which indicates the essential character of the action the liberated soul

Today a Kanchenjunga of correspondence has fallen on my head, so I could not write about humanity and its progress. Were not the later views of Lowes Dickinson greyed over by the sickly cast of a disappointed idealism? I have not myself an exaggerated respect for humanity and what it is — but to say that there has been no progress is as much an exaggerated pessimism as the rapturous hallelujahs of the nineteenth century to a progressive humanity were an exaggerated optimism.

I shall manage to read through the chapter you sent me, though how I manage to find time for these things is a standing miracle and a signal proof of a Divine Providence.

Yes, the “progress” you are making is of the genuine kind — the signs are recognisable. And after all the best way to make humanity progress is to move on oneself — that may sound either individualistic or egoistic, but it isn’t; it is only common sense.

*Yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janah.*³

*

It is no use entertaining these feelings. One has to see what the world is without becoming bitter — for the bitterness comes from one’s own ego and its disappointed expectations. If one wants the victory of the Divine, one must achieve it in oneself first.

must pursue. . . . It is that which inspires a remarkable passage in a letter of Swami Vivekananda. ‘I have lost all wish for my salvation,’ wrote the great Vedantin, ‘may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls, — and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the special object of my worship. He who is the high and low, the saint and the sinner, the god and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the omnipresent; break all other idols. In whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death nor going nor coming, in whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship; break all other idols.’

“The last two sentences contain indeed the whole gist of the matter.” The Synthesis of Yoga, volume 23 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 269–70.

³ “Whatsoever the Best doeth, that the lower kind of man puts into practice.” Gita 3.21. Sri Aurobindo’s translation. Essays on the Gita, volume 19 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 135.

Social and Political Activism

All this insistence upon action is absurd if one has not the light by which to act. Yoga must include life and not exclude it does not mean that we are bound to accept life as it is with all its stumbling ignorance and misery and the obscure confusion of human will and reason and impulse and instinct which it expresses. The advocates of action think that by human intellect and energy making an always new rush everything can be put right; the present state of the world after a development of the intellect and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical parallel is a signal proof of the illusion under which they labour. Yoga takes the stand that it is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered; from within outward is indeed the rule. But within does not mean some quarter inch behind the surface. One must go deep and find the soul, the self, the Divine Reality within us and only then can life become a true expression of what we can be instead of a blind and always repeated confused blur of the inadequate and imperfect thing we were. The choice is between remaining in the old jumble and groping about in the hope of stumbling on some discovery or standing back and seeking the Light within till we discover and can build the godhead within and without us.

*

I had never a very great confidence in X's yoga-turn getting the better of his activism — he has two strong ties that prevent it, ambition and need to act and lead in the vital and in the mind a mental idealism — these two things are the great fosterers of illusion. The spiritual path needs a certain amount of realism — one has to see the real value of the things that are — which is very little, except as steps in evolution. Then one can either follow the spiritual static path of rest and release or the spiritual dynamic path of a greater truth to be brought down into life. But otherwise —

Part Five

Questions of Spiritual and Occult Knowledge

Section One

The Divine and the Hostile Powers

Chapter One

Terminology

The Dynamic Divine, the Gods, the Asuras

The dynamic aspect of the Divine is the Supreme Brahman, not the Gods. The Gods are Personalities and Powers of the dynamic Divine. You speak as if the evolution were the sole creation; the creation or manifestation is very vast and contains many planes and worlds that existed before the evolution, all different in character and with different kinds of beings. The fact of being prior to the evolution does not make them undifferentiated. The world of the Asuras is prior to the evolution, so are the worlds of the mental, vital or subtle physical Devas — but these beings are all different from each other. The great Gods belong to the Overmind plane; in the Supermind they are unified as aspects of the Divine, in the Overmind they appear as separate personalities. Any godhead can descend by emanation to the physical plane and associate himself with the evolution of a human being with whose line of manifestation he is in affinity. But these are things which cannot be very easily understood by the mind, because the mind has too rigid an idea of personality — the difficulty only disappears when one enters into a more flexible consciousness above where one is nearer to the experience of One in all and All in one.

The Soul, the Divine, the Gods, the Asuras

The word soul has various meanings according to the context; it may mean the Purusha supporting the formation of Prakriti which we call a being, though the proper word would be rather a becoming; it may mean on the other hand specifically the psychic being in an evolutionary creature like man; it may mean the spark of the Divine which has been put into Matter by the descent of the Divine into the material world and which upholds

all evolving formations here. There is and can be no psychic being in a non-evolutionary creature like the Asura; there can be none in a God who does not need one for his existence. But what the God has is a Purusha and a Prakriti or Energy of nature of that Purusha. If any being of the typal worlds wants to evolve he has to come down to earth and take a human body and accept to share in the evolution. It is because they do not want to do this that the vital beings try to possess men so that they may enjoy the materialities of physical life without bearing the burden of the evolution or the process of conversion in which it culminates. I hope this is clear and solves the difficulty.

*

The three stages you speak of¹ are stages not of evolution but of the involution of the Divine in Matter. The Devas and Asuras are not evolved in Matter; for the typal being only a Purusha with its Prakriti is necessary — this Purusha may put out a mental and vital Purusha to represent it and according as it is centred in one or another it belongs to the mental or vital world. That is all.

There is no essential difference anywhere, for all is fundamentally the essential Divine; the difference is in the manifestation. Practically, we may say that the Jivatman is one of the divine Many and dependent on the One; the Atman is the One supporting the Many. The psychic being does not merge in the Jivatman, it becomes united with it so that there is no difference between the central being supporting the manifestation from above and the same being supporting the manifestation from within it, because the psychic being has become fully aware of the play of the Divine through it. What is called merging takes place in the Divine Consciousness when the Jivatman feels itself so one with the Divine that there is nothing else.

¹ *The correspondent's letter is not available to determine these stages. — Ed.*

Terms in *The Mother*

(1) *Falsehood and Ignorance*

Ignorance means Avidya, the separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life that flows from it and all that is natural to the separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life. This Ignorance is the result of a movement by which the cosmic Intelligence separated itself from the light of Supermind (the divine Gnosis) and lost the Truth,—truth of being, truth of divine consciousness, truth of force and action, truth of Ananda. As a result instead of a world of integral truth and divine harmony created in the light of the divine Gnosis, we have a world founded on the part truths of an inferior cosmic Intelligence in which all is half truth, half error. It is this that some of the ancient thinkers like Shankara, not perceiving the greater Truth-Force behind, stigmatised as Maya and thought to be the highest creative power of the Divine. All in the consciousness of this creation is either limited or else perverted by separation from the integral Light; even the Truth it perceives is only a half knowledge. Therefore it is called the Ignorance.

Falsehood, on the other hand, is not this Avidya, but an extreme result of it. It is created by an Asuric power which intervenes in this creation and is not only separated from the Truth and therefore limited in knowledge and open to error, but in revolt against the Truth or in the habit of seizing the Truth only to pervert it. This Power, the dark Asuric Shakti or Rakshasic Maya, puts forward its own perverted consciousness as true knowledge and its wilful distortions or reversals of the Truth as the verity of things. It is the powers and personalities of this perverted and perverting consciousness that we call hostile beings, hostile forces. Whenever these perversions created by them out of the stuff of the Ignorance are put forward as the truth of things, that is the Falsehood, in the Yogic sense, *mithyā*, *moha*.

(2) Powers and Appearances

These are the forces and beings that are interested in maintaining the falsehoods they have created in the world of the Ignorance and in putting them forward as the Truth which men must follow. In India they are termed Asuras, Rakshasas, Pisachas (beings respectively of the mentalised vital, middle vital and lower vital planes) who are in opposition to the Gods, the Powers of Light. These too are Powers, for they too have their cosmic field in which they exercise their function and authority and some of them were once divine Powers (the former gods, *pūrve devāḥ*, as they are called somewhere in the Mahabharata) who have fallen towards the Darkness by revolt against the divine Will behind the cosmos. The word “Appearances” refers to the forms they take in order to rule the world, forms often false and always incarnating falsehood, sometimes pseudo-divine.

(3) Powers and Personalities

The use of the word Power has already been explained — it can be applied to whatever or whoever exercises a conscious power in the cosmic field and has authority over the world-movement or some part of it or some movement in it. But the Four of whom you speak are also Shaktis, manifestations of different powers of the supreme Consciousness and Force, the Divine Mother, by which she rules or acts in the universe. And they are at the same time divine Personalities; for each is a being who manifests different qualities and personal consciousness-forms of her Godhead. All the greater Gods are in this way personalities of the Divine — one Consciousness playing in many personalities, *ekam sat bahudhā*. Even in the human being there are many personalities and not only one, as used formerly to be imagined; for all consciousness can be at once one and multiple. “Powers and Personalities” simply describe different aspects of the same being; a Power is not necessarily impersonal and certainly it is not *avyaktam*, as you suggest, — on the contrary it is a manifestation acting in the worlds of the divine manifestation.

(4) Emanations

Emanations correspond to your description of the Matrikas of whom you speak in your letter. An emanation of the Mother is something of her consciousness and power put forth from her, which so long as it is in play is held in close connection with her and, when its play is no longer required, is withdrawn back into its source, but can always be put out and brought into play once more. But also the detaining thread of connection can be severed or loosened and that which came forth as an emanation can proceed on its way as an independent divine being with its own play in the world. All the Gods can put forth such emanations from their being, identical with them in essence of consciousness and power though not commensurate. In a certain sense the universe itself can be said to be an emanation from the Supreme. In the consciousness of the sadhaka an emanation of the Mother will ordinarily wear the appearance, form and characteristics with which he is familiar.

In a sense the four Powers of the Mother may be called, because of their origin, her Emanations, just as the Gods may be called Emanations of the Divine, but they have a more permanent and fixed character; they are at once independent beings allowed their play by the Adyā Shakti and yet portions of the Mother, the Mahashakti, and she can always either manifest through them as separate beings or draw them together as her own various Personalities and hold them in herself, sometimes drawn back, sometimes at play, according to her will. In the supramental plane they are always in her and do not act independently but as intimate portions of the original Mahashakti and in close union and harmony with each other.

(5) Gods

These four Powers are the Mother's cosmic godheads, permanent in the world-play; they stand among the greater cosmic Godheads to whom allusion is made when it is said the Mother as the Mahashakti of this triple world "stands there (in the

Overmind plane) above the Gods”.² The Gods, as has been already said, are in origin and essence permanent Emanations of the Divine put forth from the Supreme by the Transcendent Mother, the Adyā Shakti; in their cosmic action they are Powers and Personalities of the Divine each with his independent cosmic standing, function and work in the universe. They are not impersonal entities but cosmic Personalities, although they can and do ordinarily veil themselves behind the movement of impersonal forces. But while in the Overmind and the triple world they appear as independent beings, they return in the Supermind into the One and stand there united in a single harmonious action as multiple personalities of the one Person, the divine Purushottama.

(6) *Presence*

It is intended by the word Presence to indicate the sense and perception of the Divine as a Being, felt as present in one’s existence and consciousness or in relation with it, without the necessity of any farther qualification or description. Thus of the “ineffable Presence”³ it can only be said that it is there and nothing more can or need be said about it, although at the same time one knows that all is there, personality and impersonality, Power and Light and Ananda and everything else, and that all these flow from that indescribable Presence. The word may be used sometimes in a less absolute sense, but that is always the fundamental significance, — the essential perception of the essential presence supporting everything else.

² “Determining all that shall be in this universe and in the terrestrial evolution by what she sees and feels and pours from her, she stands there above the Gods and all her Powers and Personalities are put out in front of her for the action. . . .” Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, volume 32 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 16.

³ “Alone, she harbours the absolute Power and the ineffable Presence.” Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, p. 14.

(7) The Transcendent Mother

This is what is termed the Adyā Shakti; she is the supreme Consciousness and Power above the universe and it is by her that all the Gods are manifested, and even the supramental Ishwara comes into manifestation through her — the supramental Purushottama of whom the Gods are Powers and Personalities.

Chapter Two

The Gods

The Gods or Divine Powers

The Gods are Personalities or Powers put forth by the Divine — they are therefore in front limited Emanations, although the full Divine is behind each of them.

*

Of course, the gods exist — that is to say, there are Powers that stand above the world and transmit the divine workings. It is the physical mind which believes only in what is physical that denies them. There are also beings of other worlds — gods and Asuras etc.

*

There are Gods everywhere on all the planes.

*

The Gods are in the universal Self — if identified with the universal Self one can feel their presence there.

*

While the Gods cannot be transformed, for they are typical and not evolutionary beings, they can come for conversion — that is to say, to give up their own ideas and outlook on things and conform themselves to the higher Will and supramental Truth of the Divine.

*

The higher beings are not likely to be in disharmony with each other as they are not subject to the lower ignorance.

*

The Gods have their own enjoyments, though they may not be of a material character.

*

There are no planes of manifestation without forms — for without form creation or manifestation cannot be complete. But the supraphysical planes are not bound to the forms like the physical. The forms there are expressive, not determinative. What is important on the vital plane is the force or feeling and the form expresses it. A vital being has a characteristic form but he can vary it or mask his true form under others. What is primary on the mental plane is the perception, the idea, the mental significance and the form expresses that and these mental forms too can vary — there can be many forms expressing an idea in different ways or on different sides of the idea. Form exists but it is more plastic and variable than in physical nature.

As to the Gods, man can build forms which they will accept; but these forms too are inspired into man's mind from the planes to which the God belongs. All creation has the two sides, the formed and the formless; the Gods too are formless and yet have forms, but a Godhead can take many forms, here Maheshwari, there Pallas Athene. Maheshwari herself has many forms in her lesser manifestations, Durga, Uma, Parvati, Chandi etc. The Gods are not limited to human forms — man also has not always seen them in human forms only.

The Gods and the Overmind

The natives of the Overmind are Gods. Naturally the Gods rule the cosmos.

*

The Overmind is the world of the Gods and the Gods are not merely Powers, but have Forms also.

*

In the Overmind the Gods are still separated existences.

*

Beyond the Overmind (in the supramental nearest the Overmind for instance) the Gods are eternal in their principle, but not in their forms and separate activities; they are there simply aspects of the One. If you meet a Godhead there, it is not as a separate Person; you feel only the Divine having a particular face, as it were, and relation with you for a certain purpose.

*

The Formateurs of the Overmind have shaped nothing evil — it is the lower forces that receive from the Overmind and distort its forces.

Vedic Gods of the Indian Tradition

There are many forms of Agni, — the solar fire, the vaidyuta fire and the nether fire are one Trinity — the fivefold fire is part of the Vedic symbolism of sacrifice.

*

Vayu and Indra are cosmic godheads presiding over the action of cosmic principles — they are not the manomaya purusha or pranamaya purusha in each man. You have a mental being or purusha in you and a vital being or purusha, but you cannot say that you are in your mind Indra or in your vital Vayu. The Purusha is an essential being supporting the play of Prakriti — the Godhead (Indra, Vayu) is a dynamic being manifested in Prakriti for the works of the plane to which he belongs. There is an immense difference.

*

Yes, Mitra is rather a combination of the two powers [*Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati*].

*

I indicate the psychological powers which they [*six Vedic Gods*] bring with them:

Mitra — Harmony.

Varuna — Wideness.

Aryaman — Power, Tapasya.

Brihaspati — Wisdom (Word and Knowledge).

Vishnu — Cosmic Consciousness.

Vayu — Life.

Post-Vedic Gods of the Indian Tradition

Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva are only three Powers and Personalities of the One Cosmic Godhead.

*

Brahma is the Power of the Divine that stands behind formation and creation.

*

As for Vishnu being the creator, all the three Gods are often spoken of as creating the universe — even Shiva who is by tradition the Destroyer.

*

There is no particular connection between Shiva and the Overmind — the Overmind is the higher station of all the Gods.

*

Mahashiva means a greater manifestation than that ordinarily worshipped as Shiva — the creative dance of a greater Divine manifesting Power.

*

At X's conscientious hesitations between Krishna and Shakti and Shiva I could not help indulging in a smile. If a man is attracted by one form or two forms only of the Divine, it is all right, — but if he is drawn to several at a time he need not torment himself

over it. A man of some development has necessarily several sides in his nature and it is quite natural that different aspects should draw or govern different personalities in him — he can very well accept them all and harmonise them in the One Divine and the One Adya Shakti of whom all are the manifestations.

*

Shiva is the Lord of Tapas. The power is the power of Tapas.

Krishna as a godhead is the Lord of Ananda, Love and Bhakti; as an incarnation, he manifests the union of wisdom (Jnana) and works and leads the earth-evolution through this towards union with the Divine by Ananda, Love and Bhakti.

The Devi is the Divine Shakti — the Consciousness and Power of the Divine, the Mother and Energy of the worlds. All powers are hers. Sometimes Devi-power may mean the power of the universal World-Force; but this is only one side of the Shakti.

*

Mahakali and Kali are not the same, Kali is a lesser form. Mahakali in the higher planes appears usually with the golden colour.

*

Ganesh is the Power that removes obstacles by the force of Knowledge — Kartikeya represents victory over the hostile Powers. Of course the names given are human, but the Gods exist.

*

Ganesh (among other things) is the devata of spiritual Knowledge — so as you are getting this knowledge, you saw yourself in this form, identified with Ganesh.

Chapter Three

The Hostile Forces and Hostile Beings

The Existence of the Hostile Forces

The hostile forces exist and have been known to Yogic experience ever since the days of the Veda and Zoroaster in Asia (and the mysteries of Egypt and Chaldea and the Cabbala) and in Europe also from old times. These things of course cannot be felt or known so long as one lives in the ordinary mind and its ideas and perceptions — for there there are only two categories of influences recognisable, the ideas and feelings and actions of oneself and others and the play of environment and physical forces. But once one begins to get the inner view of things, it is different. One begins to experience that all is an action of forces, forces of Prakriti psychological as well as physical which play upon our nature — and these are conscious forces or are supported by a consciousness or consciousnesses behind. One is in the midst of a big universal working and it is impossible any longer to explain everything as the result of one's own sole and independent personality. You yourself have at one time written that your crises of despair etc. came upon you as if thrown on you and worked themselves out without your being able to determine or put an end to them. That means an action of universal forces and not merely an independent action of your own personality, though it is something in your nature of which they make use. But you are not conscious, and others also, of this intervention and pressure at its source for the reason I state. Those in the Asram who have developed the inner view of things on the vital plane¹ have plenty of experience of the hostile forces.

¹ One may have the experiences on the mental plane without this knowledge coming — for there Mind and Idea predominate and one does not feel the play of Forces —

However, you need not personally concern yourself with them so long as they remain incognito.

*

It is true that all comes from the Divine and it is true also that a Divine Presence and a Divine Will is behind all that happens and leads the world towards a divine goal.

At the same time it is also taught in the Gita that this world is a world of obscurity and ignorance and to attain to the Divine one must overcome certain forces of Nature, such as Desire, which the Gita calls the enemy difficult to overcome. It is in this sense that we speak of hostile forces — those which stand in the way of coming out of the Ignorance and attaining to the consciousness of the Divine.

It is again true that those who have a complete and living faith in the Divine and a perfect sincerity in their vision of the Divine everywhere and a pure sattwic nature need not trouble themselves about the hostile forces — for from them the forces of the Ignorance fall back and cannot take possession of their nature.

The teaching about the hostile forces (Asuri Rakshasi forces) is necessary for those who have a divided consciousness or a more rajasic temperament — for if they are not on their guard they may fall into the control of undesirable forces of Desire and Ego —

*rākṣasīm āsurīm caiva prakṛtiṁ mohinīm śritāḥ*²

*

Yes, they [*the hostile forces*] have their own world and, if they kept to it, there could be no objection to their existence. There is a world that is natural to them and has its own rhythm, its own

it is only in the vital that that becomes clear. In the mind plane they manifest at most as mental suggestions and not as concrete Powers. Also if one looks at things with the Mind only (even though it be the Inner Mind), one may see the subtle play of Nature-Forces but without recognising the conscious intention which we call hostile.

² “*Dwelling in the deluding Asuric and Rakshasic nature.*” Gita 9.12. — Ed.

dharmā — just as the lesser gods have theirs. But, they want to dominate the evolution and for that purpose they have taken their station in the vital worlds which influence the earth nature and give it its materials for life.

They were created or rather manifested like other orders of being as a type or several types expressing some cosmic stress, some possibility in the Infinite, the expression of a certain kind of consciousness and force. When the work that they are permitted to do on earth, the work of negation, perversion, miscreation is finished they will be destroyed here, but there is no reason to suppose that they may not exist in their own universe, as it were, outside the system here. For here their presence is an Adharma, a disturbance of the true harmony and natural evolution there should be on the earth plane; it is an intrusion and not a natural presence.

How did the Ignorance come into being out of Sachchidananda? Or ego? The Hostile Forces in their own world embody ego self-fulfilled and having its own free play — ego on earth is not self-fulfilled and not meant to be, it is in conflict with a cosmic Force greater than itself and is only a temporary expedient for bringing forth individuality out of the indeterminateness of just conscient life and inconscient Matter.

*

If there were no hostile forces and there were still the evolutionary world, there could be ignorance still but not perversity in the ignorance. All would be a partial truth acting through imperfect instruments but for the best purposes of this or that stage in a progressive manifestation.

The Nature of the Hostile Forces

The mere intensity of the force does not show that it is a bad power; the Divine Force often works with a great intensity. Everything depends on the nature of the force and its working; what does it do, what seems to be its purpose? If it works to purify or open the system, or brings with it light or peace or

prepares the change of the thought, ideas, feelings, character in the sense of a turning towards a higher consciousness, then it is the right force. If it is dark or obscure or perturbs the being with rajasic or egoistic suggestions or excites the lower nature, then it is an adverse Force.

*

The hostiles have themselves bodies though not of a gross physical kind — they see, but with a subtle seeing that includes not only bodies, but movements of forces, thoughts, feelings.

*

Very great [*are the occult powers of the hostile beings*] — it is their occult powers and knowledge of occult processes that make them so strong and effective.

*

The lesser forces of Light are usually too much insistent on seeking for Truth to make effectivity their logic or their rule — the hostiles are too pragmatic to care for Truth, they want only success. As for the greater Forces (e.g. Overmind) they are dynamic and try always to make consciousness effective, but they insist on consciousness, while the hostiles care nothing for that — the more unconscious you are and their automatic tool, the better they are pleased — for it is unconsciousness that gives them their chance.

The Conquest of the Hostile Forces

The universe is certainly or has been up to now in appearance a rough and wasteful game with the dice of chance loaded in favour of the Powers of darkness, the Lords of obscurity, falsehood, death and suffering. But we have to take it as it is and find out — if we reject the way out of the old sages — the way to conquer. Spiritual experience shows that there is behind it all a wide terrain of equality, peace, calm, freedom, and it is only by getting into it that we can have the eye that sees and

hope to gain the power that conquers.

*

It [*the adverse force*] is the Power that keeps up ignorance and darkness in the world — it can only be destroyed when mankind is no longer in love with ignorance and darkness. Each sadhak has to push it out of contact with his being. When it has gone from him, then there will be no longer any serious difficulties in his sadhana.

*

The hostile Forces are Powers of Darkness who are in revolt against the Light and the Truth and want to keep this world under their rule in darkness and ignorance. Whenever anyone wants to reach the Truth, to realise the Divine, they stand in the way as much as possible. But what they are specially against is the work the Mother and myself are doing, to bring down the Light here into the earth and establish the Truth — that would mean their own expulsion. So they always try to destroy the work as a whole and to spoil the sadhana of each sadhak. It is not only you who are attacked: all are attacked more or less — especially when there is a great progress, these forces try to interfere. The only way to avoid it is to be entirely turned towards the Mother and to refuse any opportunity to these Forces.

*

The evil forces are perversions of the Truth by the Ignorance — in any complete transformation they must disappear and the Truth behind them be delivered. In this way they can be said to be transformed by destruction.

Asuras, Rakshasas and Other Vital Beings

The Asuras and Rakshasas etc. do not belong to the earth, but to supraphysical worlds; but they act upon the earth life and dispute the control of human life and character and action with the Gods. They are the Powers of Darkness combating the Powers of Light.

Sometimes they possess men in order to act through them, sometimes they take birth in a human body. When their use in the play is over, they will either change or disappear or no longer seek to intervene in the earth-play.

*

These things [*such as temptation by Apsaras*] are possible but they do not usually happen — because it is difficult for beings of the subtle worlds to materialise to such an extent or for a long time. They prefer to act by influencing human beings, using them as instruments or taking possession of a human mind and body.

*

There are two kinds of Asuras — one kind were divine in their origin but have fallen from their divinity by self-will and opposition to the intention of the Divine: they are spoken of in the Hindu scriptures as the former or earlier gods; these can be converted and their conversion is indeed necessary for the ultimate purposes of the universe. But the ordinary Asura is not of this character, is not an evolutionary but a typical being and represents a fixed principle of the creation which does not evolve or change and is not intended to do so. These Asuras, as also the other hostile beings, Rakshasas, Pisachas and others resemble the devils of the Christian tradition and oppose the divine intention and the evolutionary purpose in the human being; they don't change the purpose in them for which they exist which is evil, but have to be destroyed like the evil. The Asura has no soul, no psychic being which has to evolve to a higher state; he has only an ego and usually a very powerful ego; he has a mind, sometimes even a highly intellectualised mind; but the basis of his thinking and feeling is vital and not mental, at the service of his desire and not of truth. He is a formation assumed by the life-principle for a particular kind of work and not a divine formation or a soul.

*

Yes. Some kinds of Asuras are very religious, very fanatical about

their religion, very strict about rules of ethical conduct. Others of course are just the opposite. There are others who use spiritual ideas without believing in them to give them a perverted twist and delude the sadhaka. It is what Shakespeare described as the Devil quoting Scripture for his own purpose.

At present what they are most doing is to try to raise up the obscurity and weakness of the most physical mind, vital, material parts to prevent the progress or fulfilment of the sadhana.

*

As to Asuras, not many of them have shown signs of repentance or possibility of conversion up to now. It is not surprising that they should be powerful in a world of Ignorance, for they have only to persuade people to follow the established bent of their lower nature, while the Divine calls always for a change of nature. It is not to be wondered at that the Asura has an easier task and more momentary success in his combinations. But that temporary success does not bind the future.

*

It is the movements of the lower nature that get purified. The Asuras themselves are not so easily transformed.

*

The Asuras are really the dark side of the mental, or more strictly, of the vital mind plane. This mind is the very field of the Asuras. Their main characteristic is egoistic strength and struggle, which refuse the higher law. The Asura has self-control, *tapas* and intelligence, but all that for the sake of his ego. On the lower vital plane the corresponding forces we call the Rakshasas which represent violent passions and influences. There are also other kinds of beings on the vital plane which are called the Pisachas and Pramathas. They manifest more or less in the physico-vital.

On the physical plane the corresponding forces are obscure beings, more forces than beings, what the Theosophists call the elementals. They are not strongly individualised beings like the Rakshasas and Asuras, but ignorant and obscure forces

working in the subtle physical plane. What we in Sanskrit call the Bhutas mostly come under this class. But there are two kinds of elementals, the one mischievous and the other not.

There are no Asuras on the higher planes where the Truth prevails, except in the Vedic sense — “the Divine in its strength”. The mental and vital Asuras are only a deviation of that power.

*

The Gandharvas are of the vital plane but they are vital Gods, not Asuras. Many Asuras are beautiful in appearance and can carry even a splendour or light with them. It is the Rakshasas, Pisachas, etc. who are ugly or evil in appearance.

*

Some of the vital beings are very intelligent — but they do not make friends with the Light — they only try to avoid destruction and wait their time.

*

Very few [*vital beings*] come upon earth — they prefer to get hold of human beings and make them their instruments. They do not evolve. They have no evolved or evolving psychic being and they dread to incarnate just because they would then be obliged to progress and evolve the psychic.

*

There is no particular number [*of vital beings that surround a person*] — but sometimes there are particular vital beings that attach themselves to a man if he accepts them.

Section Two

The Avatar and the Vibhuti

Chapter One

The Meaning and Purpose of Avatarhood

The Avatar or Incarnation

Surely for the earth consciousness it is so [*the very fact that the Divine manifests himself is the greatest of all splendours*]. Consider the obscurity here and what it would be if the Divine did not directly intervene and the Light of Lights did not break out of the obscurity — for that is the meaning of the manifestation.

*

An Incarnation is the Divine Consciousness and Being manifesting through a physical body. It is possible from any plane.

*

It is the omnipresent cosmic Divine who supports the action of the universe; if there is an Incarnation, it does not in the least diminish the cosmic Presence and the cosmic action in the three or thirty million universes.

*

The descending Power chooses its own place, body, time for the manifestation; something of that is foreseen by those who have vision but not the whole.

*

An Avatar is supposed to be from birth. Each soul at its birth takes from the cosmic mind, life and matter to shape a new external personality for himself. What prevents the Divine from doing the same? What is continued from birth to birth is the inner being.

*

Each being in a new birth prepares a new mind, life and body — otherwise John Smith would always be John Smith and would have no chance of being Piyush Kanti Ghose. Of course inside there are old personalities contributing to the new lila — but I am speaking of the new visible personality, the outer man, mental, vital, physical. It is the psychic being that keeps the link from birth to birth and makes all the manifestations of the same person. It is therefore to be expected that the Avatar should take on a new personality each time, a personality suited for the new times, work, surroundings. In my own view of things, however, the new personality has a series of non-Avatar births behind him, births in which the intermediate evolution has been followed and assisted from age to age.

*

If they [*the difficulties and struggles of the Avatar*] are shams, they have no value for others or for any true effect. If they have no value for others or for any true effect, they are perfectly irrational and unreal and meaningless. The Divine does not need to suffer or struggle for himself; if he takes on these things it is in order to bear the world-burden and help the world and men; and if the sufferings and struggles are to be of any help, they must be real. A sham or falsehood cannot help. They must be as real as the struggles and sufferings of men themselves — the Divine bears them and at the same time shows the way out of them. Otherwise his assumption of human nature has no meaning and no utility and no value. It is strange that you cannot understand or refuse to admit so simple and crucial a point. What is the use of admitting Avatarhood if you take all the meaning out of it?

The Divine and Human Sides of the Avatar

There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness behind and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature, under the conditions of Nature, and it uses it according to the rules of the game

—though also sometimes to change the rules of the game. If Avatarhood is only a flashing miracle, then I have no use for it. If it is a coherent part of the arrangement of the omnipresent Divine in Nature, then I can understand and accept it.

*

As for the Divine and human, that also is a mind-made difficulty. The Divine is there in the human, and the human fulfilling and exceeding its highest aspirations and tendencies becomes the Divine. That is what your silly X could not understand — that when the Divine descends, he takes upon himself the burden of humanity in order to exceed it — he becomes human in order to show humanity how to become Divine. But that cannot be if there is only a weakling without any divine Presence within or divine Force behind him — he has to be strong in order to put his strength into all who are willing to receive it. There is therefore in him a double element — human in front, divine behind — and it is that which gives the impression of unfathomableness of which X complained. If you look upon the human alone, looking with the external eye only and are not willing or ready to see anything else, you will see a human being only — if you look for the Divine, you will find the Divine.

*

The Avatar is not supposed to act in a non-human way — he takes up human action and uses human methods with the human consciousness in front and the Divine behind. If he did not his taking a human body would have no meaning and would be of no use to anybody. He could just as well have stayed above and done things from there.

*

What do you mean by lust? Avatars can be married and have children and that is not possible without sex; they can have friendships, enmities, family feelings etc. etc. — these are vital things. I think you are under the impression that an Avatar must be a saint or a Yogi.

*

One can be the head of a spiritual organisation or the Messiah of a religion or an Avatar without in this life reaching the Supermind and beyond.

Human Judgments of the Divine

It is true that it is impossible for the limited human reason to judge the way or purpose of the Divine, which is the way of the Infinite dealing with the finite.

*

It is not by your mind that you can hope to understand the Divine and its action, but by the growth of the true and divine consciousness within you. If the Divine were to unveil and reveal itself in all its glory, the mind might feel a Presence, but it would not understand its action or its nature. It is in the measure of your own realisation and by the birth and growth of that greater consciousness in yourself that you will see the Divine and understand its action even behind its terrestrial disguises.

*

Men's way of doing things is a mental convention; they see things and do things with the mind and what they want is a mental and human perfection. When they think of a manifestation of Divinity, they think it must be an extraordinary perfection in doing the ordinary human things — an extraordinary business faculty, political, poetic or artistic faculty, an accurate memory, not making any mental mistakes, not undergoing any defeat or failure. Or else they think of things which they call superhuman like the people who expected me not to eat food at all or wanted me to know and tell them what will be the value of the cotton shares in Bombay from day to day, or like those who think great Yogis are those who sleep on nails or eat them. All that has nothing to do with manifesting the Divine.

At that rate Rama would be undivine because he followed the Mayamriga as if it were a natural deer and Krishna would be undivine because he was forced by Jarasandha to take refuge

in distant Dwaraka. These human ideas are false.

The Divinity acts according to another consciousness — the consciousness of the Truth above and the Lila below and it acts according to the need of the Lila, not according to men's ideas of what it should or should not do. This is the first thing one must grasp, otherwise one can understand nothing about the manifestation of the Divine.

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I do not know why you should be suddenly bewildered by what I wrote¹ — it is nothing new and we have been saying it since a whole eternity. I wrote this short answer in reference to a question which supposed that certain “perfections” must be demanded of the Divine Manifestation which seemed to me quite irrelevant to the reality. I put forward two propositions which appear to me indisputable unless we are to revise all spiritual knowledge in favour of modern European ideas about things.

First, the Divine Manifestation even when it manifests in mental and human ways has behind it a consciousness greater than the mind and not bound by the petty mental and moral conventions of this very ignorant human race — so that to impose these standards on the Divine is to try to do what is irrational and impossible. Secondly, this Divine Consciousness behind the apparent personality is concerned with only two things in a fundamental way — the Truth above and here below the Lila and the purpose of the incarnation or manifestation and it does what is necessary for that in the way its greater than human consciousness sees to be the necessary and intended way. I shall try if I can develop that when I write about it — perhaps I shall take your remarks about Rama and Krishna as the starting-point — but that I shall see hereafter.

But I do not understand how all that can prevent me from answering mental questions. On my own showing, if it is necessary for the divine purpose, it has to be done. Ramakrishna himself whom you quote for the futility of asking questions

¹ See the letter beginning “I would not describe” on pages 416–17. — Ed.

answered thousands of questions, I believe. But the answers must be such as Ramakrishna gave and such as I try to give, answers from a higher spiritual experience, from a deeper source of knowledge and not lucubrations of the logical intellect trying to coordinate its ignorance; still less can they be a placing of the Divine or the Divine Truth before the judgment of the intellect to be condemned or acquitted by that authority — for the authority here has no sufficient jurisdiction or competence.

The Work of the Avatar

I have said that the Avatar is one who comes to open the Way for humanity to a higher consciousness — if nobody can follow the Way, then either our conception of the thing, which is also that of Christ and Krishna and Buddha, is all wrong or the whole life and action of the Avatar is quite futile. X seems to say that there is no way and no possibility of following, that the struggles and sufferings of the Avatar are unreal and all humbug, — there is no possibility of struggle for one who represents the Divine. Such a conception makes nonsense of the whole idea of Avatarhood — there is then no reason in it, no necessity for it, no meaning in it. The Divine being all-powerful can lift people up without bothering to come down on earth. It is only if it is part of the world-arrangement that he should take upon himself the burden of humanity and open the Way that Avatarhood has any meaning.

*

If the Divine were not in essence omnipotent, he could not be omnipotent anywhere — whether in the supramental or anywhere else. Because he chooses to limit or determine his action by conditions, it does not make him less omnipotent. His self-limitation is itself an act of omnipotence.

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Why the immortal Hell should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and

serves better the ultimate purpose? What if the gentleman in question had to be given his chance as Duryodhan was given his chance when Krishna went to him as ambassador in a last effort to avoid the massacre of Kurukshetra? What rigid primitive notions are these about the Divine! And what about my explanation of how the Divine acts through the Avatar?² It seems all to have gone into water.

By the way about the ass becoming an elephant — what I meant to say was that the only reason why it can't be done is because there is no recognisable process for it. But if a process can be discovered whether by a scientist (let us say transformation or redistribution of the said ass's atoms or molecules — or what not) or by an occultist or by a Yogi, then there is no reason why it should not be done. In other words certain conditions have been established for the game and so long as those conditions remain unchanged certain things are not done — so we say they are impossible, can't be done. If the conditions are changed, then the same things are done or at least become licit — allowable, legal, according to the so-called laws of Nature, — and then we say they can be done. The Divine also acts according to the conditions of the game. He may change them, but he has to change them first, not proceed while maintaining the conditions to act by a series of miracles.

*

If your argument is that the life, actions, struggles of the Avatar (e.g. Rama's, Krishna's) are unreal because the Divine is there and knows it is all a Maya, in man also there is a self, a spirit that is immortal, untouched, divine, you can say that man's sufferings and ignorance are only put on, shams, unreal. But if man feels them as real and if the Avatar feels his work and the difficulties to be serious and real?

If the existence of the Divinity is of no practical effect, what is the use of a theoretical admission? The manifestation of the

² The "explanation" Sri Aurobindo refers to here is probably the one presented in *Essays on the Gita, First Series, Chapters XV to XVII.* — Ed.

Divinity in the Avatar is of help to man because it helps him to discover his own divinity, find the way to realise it. If the difference is so great that the humanity by its very nature prevents all possibility of following the way opened by the Avatar, it merely means that there is no divinity in man that can respond to the Divinity in the Avatar.

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I repeat, the Divine when he takes on the burden of terrestrial nature, takes it fully, sincerely and without any conjuring tricks or pretence. If he has something behind him which emerges always out of the coverings, it is the same thing in essence, even if greater in degree, that there is behind others — and it is to awaken that that he is there.

The psychic being does the same for all who are intended for the spiritual way — men need not be extraordinary beings to follow Yoga. That is the mistake you are making — to harp on greatness as if only the great can be spiritual.

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An Avatar or Vibhuti have the knowledge that is necessary for their work, they need not have more. There was absolutely no reason why Buddha should know what was going on in Rome. An Avatar even does not manifest all the Divine omniscience and omnipotence; he has not come for any such unnecessary display; all that is behind him but not in the front of his consciousness. As for the Vibhuti, the Vibhuti need not even know that he is a power of the Divine. Some Vibhutis, like Julius Caesar for instance, have been atheists. Buddha himself did not believe in a personal God, only in some impersonal and indescribable Permanent.

The Avatar: Historicity and Symbols

Then as to the Avatar and the symbols. There is, it seems to me, a cardinal error in the modern insistence on the biographical and historical, that is to say, the external factuality of the Avatar,

the incidents of his outward life. What matters is the spiritual Reality, the Power, the Influence that came with him or that he brought down by his action and his existence. First of all what matters in a spiritual man's life is not what he did or what he was outside to the view of the men of his time (that is what historicity or biography comes to, does it not?) but what he was and did within; it is only that that gives any value to his outer life at all. It is the inner life that gives to the outer any power it may have, and the inner life of a spiritual man is something vast and full and, at least in the great figures, so crowded and teeming with significant things that no biographer or historian could ever hope to seize it all or tell it. Whatever is significant in the outward life is so because it is a symbol of what has been realised within himself and one may go on and say that the inner life also is only significant as an expression, a living representation of the movement of the Divinity behind it. That is why we need not enquire whether the stories about Krishna were transcripts, however loose, of his acts on earth or are symbol-representations of what Krishna was and is for men, of the Divinity expressing itself in the figure of Krishna. Buddha's renunciation, his temptation by Mara, his enlightenment under the Bo-Tree are such symbols, so too the virgin birth, the temptation in the desert, the crucifixion of Christ are such symbols true by what they signify, even if they are not scrupulously recorded historical events. The outward facts as related of Christ or Buddha come to not much more than what has happened in many other lives — what is it that gives Buddha or Christ their enormous place in the spiritual world? It was because something manifested through them that was more than any outward event or any teaching. The verifiable historicity gives us very little of that, yet it is that only that matters. So it seems to me that Krishnaprem is fundamentally right in what he says of the symbols. To the physical mind only the words and facts and acts of a man matter; to the inner mind it is the spiritual happenings in him that matter. Even the teachings of Christ and Buddha are spiritually true not as mere mental teachings but as the expression of spiritual states or happenings in them which by their life on earth they made possible (or at

any rate more dynamically potential) in others. Also evidently sectarian walls are a mistake, an accretion, a mental limiting of the Truth which may serve a mental, but not a spiritual purpose. The Avatar, the Guru have no meaning if they do not stand for the Eternal; it is that that makes them what they are for the worshipper or the disciple.

It is also a fact that nobody can give you any spiritual revelation which does not come from something in one's own true Self, it is always the Divine who reveals himself and the Divine is within you; so He who reveals must be felt in your own heart. Your query here simply suggests that this is a truth which can be misinterpreted or misused, but so can every spiritual truth if it is taken hold of in the wrong way — and the human mind has a great penchant for taking Truth by the wrong end and arriving at falsehood. All statements about these things are, after all, mental statements and at the mercy of any mind that interprets them. There is a snag in every such statement created not by the Truth that it expresses but by the mind's interpretation. The snag here (what you call the slip) lies not in the statement itself which is quite correct, but in the deflected sense in which it may be taken by ignorant or self-sufficient minds enamoured of their ego. Many have put forward the "own self" gospel without taking the trouble to see whether it is the true Self, have pitted the ignorance of their "own self" — in fact, their ego — against the knowledge of the Guru or made their ego or something that flattered and fostered it the *Ishta Devata*. The snag in the worship of Guru or Avatar is a sectarian bias which insists on the Representative or the Manifestation but loses sight of the Manifested; the snag in the emphasis on the other side is the ignoring of the need or belittling of the value of the Representative or Manifestation and the substitution not of the true Self one in all but of one's "own self" as the guide and light. How many have done that here and lost the way through the pull of the magnified ego which is one of the great perils on the way! However that does not lessen the truth of the things said by Krishnaprem — only in looking at the many sides of Truth one must put each thing in its place in the harmony of the All which

is for us the expression of the Supreme.

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The answer to the question [*whether the Krishna of Brindavan and the stories of his lila are literally true or merely symbols of deep spiritual realities*] depends on what value one attaches to spiritual experience and to mystic and occult experience, that is to say, to the data of other planes of consciousness than the physical, as also on the nature of the relations between the cosmic consciousness and the individual and collective consciousness of man. From the point of view of spiritual and occult Truth, what takes shape in the consciousness of man is a reflection and particular kind of formation, in a difficult medium, of things much greater in their light, power and beauty or in their force and range which come to it from the cosmic consciousness of which man is a limited and, in his present state of evolution, a still ignorant part. All this explanation about the genius of the race, of the consciousness of a nation creating the Gods and their forms is a very partial, somewhat superficial and in itself a misleading truth. Man's mind is not an original creator, it is an intermediary; to start creating it must receive an initiating "inspiration", a transmission or a suggestion from the cosmic consciousness, and with that it does what it can. God is, but man's conceptions of God are reflections in his own mentality, sometimes of the Divine, sometimes of other Beings and Powers and they are what his mentality can make of the suggestions that come to him, generally very partial and imperfect so long as they are still mental, so long as he has not arrived at a higher and truer, a spiritual or mystic knowledge. The Gods already exist, they are not created by man even though he does seem to conceive them in his own image; fundamentally, he formulates as best he can what truth about them he receives from the cosmic Reality. An artist or a bhakta may have a vision of the Gods and it may get stabilised and generalised in the consciousness of the race and in that sense it may be true that man gives their forms to the Gods; but he does not invent these forms, he records what he sees; the forms that he gives are given to him. In the

“conventional” form of Krishna men have embodied what they could see of his eternal beauty and what they have seen may be true as well as beautiful, it conveys something of the form, but it is fairly certain that if there is an eternal form of that eternal beauty it is a thousand times more beautiful than what man had as yet been able to see of it. Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is a Power, a Godhead, for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being. Such Beings are as real and more permanently real than the men they influence, but they belong to a higher plane, are part of the cosmic consciousness and being and act here on earth by shaping the human consciousness on which they exercise their influence. It is natural for man who only sees his own consciousness individual, national or racial at work and does not see what works upon it and shapes it, to think that all is created by him and there is nothing cosmic and greater behind it. The Krishna consciousness is a reality, but if there were no Krishna, there could be no Krishna consciousness: except in arbitrary metaphysical abstractions there can be no consciousness without a Being who is conscious. It is the person who gives value and reality to the personality, he expresses himself in it and is not constituted by it. Krishna is a being, a person and it is as the Divine Person that we meet him, hear his voice, speak with him and feel his presence. To speak of the consciousness of Krishna as something separate from Krishna is an error of the mind, which is always separating the inseparable and which also tends to regard the impersonal, because it is abstract, as greater, more real and more enduring than the person. Such divisions may be useful to the mind for its own purposes, but it is not the real truth; in the real truth the being or person and its impersonality or state of being are one reality.

The historicity of Krishna is of less spiritual importance and is not essential, but it has still a considerable value. It does not seem to me that there can be any reasonable doubt that Krishna the man was not a legend or a poetic invention but actually existed upon earth and played a part in the Indian past. Two facts emerge clearly, that he was regarded as an important

spiritual figure, one whose spiritual illumination was recorded in one of the Upanishads, and that he was traditionally regarded as a divine man, one worshipped after his death as a deity; this is apart from the story in the Mahabharata and the Puranas. There is no reason to suppose that the connection of his name with the development of the Bhagavata religion, an important current in the stream of Indian spirituality, was founded on a mere legend or poetic invention. The Mahabharata is a poem and not history, but it is clearly a poem founded on a great historical event, traditionally preserved in memory; some of the figures connected with it, Dhritarashtra, Parikshit, for instance, certainly existed and the story of the part played by Krishna as leader, warrior and statesman can be accepted as probable in itself and to all appearance founded on a tradition which can be given a historical value and has not the air of a myth or a sheer poetical invention. That is as much as can be positively said from the point of view of the theoretical reason as to the historical figure of the man Krishna; but in my view there is much more than that in it and I have always regarded the incarnation as a fact and accepted the historicity of Krishna as I accept the historicity of Christ.

The story of Brindavan is another matter; it does not enter into the main story of the Mahabharata and has a Puranic origin and it could be maintained that it was intended all along to have a symbolic character. At one time I accepted that explanation, but I had to abandon it afterwards; there is nothing in the Puranas that betrays any such intention. It seems to me that it is related as something that actually occurred or occurs somewhere; the Gopis are to them realities and not symbols. It was for them at the least an occult truth, and occult and symbolic are not the same thing; the symbol may be only a significant mental construction or only a fanciful invention, but the occult is a reality which is actual somewhere, behind the material scene as it were and can have its truth for the terrestrial life and its influence upon it, may even embody itself there. The lila of the Gopis seems to be conceived as something which is always going on in a divine Gokul and which projected itself in

an earthly Brindavan and can always be realised and its meaning made actual in the soul. It is to be presumed that the writers of the Puranas took it as having been actually projected on earth in the life of the incarnate Krishna and it has always been so accepted by the religious mind of India.

These questions and the speculations to which they have given rise have no indispensable connection with the spiritual life. There what matters is the contact with Krishna and the growth towards the Krishna consciousness, the presence, the spiritual relation, the union in the soul and, till that is reached, the aspiration, the growth in bhakti and whatever illumination one can get on the way. To one who has had these things, lived in the presence, heard the voice, known Krishna as Friend or Lover, Guide, Teacher, Master or, still more, has had his whole consciousness changed by the contact, or felt the presence within him, all such questions have only an outer and superficial interest. So also, to one who has had contact with the inner Brindavan and the lila of the Gopis, made the surrender and undergone the spell of the joy and the beauty or even only turned to the sound of the flute, the rest hardly matters. But from another point of view, if one can accept the historical reality of the incarnation, there is this great spiritual gain that one has a *point d'appui* for a more concrete realisation in the conviction that once at least the Divine has visibly touched the earth, made the complete manifestation possible, made it possible for the divine supernature to descend into this evolving but still very imperfect terrestrial nature.

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What he [*Krishnaprem*] says³ — the central thing — is very correct as always, the position of all who have any notion of spirituality, though the religionists seem to find it difficult to get to it. But though Christ and Krishna are the same, they are the same in difference; that is indeed the utility of so many manifestations

³ In his letter to the correspondent, *Krishnaprem* observed that “Christ and Krishna are the same.” He also said: “Why is Christianity tottering? Primarily because the Christians have pinned their faith on historical events and a historical person.” — Ed.

instead of there being only one as these missionaries would have it. But is it really because the historical Christ has been made too much the foundation-stone of the faith that Christianity is failing? It may be something inadequate in the religion itself — perhaps in religion itself; for all religions are a little off-colour now. The need of a larger opening of the soul into the Light is being felt, an opening through which the expanding human mind and heart can follow.

The Avatar and the Vibhuti

The Avatar is necessary when a special work is to be done and in crises of the evolution. The Avatar is a special manifestation, while for the rest of the time it is the Divine working within the ordinary human limits as a Vibhuti.

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An Avatar, roughly speaking, is one who is conscious of the presence and power of the Divine born in him or descended into him and governing from within his will and life and action; he feels identified inwardly with this divine power and presence. A Vibhuti is supposed to embody some power of the Divine and is enabled by it to act with great force in the world but that is all that is necessary to make him a Vibhuti: the power may be very great but the consciousness is not that of an inborn or indwelling Divinity. This is the distinction we can gather from the Gita which is the main authority on this subject. If we follow this distinction, we can confidently say from what is related of them that Rama and Krishna can be accepted as Avatars; Buddha figures as such although with a more impersonal consciousness of the Power within him; Ramakrishna voiced the same consciousness when he spoke of him who was Rama and who was Krishna being within him. But Chaitanya's case is peculiar; for according to the accounts he ordinarily felt and declared himself a bhakta of Krishna and nothing more, but in great moments he manifested Krishna, grew luminous in mind and body and was Krishna himself and spoke and

acted as the Lord. His contemporaries saw in him an Avatar of Krishna, a manifestation of the divine love. Shankara and Vivekananda were certainly Vibhutis; they cannot be reckoned as more, though as Vibhutis they were very great.

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It was not my intention to question in any degree Chaitanya's position as an Avatar of Krishna and the divine love. That character of the manifestation appears very clearly from all the accounts about him and even, if what is related about the appearance of Krishna in him from time to time is accepted, these outbursts of the splendour of the Divine Being are among the most remarkable in the story of the Avatar. As for Ramakrishna, the manifestation in him was not so intense but more many-sided and fortunately there can be no doubt about the authenticity of the details of his talk and actions since they have been recorded from day to day by so competent an observer as Mahendranath Gupta. I would not care to enter into any comparison as between these two great spiritual personalities; both exercised an extraordinary influence and did something supreme in their own sphere.

Chapter Two

Specific Avatars and Vibhutis

The Ten Avatars as a Parable of Evolution

Avatarhood would have little meaning if it were not connected with the evolution. The Hindu procession of the ten Avatars is itself, as it were, a parable of evolution. First the Fish Avatar, then the amphibious animal between land and water, then the land animal, then the Man-Lion Avatar, bridging man and animal, then man as dwarf, small and undeveloped and physical but containing in himself the godhead and taking possession of existence, then the rajasic, sattwic, nirguna Avatars, leading the human development from the vital rajasic to the sattwic mental man and again the overmental superman. Krishna, Buddha and Kalki depict the last three stages, the stages of the spiritual development — Krishna opens the possibility of Overmind, Buddha tries to shoot beyond to the supreme liberation but that liberation is still negative, not returning upon earth to complete positively the evolution; Kalki is to correct this by bringing the Kingdom of the Divine upon earth, destroying the opposing Asura forces. The progression is striking and unmistakable.

As for the lives in between the Avatar lives, it must be remembered that Krishna speaks of many lives in the past, not only a few supreme ones, and secondly that while he speaks of himself as the Divine, in one passage he describes himself as a Vibhuti, *uṣṇīnām vāsudevaḥ*. We may therefore fairly assume that in many lives he manifested as the Vibhuti veiling the fuller Divine Consciousness. If we admit that the object of Avatarhood is to lead the evolution, this is quite reasonable, the Divine appearing as Avatar in the great transitional stages and as Vibhutis to aid the lesser transitions.

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In speaking of supreme liberation [*in the previous letter*] I was

simply taking the Buddhist, Advaita view for granted and correcting it by saying that this Nirvana view is too negative. Krishna opened the possibility of Overmind with its two sides of realisation, static and dynamic. Buddha tried to shoot from mind to Nirvana in the Supreme, just as Shankara did in another way after him. Both agree in overleaping the other stages and trying to get at a nameless and featureless Absolute. Krishna on the other hand was leading by the normal course of evolution. The next normal step is not a featureless Absolute, but the Supermind. I consider that in trying to overshoot, Buddha like Shankara made a mistake, cutting away the dynamic side of the liberation. Therefore there has to be a correction by Kalki.

I was of course dealing with the Ten Avatars as a “parable of the evolution”, and only explaining the interpretation we can put on it from that point of view. It was not my own view of the thing that I was giving.

*

I only took the Puranic list of Avatars and interpreted it as a parable of evolution, so as to show that the idea of evolution is implicit behind the theory of Avatarhood. As to whether one accepts Buddha as an Avatar or prefers to put others in his place (in some lists Balaram replaces Buddha), is a matter of individual feeling. The Buddhist Jatakas are legends about the past incarnations of the Buddha, often with a teaching implied in them, and are not a part of the Hindu system. To the Buddhists Buddha was not an Avatar at all, he was the soul climbing up the ladder of spiritual evolution till it reached the final stage of emancipation — although Hindu influence did make Buddhism develop the idea of an eternal Buddha above, that was not a universal or fundamental Buddhistic idea. Whether the Divine in manifesting his Avatarhood could choose to follow the line of evolution from the lowest scale, manifesting on each scale as a Vibhuti, is a question again to which the answer is not inevitably in the negative. If we accept the evolutionary idea, such a thing may have its place.

If Buddha taught something different from Krishna, that

does not prevent his advent from being necessary in the spiritual evolution. The only question is whether the attempt to scale the heights of an absolute Nirvana through negation of cosmic existence was a necessary step or not, having a view to the fact that one can make the attempt to reach the Highest on the *neti neti* as well as the *iti iti* line.

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Too much importance need not be attached to the details about Kalki — they are rather symbolic than an attempt to prophesy details of future history. What is expressed is something that has to come, but it is symbolically indicated, no more.

So too, too much weight need not be put on the exact figures about the Yugas in the Purana. Here again the Kala and the Yugas indicate successive periods in the cyclic wheel of evolution, the perfect state, decline and disintegration of successive ages of humanity followed by a new birth — the mathematical calculations are not the important element. The argument of the end of the Kali Yuga already come or coming and a new Satya Yuga coming is a very familiar one and there have been many who have upheld it.

Rama as an Avatar

I have no intention of entering into a supreme defence of Rama — I only entered into the points about Bali etc. because these are usually employed nowadays to belittle him as a great personality on the usual level. But from the point of view of Avatarhood I would no more think of defending his moral perfection according to modern standards than I would think of defending Napoleon or Caesar against the moralists or the democratic critics or the debunkers in order to prove that they were Vibhutis. Vibhuti, Avatar are terms which have their own meaning and scope, and they are not concerned with morality or immorality, perfection or imperfection according to small human standards or setting an example to men or showing new moral attitudes or giving new spiritual teachings. These things may or may not

be done, but they are not at all the essence of the matter.

Also, I do not consider your method of dealing with Rama's personality to be the right one. It has to be taken as a whole in the setting that Valmiki gave it (not treated as if it were the story of a modern man) and with the significance that he gave to his hero's personality, deeds and works. If it is pulled out of its setting and analysed under the dissecting knife of a modern ethical mind, it loses all its significance at once. Krishna so treated becomes a mere debauchee and trickster who no doubt did great things in politics — but so did Rama in war. Achilles and Odysseus pulled out of their setting become, one a furious egoistic savage, and the other a cruel and cunning savage. I consider myself under an obligation to enter into the spirit, significance, atmosphere of the Mahabharata, Iliad, Ramayana and identify myself with their time-spirit before I can feel what their heroes were in themselves apart from the details of their outer action.

As for the Avatarhood, I accept it for Rama first because he fills a place in the scheme and seems to me to fill it rightly — and because when I read the Ramayana I feel a great afflatus which I recognise and which makes of its story — mere faery-tale though it seems — a parable of a great critical transitional event that happened in the terrestrial evolution and gives to the main character's personality and actions a significance of the large typical cosmic kind which these actions would not have had if they had been done by another man in another scheme of events. The Avatar is not bound to do extraordinary actions, but he is bound to give his acts or his work or what he is — any of these or all — a significance and an effective power that are part of something essential to be done in the history of the earth and its races.

All the same, if anybody does not see as I do and wants to eject Rama from his place, I have no objection — I have no particular partiality for Rama — provided somebody is put in who can more worthily fill up the gap his absence leaves. There *was* somebody there, Valmiki's Rama or another Rama or somebody else not Rama.

Also I do not mean that I admit the validity of your remarks

about Rama, even taken as a piecemeal criticism; but that I have no time for today. I maintain my position about the killing of Bali and the banishment of Sita in spite of Bali's preliminary objection to the procedure, afterwards retracted, and in spite of the opinions of Rama's relatives. Necessarily from the point of view of the antique dharma — not from that of any universal moral standard — which besides does not exist, since the standard changes according to clime or age.

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No, certainly not — an Avatar is not at all bound to be a spiritual prophet — he is never in fact merely a prophet, he is a realiser, an establisher — not of outward things only, though he does realise something in the outward also, but, as I have said, of something essential and radical needed for the terrestrial evolution which is the evolution of the embodied spirit through successive stages towards the Divine. It was not at all Rama's business to establish the spiritual stage of that evolution — so he did not at all concern himself with that. His business was to destroy Ravana and to establish the Ramarajya — in other words, to fix for the future the possibility of an order proper to the sattwic civilised human being who governs his life by the reason, the finer emotions, morality or at least moral ideals, such as truth, obedience, cooperation and harmony, the sense of humour, the sense of domestic and public order, to establish this in a world still occupied by anarchic forces, the Animal Mind and the powers of the vital Ego making its own satisfaction the rule of life, in other words, the Vanara and the Rakshasa. This is the meaning of Rama and his life-work and it is according as he fulfilled it or not that he must be judged as Avatar or no Avatar. It was not his business to play the comedy of the chivalrous Kshatriya with the formidable brute beast that was Bali, it was his business to kill him and get the Animal Mind under his control. It was his business to be not necessarily a perfect, but a largely representative sattwic Man, a faithful husband and lover, a loving and obedient son, a tender and perfect brother, father, friend — he is friend of all kinds of people, friend of the outcaste Guhaka, friend of the Animal

leaders, Sugriva, Hanuman, friend of the vulture Jatayu, friend even of the Rakshasa Vibhishan. All that he was in a brilliant, striking but above all spontaneous and inevitable way, not with a forcing of this note or that like Harishchandra or Shivi, but with a certain harmonious completeness. But most of all, it was his business to typify and establish the things on which the social idea and its stability depend, truth and honour, the sense of the Dharma, public spirit and the sense of order. To the first, to truth and honour, much more even than to his filial love and obedience to his father — though to that also — he sacrificed his personal rights as the elect of the King and the Assembly and fourteen of the best years of his life and went into exile in the forests. To his public spirit and his sense of public order (the great and supreme civic virtue in the eyes of the ancient Indians, Greeks, Romans, for at that time the maintenance of the ordered community, not the separate development and satisfaction of the individual was the pressing need of human evolution) he sacrificed his own happiness and domestic life and the happiness of Sita. In that he was at one with the moral sense of all the antique races, though at variance with the later romantic individualistic sentimental morality of the modern man who can afford to have that less stern morality just because the ancients sacrificed the individual in order to make the world safe for the spirit of social order. Finally it was Rama's business to make the world safe for the ideal of the sattwic human being by destroying the sovereignty of Ravana, the Rakshasa menace. All this he did with such a divine afflatus in his personality and action that his figure has been stamped for more than two millenniums on the mind of Indian culture and what he stood for has dominated the reason and idealising mind of man in all countries — and in spite of the constant revolt of the human vital is likely to continue to do so until a greater Ideal arises. And you say in spite of all this that he was no Avatar? If you like — but at any rate he stands among the few greatest of the great Vibhutis. You may dethrone him now — for man is no longer satisfied with the sattwic ideal and is seeking for something more — but his work and meaning remain stamped on the past of the earth's evolving race.

When I spoke of the gap that would be left by his absence, I did not mean a gap among the prophets and intellectuals, but a gap in the scheme of Avatarhood — there was somebody who was the Avatar of the sattwic Human as Krishna was the Avatar of the overmental Superhuman — I see no one but Rama who can fill the place. Spiritual teachers and prophets (as also intellectuals, scientists, artists, poets, etc.) — these are at the greatest Vibhūtis, but they are not Avatars. For at that rate all religious founders would be Avatars — Joseph Smith (I think that is his name) of the Mormons, St. Francis of Assisi, Calvin, Loyola and a host of others as well as Christ, Chaitanya or Ramakrishna.

For faith, miracles, Bijoy Goswami, another occasion. I wanted to say this much more about Rama — which is still only a hint and is not the thing I was going to write about the general principle of Avatarhood.¹

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I am rather perplexed by your strictures on Rama. Cowardice is the last thing that can be charged against Valmiki's Rama; he has always been considered as a warrior and it is the "martial races" of India who have made him their god. Valmiki everywhere paints him as a great warrior. His employment of ruse against an infrahuman enemy does not prove the opposite — for that is always how the human (even great warriors and hunters) has dealt with the infrahuman. I think it is Madhusudan who has darkened Valmiki's hero in Bengali eyes and turned him into a poor puppet, but that is not the authentic Rama who, say what one will, was a great epic figure, — Avatar or no Avatar. As

¹ Nor, I may add, is it a complete or supreme defence of Rama. For that I would have to write about what the story of the Ramayana meant, appreciate Valmiki's presentation of his chief characters (they are none of them copy-book examples, but great men and women with the defects and merits of human nature, as all men, even the greatest, are), and show also how the Godhead, which was behind the frontal and instrumental personality we call Rama, worked out every incident of his life as a necessary step in what had to be done. As to the weeping of Rama, I had answered that in my other yet unfinished letter. You are imposing the colder and harder Nordic ideal on the Southern temperament which regarded the expression of emotion, not its suppression, as a virtue. Witness the weeping and lamentations of Achilles, Ulysses and other Greek, Persian and Indian heroes — the latter especially as lovers.

for conventional morality, all morality is a convention — man cannot live without conventions, mental and moral, otherwise he feels himself lost in the rolling sea of the anarchic forces of vital Nature. Even the Russells and Bernard Shaws can only end by setting up another set of conventions in the place of those they have skittled over. Only by rising above mind can one really get beyond conventions — Krishna was able to do it because he was not a mental human being but an overmental godhead acting freely out of a greater consciousness than man's. Rama was not that, he was the Avatar of the sattwic human mind — mental, emotional, moral — and he followed the Dharma of the age and race. That may make him temperamentally congenial to Gandhi and the reverse to you; but just as Gandhi's temperamental recoil from Krishna does not prove Krishna to be no Avatar, so your temperamental recoil from Rama does not establish that he was not an Avatar. However, my main point will be that Avatarhood does not depend upon these questions at all, but has another basis, meaning and purpose.

*

No time for a full answer to your renewed remarks on Rama tonight. You are intrigued only because you stick to the standard modern measuring rods of moral and spiritual perfection (introduced by Seeley and Bankim) for the Avatar — while I start from another standpoint altogether and resolutely refuse these standard human measures. The ancient Avatars except Buddha were *not* either standards of perfection or spiritual teachers — in spite of the Gita which was spoken, says Krishna, in a moment of supernormal consciousness which he lost immediately afterwards. They were, if I may say so, representative cosmic men who were instruments of a divine Intervention for fixing certain things in the evolution of the earth-race. I stick to that and refuse to submit myself in this argument to any other standard whatever.

I did not admit that Rama was a blind Avatar, but offered you two alternatives of which the latter represents my real view founded on the impression made on me by the Ramayana that

Rama knew very well but refused to be talkative about it — his business being not to disclose the Divine, but to fix mental, moral and emotional man (not to originate him for he was there already) on the earth as against the Animal and the Rakshasa forces. My argument from Chaitanya (who was for most of the time, first a pandit and then a bhakta, but only occasionally the Divine himself) is perfectly rational and logical, if you follow my line and don't insist on a high specifically spiritual consciousness for the Avatar. I shall point out what I mean in my next.

By sattwic man I do not mean a moral or an always self-controlled one, but a predominantly mental (as opposed to a vital or merely physical man) who has rajasic emotions and passions, but lives predominantly according to his mind and its will and ideas. There is no such thing, I suppose, as a purely sattwic man — since the three gunas go always together in a state of unstable equilibrium, but a predominantly sattwic man is what I have described. My impression of Rama from Valmiki is such — it is quite different from yours. I am afraid your picture of him is quite out of focus — you efface the main lines of the character, belittle and brush out all the lights to which Valmiki gave so much value and prominence and hammer always at some details and some parts of shadow which you turn into the larger part of Rama. That is what the debunkers do — but a debunked figure is not the true figure.

By the way, a sattwic man can have strong passion and strong anger — and when he lets the latter loose, the normally violent fellow is simply nowhere. Witness the outbursts of anger of Christ, the indignation of Chaitanya — and the general evidence of experience and psychology on that point. All this however by the way — I shall try to develop later.

P. S. The trait of Rama which you give as that of an undeveloped man, viz., his decisive spontaneous action according to the will and the idea that came to him, is a trait of the cosmic man and many Vibhutis, men of action of the large Caesarian or Napoleonic type. That also I hope to develop sometime.

Why should Rama not have *kāma* as well as *prema*? — they were supposed to go together as between husband and wife in ancient India. The performances of Rama in the *viraha* of Sita are due to Valmiki's poetic idea which was also Kalidasa's and everybody else's in those far-off times about how a complete lover should behave in such a quandary. Whether the actual Rama bothered himself to do all that is another matter.

As for the unconscious Avatar, why not? Chaitanya is supposed to be an Avatar by the Vaishnavas, yet he was conscious of the Godhead behind only when that Godhead came in front and possessed him on rare occasions. Christ said "I and my Father are one", but yet he always spoke and behaved as if there were a difference. Ramakrishna's earlier period was that of one seeking God, not aware from the first of his identity. These are the reputed religious Avatars who ought to be more conscious than a man of action like Rama. And supposing the full and permanent consciousness, why should the Avatar proclaim himself except on rare occasions to an Arjuna or to a few bhaktas or disciples? It is for others to find out what he is; though he does not deny when others speak of him as That, he is not always saying and perhaps never may say or only in moments like that of the Gita, "I am He."

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When I said, "Why not an unconscious Avatar?" I was taking *your* statement (not mine) that Rama was unconscious and how could there be an unconscious Avatar. My own view is that Rama was not blind, not unconscious of his Avatarhood, only uncommunicative about it. But I said that even taking your statement to be correct, the objection was not insuperable. I instanced the case of Chaitanya and the others, because there the facts are hardly disputable. Chaitanya for the first part of his life was simply Nimai Pandit and had no consciousness of being anything else. Then he had his conversion and became the bhakta, Chaitanya. This bhakta at times seemed to be possessed by the presence of Krishna, knew himself to be Krishna, spoke, moved and appeared with the light of the Godhead — none around him

could think of or see him as anything else when he was in this glorified and transfigured condition. But from that he fell back to the ordinary consciousness of the bhakta and, as I have read in his biography, refused then to consider himself as anything more. These, I think, are the facts. Well then, what do they signify? Was he only Nimai Pandit at first? It is quite conceivable that he was so and the descent of the Godhead into him only took place after his conversion and spiritual change. But also afterwards when he was in his normal bhakta-consciousness, was he then no longer the Avatar? An intermittent Avatarhood? Krishna coming down for an afternoon call into Chaitanya and then going up again till the time came for the next visit? I find it difficult to believe in this phenomenon. The rational explanation is that in the phenomenon of Avatarhood there is a Consciousness behind, at first veiled or sometimes perhaps only half-veiled, which is that of the Godhead and a frontal consciousness, human or apparently human or at any rate with all the appearance of terrestriality, which is the instrumental Personality. In that case, it is possible that the secret Consciousness was all along there, but waited to manifest until after the conversion; and it manifested intermittently because the main work of Chaitanya was to establish the type of a spiritual and psychic bhakti and love in the emotional vital part of man, preparing the vital in us in that way to turn towards the Divine — at any rate, to fix that possibility in the earth-nature. It was not that there had not been the emotional type of bhakti before; but the completeness of it, the *élan*, the vital's rapture in it had never manifested as it manifested in Chaitanya. But for that work it would never have done if he had always been in the Krishna consciousness; he would have been the Lord to whom all gave bhakti, but not the supreme example of the divine ecstatic bhakta. At the same time the occasional manifestation showed who he was and at the same time evidenced the mystic law of the Immanence.

Voilà — for Chaitanya. But, if Chaitanya, the frontal consciousness, the instrumental Personality, was all the time the Avatar, yet except in his highest moments was unconscious of it and even denied it, that pushed a little farther would establish the

possibility of what you call an unconscious Avatar — that is to say, of one in which the veiled consciousness might not come in front but always move the instrumental Personality from behind. The frontal consciousness might be aware in the inner parts of its being that it was only an instrument of Something Divine which was its real Self, but outwardly would think, speak and behave as if it were only the human being doing a given work with a peculiar power and splendour. Whether there was such an Avatar or not is another matter, but logically it is quite possible.

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What is all this obsession of greater or less? In our Yoga we do not strive after greatness.

It is not a question of Sri Krishna's disciples, but of the earth consciousness — Rama was a mental man, there is no touch of the overmind consciousness (direct) in anything he said or did, but what he did was done with the greatness of the Avatar. But there have since been men who did live in touch with the planes above mind — higher mind, illumined mind, Intuition. There is no question of asking whether they were "greater" than Rama; they might have been less "great", but they were able to live from a new plane of consciousness. And Krishna's opening the overmind certainly made it possible for the attempt at bringing Supermind to the earth to be made.

*

About greater and less, one point. Is Captain John Higgins of S.S. *Mauretania* a greater man than Christopher Columbus because he can reach America without trouble in a few days? Is a university graduate in philosophy greater than Plato because he can reason about problems and systems which had never even occurred to Plato? No, only humanity has acquired greater scientific power which any good navigator can use or a wider intellectual knowledge which anyone with a philosophic training can use. You will say greater scientific power and wider knowledge is not a change of consciousness. Very well, but there are Rama and Ramakrishna. Rama spoke always from

the thinking intelligence, the common property of developed men; Ramakrishna spoke constantly from a swift and luminous spiritual intuition. Can you tell me which is the greater? the Avatar recognised by all India? or the saint and Yogi recognised as an Avatar only by his disciples and some others who follow them?

Krishna as an Avatar

Krishna is not the supramental light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually bringing, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya, he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda.

*

What Krishna worked for was the Overmind consciousness acting in the mind and vital.

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What was said² was that Krishna as a manifestation on earth opened the possibility of the Overmind consciousness here to men and stood for that, as Rama was the incarnation in mental Man. If Krishna was *an* overmind “God”, that means he was not an Incarnation, not the Divine, but somebody else who claimed to be the Divine — i.e. he was a god who somehow thought he was God.

*

I suppose very few recognised him [*Krishna*] as an Avatar; certainly it was not at all a general recognition. Among the few those nearest him do not seem to have counted — it was less prominent people like Vidura etc.

*

² The correspondent asked, “Why is it said that Krishna is an Overmind God?” — Ed.

Those who were with Krishna were in all appearance men like other men. They spoke and acted with each other as men with men and were not thought of by those around them as gods. Krishna himself was known by most as a man — only a few worshipped him as the Divine.

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*Yuge yuge*³ may be used in a general sense, as in English “from age to age” and not refer technically to the *yuga* proper according to the Puranic computation. But the *bahūni* has an air of referring to very numerous lives especially when coupled with *tava ca*. In that case all these many births could not be full incarnations, — many may have been merely Vibhuti births carrying on the thread from incarnation to incarnation. About Arjuna’s accompanying him in each and every birth, nothing is said, but it would not be likely — many, of course.

Buddha as an Avatar

He [*Buddha*] affirmed practically something unknowable that was Permanent and Unmanifested. Advaita does the same. Buddha never said he was an Avatar of a Personal God but that he was the Buddha. It is the Hindus who made him an Avatar. If Buddha had looked upon himself as an Avatar at all, it would have been as an Avatar of the impersonal Truth.

*

If a Divine Consciousness and Force descended and through the personality we call Buddha did a great work for the world, then Buddha can be called an Avatar — the tapasya and arriving at knowledge are only an incident of the manifestation.

If on the other hand Buddha was only a human being like many others who arrived at some knowledge and preached it,

³ In the Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna, “Many are my lives that are past” (4.5) and again, “I am born from age to age.” (4.8) The correspondent asked how Krishna’s past lives could be many (*bahūni*) if he was born only from age to age (*yuge yuge*). — Ed.

then he was not an Avatar — for of that kind there have been thousands and they cannot be all Avatars.

*

I don't know that historically there could have been any other Buddha. It is the Vaishnava Puranas, I think, that settled the list of Avatars, for they are all Avatars of Vishnu according to the Purana. The final acceptance by all may have come later than Shankara, after the Buddhist-Brahminic controversy had ceased to be an actuality. For some time there was a tendency to substitute Balarama's name for Buddha's or to say that Buddha was an Avatar of Vishnu, but that he came to mislead the Asuras. He is evidently aimed at in the story of Mayamoha in the Vishnu Purana.

*

He [*Buddha*] had a more powerful vital than Ramakrishna, a stupendous will and an invincible mind of thought. If he had led the ordinary life, he would have been a great organiser, conqueror and creator.

Mahomed and Christ

Mahomed would himself have rejected the idea of being an Avatara, so we have to regard him only as the prophet, the instrument, the Vibhuti. Christ realised himself as the Son who is one with the Father — he must therefore be an *amśa avatāra*, a partial incarnation.

Ramakrishna

He [*Ramakrishna*] never wrote an autobiography. What he said was in conversation with his disciples and others. He was certainly quite as much an Avatar as Christ or Chaitanya.

Augustus Caesar and Leonardo da Vinci

Augustus Caesar organised the life of the Roman Empire and it was this that made the framework of the first transmission of the Graeco-Roman civilisation to Europe — he came for that work and the writings of Virgil and Horace and others helped greatly towards the success of his mission. After the interlude of the Middle Ages, this civilisation was reborn in a new mould in what is called the Renaissance, not in its life-aspects but in its intellectual aspects. It was therefore a supreme intellectual, Leonardo da Vinci, who took up again the work and summarised in himself the seeds of modern Europe.

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Never heard before of my declaring or anybody declaring such a thing [*that a divine descent was attempted during the Renaissance with Leonardo da Vinci as its centre*]. What Leonardo da Vinci held in himself was all the new age of Europe on its many sides. But there was no question of Avatarhood or consciousness of a descent or pressure of spiritual planes. Mysticism was no part of what he had to manifest.

Napoleon

I don't think it can be said that Napoleon had little of ego. He was exceedingly ego-centric. He made himself a dictator from Brumaire, and as a dictator he should always have acted — but he felt the need of support and made the error of seeking it in the democratic way — a way for which he was utterly unfit. He had the capacities of a ruler but not of a politician — as a politician he would have been an entire failure. His hesitations were due to this defect — if it can be called one. He could not have dealt successfully with parties or a parliamentary assembly.

*

I never heard that Napoleon failed at Waterloo for want of self-confidence. I have always read that he failed because he

was, owing to his recent malady, no longer so quick and self-confident in decision and so supple in mental resource as before. Please don't rewrite history unless you have data for your novel version.

Chapter Three

Human Greatness

Greatness

Why should the Divine not care for the outer greatness? He cares for everything in the universe. All greatness is the Vibhuti of the Divine, says the Gita.

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Obviously outer greatness is not the aim of Yoga. But that is no reason why one should not recognise the part played by greatness in the order of the universe or the place of great men of action, great poets and artists etc.

*

People have begun to try to prove that great men were not great, which is a very big mistake. If greatness is not appreciated by men, the world will become mean, small, dull, narrow and tamasic.

*

By greatness is meant an exceptional capacity of one kind or another which makes a man eminent among his fellows.

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That kind of greatness [*scientific, literary, political*] has nothing to do with the psychic. It consists in a special mental capacity (Raman, Tagore) or in a great vital force which enables them to lead men and dominate them. These faculties are often but not always accompanied by something in the personality Daivic or Asuric which supports their action and gives to men an impression of greatness apart even from the special capacity — the sense of a great personality.

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Most great men know perfectly well that they are great.

*

It is the power in them [*great men*] that is great and that power comes from the Divine — by their actions and greatness they help the world and aid the cosmic purpose. It does not matter whether they have ego or not — they are not doing Yoga.

*

If a man rises to a higher plane of consciousness, it does not necessarily follow that he will be a greater man of action or a greater creator. One may rise to spiritual planes of inspiration undreamed of by Shakespeare and yet not be as great a poetic creator as Shakespeare. “Greatness” is not the object of spiritual realisation any more than fame or success in the world — how are these things the standard of spiritual realisation?

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Of course you can [*do Yoga without being great*] — there is no need of being great. On the contrary humility is the first necessity, for one who has ego and pride cannot realise the Highest.

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Each one can be truly great only in the measure in which he feels and opens to the source of all greatness, the Divine.

Greatness and Vices

It is not only the very very very big people who are of importance to the Divine. All energy, strong capacity, power of effectuation are of importance.

As for Napoleon, Caesar and Shakespeare, not one of them was a virtuous man, but they were great men — and that was your contention, that only virtuous men are great men and those who have vices are not great, which is an absurd contention. All of them went after women — two were ambitious, unscrupulous. Napoleon was most arrogant and violent.

Shakespeare stole deer, Napoleon lied freely, Caesar was without scruples.

*

But do you really believe that men like Napoleon, Caesar, Shakespeare were not great men and did nothing for the world or for the cosmic purpose? that God was deterred from using them for His purpose because they had defects of character and vices? What a singular idea!

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Why should he [*the Divine*] care [*about the vices of great men*]? Is he a policeman? So long as one is in the ordinary nature, one has qualities and defects, virtues and vices. When one goes beyond, there are no virtues and vices, — for these things do not belong to the Divine Nature.

*

Yes, certainly. Many great men even have often very great vices and many of them. Great men are not usually model characters.

*

They [*great men*] have more energy and the energy comes out in what men call vices as well as in what men call virtues.

*

Men with great capacities or a powerful mind or a powerful vital have very often more glaring defects of character than ordinary men — or at least the defects of the latter do not show so much, being like themselves, smaller in scale.

*

Great or dazzling, or small in their field, ambition is ambition and it is necessary for most for an energetic action. What is the use of calling a thing a vice when it is small and glorifying it when it is big?

Section Three

Destiny, Karma, Death and Rebirth

Chapter One

Fate, Free Will and Prediction

Destiny

Each follows in the world his own line of destiny which is determined by his own nature and actions—the meaning and necessity of what happens in a particular life cannot be understood except in the light of the whole course of many lives. But this can be seen by those who can get beyond the ordinary mind and feelings and see things as a whole, that even errors, misfortunes, calamities are steps in the journey, the soul gathering experience as it passes through and beyond them until it is ripe for the transition which will carry it beyond these things to a higher consciousness and higher life. When one comes to that line of crossing one has to leave behind one the old mind and feelings. One looks then on those who are still fixed in the pleasures and sorrows of the ordinary world with sympathy and wherever it is possible with spiritual helpfulness, but no longer with attachment. One learns that they are being led through all their stumblings and trusts to the universal Power that is watching and supporting their existence to do for them whatever for them is the best. But the one thing that is really important for us is to get into the greater Light and the Divine Union—to turn to the Divine alone, to put our trust there alone whether for ourselves or for others.

*

Destiny in the rigid sense applies only to the outer being so long as it lives in the Ignorance. What we call destiny is only in fact the result of the present condition of the being and the nature and energies it has accumulated in the past acting on each other and determining the present attempts and their future results. But as soon as one enters the path of spiritual life, this old predetermined destiny begins to recede. There comes in a new factor, the

Divine Grace, the help of a higher Divine Force other than the force of Karma which can lift the sadhak beyond the present possibilities of his nature. One's spiritual destiny is then the divine election which ensures the future. The only doubt is about the vicissitudes of the path and the time to be taken by the passage. It is here that the hostile forces playing on the weaknesses of the past nature strive to prevent the rapidity of the progress and to postpone the fulfilment. Those who fell, fell not because of the attacks of the vital forces, but because they put themselves on the side of the hostile Force and preferred a vital ambition or desire (ambition, vanity, lust, etc.) to the spiritual siddhi.

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Each has his own destiny which he brings with him into the world.

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Each has his own destiny and his entering into a particular family in one life is only an incident.

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Obviously, neither Nature nor Destiny nor the Divine work in the mental way or by the law of the mind or according to its standards — that is why even to the scientist and the philosopher Nature, Destiny, the way of the Divine, all remain a mystery.

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Nature is very largely what you make of her — or can make of her.

*

Destiny is not an absolute, it is a relative. One can alter it for the better or the worse.

Free Will and Determinism

It is difficult indeed to make out what Planck means in these

pages¹ — what is his conclusion and how he arrives at it; he has probably so condensed his arguments that the necessary explanatory links are missing. The free will affair, I see by glancing through the previous pages, arises only incidentally from his position that the new discoveries grouped round the quantum theory do not make a radical difference in physics. If there is a tendency to regard laws as statistical — in which case there is no “strict causality” and no determinism — still there is nothing to prove that they cannot be treated and may not be advantageously treated as dynamical also — in which case determinism can stand; the uncertainty of individual behaviour (electrons, quanta) does not really undermine determinism, but only brings a new feature into it. That seems from a hasty glance to be his position. Certain scientific thinkers consider this uncertainty of individual behaviour to be a physical factor correspondent to the element of free will in individual human beings. It is here that Planck brings in the question of free will to refute the conclusion that it affects strict causality and the law of determinism. His argument, as far as I can make it out, is this:

(1) The law of strict causality stands because any given action or inner happening of the individual human being is an effect determined completely by two causes, (a) the previous state of his mind taken as a whole, (b) external influences.

(2) The will is a mental process completely determined by these two factors; therefore it is not free, it is part of the chain of strict causality — as are also the results of the free will.

(3) What is important is not the actual freedom of the will, but the man’s consciousness of freedom. This creates an inner experience of conscious motive which again creates fresh motives and so on indefinitely. For this reason it is impossible for a man to predict his future action — for at any moment a fresh motive may arise. But when we look back at the past, then the concatenation of cause and effect becomes apparent.

(4) The fact of strict causality (or at least the theory of it)

¹ *Max Planck, The Universe in the Light of Modern Physics (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), pp. 84–87.*

stands therefore unshaken by the consciousness of free will of the individual. It is only obscured by the fact that a man cannot predict his own actions or grasp the causes of his present state; but that is because here the subject and object are the same and this subject-object is in a state of constant alterative motion unlike an object outside, which is supposed not to change as a result of the inner movements of the knower.

There is a reference to causal law and ethical law which baffles me. Is the “ethical law” something outside the strict chain of effects and causes? Is there such a thing at all? If “strict causality” rules all, what is such an ethical law doing there?

That is the argument so far as I can follow it, but it does not seem to me very conclusive. If a man’s conduct cannot be predicted by himself, neither can it be predicted by anyone else, though here the subject and object are not the same; if not predictable, then it must be for the same reason, the element of free will and the mobility created by the possible indefinite intrusion of fresh motives. If that is so, strict causality cannot be affirmed, though a plastic causality in which the power of choice called by us free will is an element (either as one among many contributory causes or as an instrument of a cause beyond itself) can still be asserted as possible.

The statement that the action of the individual is strictly determined by his total mental state + external influences is doubtful and does not lead very far. It is possible to undermine the whole idea of inevitable causality by holding that the total existing state before a happening is only the condition under which it happens — there are a mass of antecedents and there is a sequent, if it may be so called, or a mass of sequences, but nothing proves that the latter are inevitable consequences of the mass of antecedents. Possibly this total existing state is a matrix into which some seed of happening is thrown or becomes active, so that there may be many possible results, and in the case of human action it is conceivable that free will is *the* or at least *a* determining factor.

I do not think therefore that these arguments of Planck carry us very far. There is also of course the question raised in the book

itself whether, granting determinism, a local state of things is an independent field of causality or all is so bound together that it is the whole that determines the local result. A man's action then would be determined by universal forces and his state of mind and apparent choice would be only part of the instrumentation of Universal Force.

*

In the case of Socrates and that of the habitual drunkard raised by you, the difference you make is correct. The weak-willed man is governed by his vital and physical impulses, his mental being is not dynamic enough to make its will prevail over them. His will is not "free" because it is not strong enough to be free, it is the slave of the forces that act on or in his vital and physical nature. In the case of Socrates the will is so far free that it stands above the play of these forces and he determines by his mental idea and resolve what he shall or shall not do. The question remains whether the will of Socrates is only free in this sense, itself being actually determined by something larger than the mentality of Socrates, something of which it is the instrument, whether Universal Force or a Being in him of which his daemon was the voice and which not only gave his mind that decisive awareness of the mental ideal but imposed on it the drive to act in obedience to the awareness. Or it may be subject to a nexus between the inner Purusha and the Universal Force. In the latter case there would be an unstable balance between determinism of Nature and a self-determination from within. If we start from the Sankhya view of things, that Being would be the soul or Purusha and both in the strong-willed Socrates and in the weak-willed slave of vital impulse, the action and its results would be determined by the assent or refusal of the Purusha. In the latter the Purusha gives its assent to and undergoes the play of the forces of Nature, the habit of the vital impulse, through a vital submission while the mind looks on helpless. In Socrates the Purusha has begun to emancipate itself and decide what it shall accept or shall not accept — the conscious being has begun to impose itself on the forces that act on it. This mastery has become

so complete that he can largely determine his own actions and can even within certain limits not only forecast but fix the results — so that what he wants shall happen sooner or later.

As for the Superman, that is the conscious being whose emancipation is complete by his rising to a station beyond the limits of mind. He can determine his action in complete accord with an awareness which perceives all the forces acting in and on and around him and is able, instead of undergoing, to use them and even to determine.

*

After reading Krishnaprem's exposition [*on free will and determinism*], I saw what might be said from the intellectual point of view on this question so as to link the reality of the supreme Freedom with the phenomenon of the determinism of Nature — in a different way from his but to the same purpose. In reality, the freedom and the determination are only two sides of the same thing — for the fundamental truth is self-determination, a self-determination of the cosmos and in it a secret self-determination of the individual. The difficulty arises from the fact that we live in the surface mind of ignorance, do not know what is going on behind and see only the phenomenal process of Nature. There the apparent fact is an overwhelming determinism of Nature and as our surface consciousness is part of that process we are unable to see the other term of the biune reality. For practical purposes, on the surface there is an entire determinism in Matter — though this is now disputed by the latest school of Science. As Life emerges a certain plasticity sets in, so that it is difficult to predict anything exactly as one predicts material things that obey a rigid law. The plasticity increases with the growth of Mind so that man can have at least a sense of free will, of a choice of his action, of a self-movement which at least helps to determine circumstances. But this freedom is dubious because it can be declared to be an illusion, a device of Nature, part of its machinery of determination, only a seeming freedom or at most a restricted, relative and subject independence. It is only when one goes behind away from Prakriti to Purusha and upward

away from Mind to spiritual Self that the side of freedom comes to be first evident and then, by unison with the Will which is above Nature, complete.

*

Well, the determination of human life and events is a mysterious thing. Can't help that, you know. Fate is composed of many things — Cosmic Will + individual self-determination + play of forces + Karma + $x + y + z + a + b + c$ ad infinitum.

Predictions and Prophecy

I am afraid I have no great confidence in Cheiro's ideas and prophecies — some prophecies are fulfilled but most have gone wrong. The idea about the Jews is an old Jewish and Christian belief; not much faith can be put in it. As for the numbers it is true that according to occult science numbers have a mystic meaning. It is also true that there are periods and cycles in life as well as in world-life. But too exact a meaning cannot always be put in these things.

*

Mother says Cheiro has always missed his predictions. They are (at best) half truths which you have to turn this way or that to get something out of them corresponding with the fact.

*

Your extracts taken by themselves are very impressive, but when one reads the book, the impression made diminishes and fades away. You have quoted Cheiro's successes, but what about his failures? I have looked at the book and was rather staggered by the number of prophecies that have failed to come off. You can't deduce from a small number of predictions, however accurate, that all is predestined down to your putting the questions in the letter and my answer. It may be, but the evidence is not sufficient to prove it. What is evident is that there is an element of the predictable, predictable accurately and in detail as well

as in large points, in the course of events. But that was already known; it leaves the question still unsolved whether all is so predictable, whether destiny is the sole factor in existence or there are other factors also that can modify destiny, — or, destiny being given, there are not different sources or powers or planes of destiny and we can modify the one with which we started by calling in another destiny source, power or plane and making it active in our life. Metaphysical questions are not so simple that they can be trenchantly solved either in one sense or in another contradictory to it — that is the popular way of settling things, but it is quite summary and inconclusive. All is free will or else all is destiny — it is not so simple as that. This question of free will or determination is the most knotty of all metaphysical questions and nobody has been able to solve it — for a good reason, that both destiny and will exist and even a free will exists somewhere — the difficulty is only how to get at it and make it effective.

Astrology? Many astrological predictions come true, quite a mass of them, if one takes all together. But it does not follow that the stars rule our destiny; the stars merely record a destiny that has been already formed, they are a hieroglyph, not a Force, — or if their action constitutes a force, it is a transmitting energy, not an originating Power. Someone is there who has determined or something is there which is Fate, let us say; the stars are only indicators. The astrologers themselves say that there are two forces, *daiva* and *puruṣārtha*, fate and individual energy, and the individual energy can modify and even frustrate fate. Moreover the stars often indicate several fate-possibilities; for example that one may die in mid-age, but that if that determination can be overcome, one can live to a predictable old age. Finally, cases are seen in which the predictions of the horoscope fulfil themselves with great accuracy up to a certain age, then apply no more. This often happens when the subject turns away from the ordinary to the spiritual life. If the turn is very radical the cessation of predictability may be immediate; otherwise certain results may still last on for a time, but there is no longer the same inevitability. This would seem to show that there is or

can be a higher-power or higher-plane or higher-source spiritual destiny which can, if its hour has come, override the lower-power, lower-plane or lower-source vital and material fate of which the stars are indicators. I say vital because character can also be indicated from the horoscope much more completely and satisfactorily than the events of the life.

The Indian explanation of fate is Karma. We ourselves are our own fate through our actions, but the fate created by us binds us; for what we have sown, we must reap in this life or another. Still we are creating new fate for the future even while undergoing old fate from the past in the present. That gives a meaning to our will and action and does not, as European critics wrongly believe, constitute a rigid and sterilising fatalism. But again our will and action can often annul or modify even the past Karma, it is only certain strong effects, called *utkata karma*, that are non-modifiable. Here too the achievement of the spiritual consciousness and life is supposed to annul or give the power to annul Karma. For we enter into union with the Will Divine, cosmic or transcendent, which can annul what it had sanctioned for certain conditions, new-create what it had created; the narrow fixed lines disappear, there is a more plastic freedom and wideness. Neither Karma nor Astrology therefore points to a rigid and for ever immutable fate.

As for prophecy, I have never met or known of a prophet, however reputed, who was infallible. Some of their predictions come true to the letter, others do not, — they half-fulfil or misfire entirely. It does not follow that the power of prophecy is unreal or the accurate predictions can be all explained by probability, chance or coincidence. The nature and number of those that cannot is too great. The variability of fulfilment may be explained either by an imperfect power in the prophet sometimes active, sometimes failing or by the fact that things are predictable in part only, they are determined in part only or else by different factors or lines of power, different series of potentials and actuals. So long as one is in touch with one line, one predicts accurately, otherwise not — or if the line of power changes, one's prophecy also goes off the rails. All the same, one may say, there must be, if

things are predictable at all, some power or plane through which or on which all is foreseeable; if there is a divine Omniscience and Omnipotence it must be so. Even then what is foreseen has to be worked out, actually is worked out by a play of forces, — spiritual, mental, vital, physical forces — and in that plane of forces there is no absolute rigidity discoverable. Personal will or endeavour is one of those forces — Napoleon when asked why he believed in Fate, yet was always planning and acting, answered, “Because it is fated that I should work and plan” — in other words, his planning and acting were part of Fate, contributed to the results Fate had in view. Even if I foresee an adverse result, I must work for the one that I consider should be; for it keeps alive the force, the principle of Truth which I serve and gives it a possibility to triumph hereafter, so that it becomes part of the working of a future favourable Fate, even if the fate of the hour is adverse. Men do not abandon a cause because they have seen it fail or foresee its failure; and they are spiritually right in their stubborn perseverance. Moreover, we do not live for material result alone, — far more the object of life is the growth of the soul, not outward success of the hour or even of the near future. The soul can grow against or even by a material destiny that is adverse.

Finally, even if all is determined, why say that Life is, in Shakespeare’s phrase or rather Macbeth’s, “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”? Life would rather be that if it were all chance and random incertitude. But if it is something foreseen, planned in every detail, does it not rather mean that life does signify something, that there must be a secret Purpose that is being worked up to, powerfully, persistently through the ages, and ourselves are a part of it and fellow-workers in the fulfilment of that invincible Purpose?

*

Well, one of the greatest ecstasies possible is to feel oneself carried by the Divine, — not by the stars or Karma, for the latter is a bad business, dry and uncomfortable — like being turned on a machine, “*yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*”.

Astrology and Yoga

Astrology is an occult science — it is not a part of the Yoga except as anything can be made part of the Yoga — if done in the right spirit.

*

That is not the question.² The question is what influence has the sadhak on the stars at his birth?

² *The correspondent asked, "Can astrological truths have any influence on a sadhak?" — Ed.*

Chapter Two

Karma and Heredity

Karma

Karma is not luck, it is the transmission of past energies into the present with their results.

*

All energies put into activity — thought, speech, feeling, act — go to constitute Karma. These things help to develop the nature in one direction or another, and the nature and its actions and reactions produce their consequences inward and outward: they also act on others and create movements in the general sum of forces which can return upon oneself sooner or later. Thoughts unexpressed can also go out as forces and produce their effects. It is a mistake to think that a thought or will can have effect only when it is expressed in speech or act: the unspoken thought, the unexpressed will are also active energies and can produce their own vibrations, effects or reactions.

*

If it [*the soul*] goes on with its Karma, then it does not get liberation. If it wants only farther experience, it can just stay there in the ordinary nature. The aim of Yoga is to transcend Karma. Karma means subjection to lower Nature; through Yoga the soul goes towards freedom.

*

The bondage to the effects of Karma remains so long as one has not passed out of the ordinary human consciousness which is its field to the higher spiritual consciousness where all bonds are untied. As for peace one can gain it by an entire reliance on the Divine and surrender to the Divine Will.

*

In life all sorts of things offer themselves. One cannot take anything that comes with the idea that it is sent by the Divine. There is a choice and a wrong choice produces its consequence.

Karma and Heredity

Karma and heredity are the two main causes [*of one's temperament*]. According to some heredity is also subject to Karma, but that may be only in a general way, not in all the details.

*

Many things in the body and some in the mind and vital are inherited from the father and mother or other ancestors — that everybody is supposed to know. There are other things that are not inherited, but peculiar to one's own nature or developed by the happenings of this life.

*

You must realise that all human beings are made partly of what is given them by their ancestors (not only father and mother but all the ancestors), partly of what they bring with them. The part they get from the ancestors is called hereditary — it is part (not the whole) of the physical and lower vital consciousness, sometimes a little of the external mind also — it is a small portion of the external being, but although small, it is sometimes very persistent and active. The rest of the being, inner and a great part too of the external, is brought from past lives. This hereditary part has to be got rid of and replaced by the true individuality spreading itself to the whole external nature.

*

A very big stamp in most cases¹ — it is in the physical vital and physical material that the stamp chiefly exists — and it is increased by education and upbringing.

*

¹ *The correspondent asked whether the influence of heredity, race, caste and family leaves a stamp on one's lower nature. — Ed.*

There is always a hereditary part of the nature which is a large portion of the outward nature — there is also the educational influence of the father which has put a stamp on you.

*

Hereditary influence² creates an affinity and affinity is a living thing. It is only when the hereditary part is changed that the affinity ceases.

*

It is your own being that seeks for the Divine. The hereditary part is not your true being, but something you have taken up as part of this birth. It can be got rid of or changed.

Evolution, Karma and Ethics

The question as put in your letter seems to me to be too rigidly phrased and not to take into sufficient account the plasticity of the facts and forces of existence. It sounds like the problem which one might raise on the strength of the most recent scientific theories — if all is made up of protons and electrons, all exactly similar to each other (except for the group numbers, and why should a difference of quantity make such an extraordinary difference or any difference of quality?) how does their action result in such stupendous differences of degree, kind, power, everything? But why should we assume that the psychic seeds or sparks all started in a race at the same time, equal in conditions, equal in power and nature? Granted that the One Divine is the source of all and the Self is the same in all; but in manifestation why should not the Infinite throw itself out in infinite variety, why must it be in an innumerable sameness? How many of these psychic seeds started long before others and have a great past of development behind them and how many are young and raw and half-grown only? And even among those who started together,

² *The correspondent asked whether the hereditary influence created by his father had come to an end in him. — Ed.*

why should not there be some who ran at a great speed and others who loitered and grew with difficulty or went about in circles? And then there is an evolution, and it is only at a certain stage in the evolution that the animal belt is past and there is a human beginning; what constitutes the human beginning, which represents a very considerable revolution or turnover? Up to the animal line it is the vital and physical that have been developing — for the human to begin is it not necessary that there should be the descent of a mental being to take up the vital and physical evolution? And may it not well be that the mental beings who descend are not all of the same power and stature and, besides, do not take up equally developed vital and physical consciousness-material? There is also the occult tradition of a hierarchy of beings who stand above the present manifestation and put themselves into it with results which will obviously be just such a stupendous difference of degrees, and even intervene by descending into the play through the gates of birth in human Nature. There are many complexities and the problem cannot be put with the rigidity of a mathematical formula.

A great part of the difficulty of these problems, I mean especially the appearance of inexplicable contradiction, arises from the problem itself being badly put. Take the popular account of reincarnation and Karma — it is based on the mere mental assumption that the workings of Nature ought to be moral and proceed according to an exact morality of equal justice — a scrupulous, even mathematical law of reward and punishment or, at any rate, of results according to a human idea of right correspondences. But Nature is non-moral — she uses forces and processes moral, immoral and amoral pell-mell for working out her business. Nature in her outward aspect seems to care for nothing except to get things done — or else to make conditions for an ingenious variety of the play of life. Nature in her deeper aspect as a conscious spiritual Power is concerned with the growth, by experience, the spiritual development of the souls she has in her charge — and these souls themselves have a say in the matter. All these good people lament and wonder that unaccountably they and other good people are visited with

such meaningless sufferings and misfortunes. But are they really visited with them by an outside Power or by a mechanical Law of Karma? Is it not possible that the soul itself — not the outward mind, but the spirit within — has accepted and chosen these things as part of its development in order to get through the necessary experience at a rapid rate, to hew through, *durchhauen*, even at the risk or the cost of much damage to the outward life and the body? To the growing soul, to the spirit within us, may not difficulties, obstacles, attacks be a means of growth, added strength, enlarged experience, training for spiritual victory? The arrangement of things may be that and not a mere question of the pounds, shillings and pence of a distribution of rewards and retributory misfortunes!

It is the same with the problem of the taking of animal life under the circumstances put forward by your friend in the letter. It is put on the basis of an invariable ethical right and wrong to be applied to all cases — is it right to take animal life at all, under any circumstances, is it right to allow an animal to suffer under your eyes when you can relieve it by an euthanasia? There can be no indubitable answer to a question put like that, because the answer depends on data which the mind has not before it. In fact there are many other factors which make people incline to this short and merciful way out of the difficulty — the nervous inability to bear the sight and hearing of so much suffering, the unavailing trouble, the disgust and inconvenience — all tend to give force to the idea that the animal itself would want to be out of it. But what does the animal really feel about it — may it not be clinging to life in spite of the pain? Or may not the soul have accepted these things for a quicker evolution into a higher state of life? If so, the mercy dealt out may conceivably interfere with the animal's Karma. In fact the right decision might vary in each case and depend on a knowledge which the human mind has not — and it might very well be said that until it has it, it has not the right to take life. It was some dim perception of this truth that made religion and ethics develop the law of Ahimsa — and yet that too becomes a mental rule which it is found impossible to apply in practice. And perhaps the moral of it all is that we must

act for the best according to our lights in each case, as things are, but that the solution of these problems can only come by pressing forward towards a greater light, a greater consciousness in which the problems themselves, as now stated by the human mind, will not arise because we shall have a vision which will see the world in a different way and a guidance which at present is not ours. The mental or moral rule is a stop-gap which men are obliged to use, very uncertainly and stumblingly, until they can see things whole in the light of the spirit.

Chapter Three

Death

Death and Karma

It [*death*] is a universal force — the happening or change called death is simply one result of the working of the force.

*

Most people die before the vitality of the body is exhausted. It is due to many causes of which one is the destiny prepared by past lives; another the inner purpose or utility of the present life being completed — but these are subtle and secret reasons — others, accident, violence or other causes, are only an exterior machinery.

*

X had reached a stage of her development marked by a predominance of the sattwic nature, but not a strong vital (which works towards a successful or fortunate life) or the opening to a higher light, — her mental upbringing and surroundings stood against that and she herself was not ready. Her early death with much suffering may have been the result of past (prenatal) influences or they may have been chosen by her own psychic being as a passage towards a higher state for which she was not yet prepared but towards which she was moving. This and the non-fulfilment of her capacities would be a final tragedy if there were this life alone. As it is she has passed towards the psychic sleep to prepare for her life to come.

*

You can explain¹ to X that the death of his nephew had nothing

¹ *Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the enquirer. — Ed.*

to do with their [*his family members*'] obscurities and imperfections — it was part of his own Karma — each person has his own destiny and follows its line; to be in a certain family and with certain relations is only a temporary incident in its course. The sadhak should be free from these attachments and regard these happenings as ordeals to be passed through with equality and faith in the Divine — doing his best for those who are in his charge but not disturbed by results.

*

It is a very intricate and difficult question to tackle² and it can hardly be answered in a few words. Moreover it is impossible to give a general rule as to why there are these close inner contacts followed by a physical separation through death — in each case there is a difference and one would have to know the persons and be familiar with their soul history to tell what was behind their meeting and separation. In a general way, a life is only one brief episode in a long history of spiritual evolution in which the soul follows the curve of the line set for the earth, passing through many lives to complete it. It is an evolution out of material inconscience to consciousness and on towards the divine Consciousness, from ignorance to divine Knowledge, from darkness through half-lights to Light, from death to Immortality, from suffering to the Divine Bliss. Suffering is due first to the Ignorance, secondly to the separation of the individual consciousness from the Divine Consciousness and Being, a separation created by the Ignorance — when that ceases, when one lives completely in the Divine and no more in one's separated smaller self, then only suffering can altogether cease. Each soul follows its own line and these lines meet, journey together for a space, then part to meet again perhaps hereafter — often they meet to help each other on the journey in one way or another. As for the after-death period, the soul passes into other planes of existence, staying there for a while till it reaches its place of rest where it

² A mother whose sixteen-year-old son had died wrote to ask why his death had taken place. Her letter was referred to Sri Aurobindo. — Ed.

remains until it is ready for another terrestrial existence. This is the general law, but for the connections of embodied soul with embodied soul, that is a matter of personal evolution on which nothing general can be said as it is intimate to the soul stories of the two and needs a personal knowledge. That is all I can say, but I don't know that it will be of much help to her, as these things are helpful usually only when one enters into the consciousness in which they become not mere ideas but realities. Then one grieves no longer because one has entered into the Truth and the Truth brings calm and peace.

Death and Grieving

I can understand the shock your wife's catastrophic death must have been to you. But you are now a seeker and sadhak of the Truth and must set your mind above the normal reactions of the human being and see things in a larger greater light. Regard your lost wife as a soul that was progressing through the vicissitudes of the life of Ignorance — like all others here — in that progress things happen that seem unfortunate to the human mind and a sudden accidental or violent death cutting short prematurely this always brief spell of terrestrial experience we call life seems to it especially painful and unfortunate. But one who gets behind the outward view knows that all that happens in the progress of the soul has its meaning, its necessity, its place in the series of experiences which are leading it towards the turning point where one can pass from the Ignorance to the Light. He knows that whatever happens in the Divine Providence is for the best even though it may seem to the mind otherwise. Look on your wife as a soul that has passed the barrier between two states of existence. Help her journey towards her place of rest by calm thoughts and the call to the Divine Help to aid her upon it. Grief too long continued does not help but delays the journey of the departed soul. Do not brood on your loss, but think only of her spiritual welfare.

The telegram announces the passing away of your husband.

All has been done that could be done to keep him in life. What has happened must now be accepted calmly as the thing decreed and best for his soul's progress from life to life though not the best in human eyes which look only at the present and at outside appearance. For the spiritual seeker death is only a passage from one form of life to another, and none is dead but only departed. Look at it as that and shaking from you all reactions of vital grief — they cannot help him in his journey, — pursue steadfastly the path to the Divine.

*

There is nothing to grieve about as death means only passing over to another country — to which you probably go very often when you are asleep.

That is, so long as one has attachment — one ought to look at it like that. But all attachment to past ties should be overcome.

*

Of course, that is the real fact — death is only a shedding of the body, not a cessation of the personal existence. A man is not dead because he goes into another country and changes his clothes to suit that climate.

The After-Death Sojourn

There is after death a period in which one passes through the vital world and lives there for a time. It is only the first part of this transit that can be dangerous or painful; in the rest one works out, under certain surroundings, a remnant of the vital desires and instincts which one had in the body. As soon as one is tired of these and able to go beyond, the vital sheath is dropped and the soul, after a little time needed to get rid of some mental survivals, passes into a state of rest in the psychic world and remains there till the next life on earth.

One can help the departed soul by one's good will or by occult means if one has the knowledge. The one thing that one

should not do is to hold them back by sorrow for them or longings or anything else that would pull them nearer to earth or delay their journey to their place of rest.

*

It may happen to some not to realise for a little time that they are dead, especially if the death has been unforeseen and sudden, but it cannot be said that it happens to all or to most — some may enter into a state of semi-unconsciousness or obsession by a dark inner condition, created by their state of mind at death, in which they realise nothing of where they are etc., others are quite conscious of the passage. It is true that the departing being in the vital body lingers for some time near the body or the scene of life very often for as many as eight days and in the ancient religions mantras and other means were used for the severance. Even after the severance from the body a very earthbound nature or one full of strong physical desires may linger long in the earth-atmosphere up to a maximum period extended to three years. Afterwards it passes to the vital worlds, proceeding on its journey which must sooner or later bring it to the psychic rest till the next life. It is true also that sorrow and mourning for the dead impedes its progress by keeping it tied to the earth-atmosphere and pulling it back from its passage.

*

After death the soul passes in a little while or at once from the earth atmosphere and goes into the vital worlds where it remains for a time until it is ready to leave it. Thus it passes on its way till it is ready to pass into the psychic world where it rests until it is ready for a new birth.

*

After death one passes through various vital and mental planes till the psychic being drops its vital and mental sheaths and enters into rest on the psychic plane till the time comes for rebirth.

*

At the time of death the being goes out of the body through the head; it goes out in the subtle body and goes to different planes of existence for a short time until it has gone through certain experiences which are the result of its earthly existence. Afterwards it reaches the psychic world where it rests in a kind of sleep until it is time for it to start a new life on earth. That is what happens usually — but there are some beings who are more developed and do not follow this course.

*

That is a superstition [*that people have to live in naraka (hell) due to their bad actions*]. People after death pass through certain vital and mental worlds or through certain psychological states which are the results of their nature and action in life, afterwards they go to the psychic world and return to birth at a later time.

*

When the Mother spoke of the continuance of the same trouble after death, she did not mean another life. At death you go out of this physical frame in another kind of body, not physical, and are the same person with the same consciousness. That is why to talk of dying as going to rest is an ignorance and why it is useless. The only real thing is to get rid of the old lower self and be reborn to the new higher one, which can only be done by a change within you. That is what the Mother wants of you.

Chapter Four

Rebirth

The Psychic's Choice at the Time of Death

The psychic being at the time of death chooses what it will work out in the next birth and determines the character and conditions of the new personality. Life is for the evolutionary growth by experience in the conditions of the Ignorance till one is ready for the higher light.

*

The dying wish of the man is only something on the surface — it may be determined by the psychic and so help to shape the future but it does not determine the psychic's choice. That is something behind the veil. It is not the outer consciousness's action that determines the inner process, but the other way round. Sometimes, however, there are signs or fragments of the inner action that come up on the surface, e.g. some people have a vision or remembrance of the circumstances of their past in a panoramic flash at the time of death, that is the psychic's review of the life before departing.

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The psychic being's choice at the time of death doesn't work out the next formation of personality, it fixes it. When it enters the psychic world, it begins to assimilate the essence of its experience and by that assimilation is formed the future psychic personality in accordance with the fixation already made. When this assimilation is over, it is ready for a new birth — but the less developed beings do not work out the whole thing for themselves, there are beings and forces of the higher world who have that work. Also when it comes to birth, it is not sure that the forces of the physical world will not come across the working out of what it wanted — its own new instrumentation may not be strong enough for

that purpose; for there is the interaction of its own energies and the cosmic forces here. There may be frustration, diversion, a partial working out — many things may happen. All that is not a rigid machinery, it is a working out of complex forces. It may be added however that a developed psychic being is much more conscious in this transition and works much of it out itself. The time depends also on the development and on a certain rhythm of the being — for some there is practically immediate rebirth, for others it takes longer, for some it may take centuries; but here again, once the psychic being is sufficiently developed, it is free to choose its own rhythm and its own intervals. The ordinary theories are too mechanical — and that is the case also with the idea of *punya* and *pāpa* and their results in the next life. There are certainly results of the energies put forth in a past life, but not on that rather infantile principle. A good man's sufferings in this life would be a proof according to the orthodox theory that he had been a very great villain in his past life, a bad man's prospering would be a proof that he had been quite angelic in his last visit to earth and sown a large crop of virtues and meritorious actions to reap this bumper crop of good fortune. Too symmetrical to be true. The object of birth being growth by experience, whatever reactions come to past deeds must be for the being to learn and grow, not as lollipops for the good boys of the class (in the past) and canings for the bad ones. The real sanction for good and ill is not good fortune for the one and bad fortune for the other, but this that good leads us towards a higher nature which is eventually lifted above suffering and ill pulls us towards the lower nature which remains always in the circle of suffering and evil.

Assimilation in the Psychic World

The soul after it leaves the body travels through several states or planes until the psychic being has shed its temporary sheaths, then it reaches the psychic world where it rests in a kind of sleep till it is ready for reincarnation. What it keeps with it of the human experience in the end is only the essence of all

that it has gone through, what it can use for its development. This is the general rule, but it does not apply to exceptional cases or to very developed beings who have achieved a greater consciousness than the ordinary human level.

It is not the soul (the psychic being) that takes a lesser form [*in its next birth*], it is some part of the manifested being, usually some part of the vital that does it, owing to some desire, affinity, need of particular experience. This happens fairly often to the ordinary man.

*

After leaving the body, the soul, after certain experiences in other worlds, throws off its mental and vital personality and goes into rest to assimilate the essence of its past and prepare for a new life. It is this preparation that determines the circumstances of the new birth and guides it in its reconstitution of a new personality and the choice of its materials.

The departed soul retains the memory of its past experiences only in their essence, not in their form or detail. It is only if the soul brings back some past personality or personalities as part of its present manifestation that it is likely to remember the details of the past life. Otherwise, it is only by Yogadrishti that the memory comes.

There may be what seem to be retrograde movements [*in the evolution of the soul*], but these are only like zigzag movements, not a real falling back, but a return on something not worked out so as to go on better afterwards.

The soul does not go back to the animal condition; but part of the vital personality may disjoin itself and join an animal birth to work out its animal propensities there.

There is no truth in the popular belief about the avaricious man becoming a serpent. These are popular romantic superstitions.

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The soul takes birth each time, and each time a mind, life and body are formed out of the materials of universal Nature,

according to the soul's past evolution and its need for the future.

When the body is dissolved, the vital goes into the vital plane and remains there for a time, but after a time the vital sheath disappears. The last to dissolve is the mental sheath. Finally the soul or psychic being retires into the psychic world to rest there till a new birth is due.

This is the general course for ordinarily developed human beings. There are variations according to the nature of the individual and his development. For example, if the mental is strongly developed, then the mental being can remain; so also can the vital, provided they are organised by and centred around the true psychic being; they share the immortality of the psychic.

The soul gathers the essential element of its experiences in life and makes that its basis of growth in the evolution; when it returns to birth it takes up with its mental, vital, physical sheaths so much of its Karma as is useful to it in the new life for farther experience.

It is really for the vital part of the being that *śrāddha* and rites are done — to help the being to get rid of the vital vibrations which still attach it to the earth or to the vital worlds, so that it may pass quickly to its rest in the psychic peace.

*

The movement of the psychic being dropping its outer, its vital and mental sheaths on its way to the psychic plane, is its normal movement after death. But there can be any number of variations; one can return directly from the vital plane without passing on to farther and higher states, and there are cases of an almost immediate rebirth, sometimes even attended with a detailed memory of the events of the past life.

Hell and heaven are often imaginary states of the soul, or rather of the vital being, which it constructs about it after its passing. What is meant by hell is a painful passage through some vital world or a dolorous lingering there, as for instance in many cases of suicide where one remains surrounded by the forces of suffering and turmoil created by this unnatural and violent exit. There are also, of course, real worlds of mind and vital

worlds which are penetrated with joyful or dark experiences, and one may pass through these as the result of things formed in the nature which create the necessary affinities. But the idea of reward or retribution is a crude and vulgar conception and we can disregard it as a mere popular error.

There is no rule of complete forgetfulness in the return of the soul to rebirth. There are, especially in childhood, many impressions of the past life which can be strong and vivid enough, but a materialising education and the overpowering influences of the environment must often, but not quite always, prevent their true nature from being recognised. There are even a number of people who have definite recollections of a past life. But these things are discouraged by education and the atmosphere and cannot remain or develop; in most cases they are stifled out of existence. At the same time it must be noted that what the psychic being mainly carries away with it and brings back is ordinarily the essence and effect of the experiences it had in former lives, and not the details, so that you cannot expect the same coherent memory as one has of past happenings in the present existence.

A soul can go straight to the psychic world but that depends on the state of consciousness at the time of departure. If the psychic is in front at the time, this immediate transition is possible. It does not depend on the acquisition of a mental and vital as well as a psychic immortality—those who have acquired that would rather have the power to move about in the different planes and even act on the physical world without being bound to it. On the whole it may be said that there is no one rigid rule for these things; manifold variations are possible depending upon the consciousness, its energies, tendencies and formations, although there is a general framework and design into which all fit and take their place.

The Psychic Being and the Progression from Life to Life

It is necessary to understand clearly the difference between the evolving soul (psychic being) and the pure Atman, self or spirit. The pure self is unborn, does not pass through death or birth,

is independent of birth or body, mind or life or this manifested Nature. It is not bound by these things, not limited, not affected, even though it assumes and supports them. The soul, on the contrary, is something that comes down into birth and passes through death — although it does not itself die, for it is immortal — from one state to another, from the earth-plane to other planes and back again to the earth-existence. It goes on with this progression from life to life through an evolution which leads it up to the human state and evolves through it all a being of itself which we call the psychic being. This being supports the evolution and develops a physical, a vital, a mental human consciousness as its instruments of world-experience and of a disguised, imperfect, but growing self-expression. All this it does from behind a veil, showing something of its divine self only in so far as the imperfection of the instrumental being will allow it. But a time comes when it is able to prepare to come out from behind the veil, to take command and turn all the instrumental nature towards a divine fulfilment. This is the beginning of the true spiritual life. The soul is able now to make itself ready for a higher evolution of manifested consciousness than the mental human — it can pass from the mental to the spiritual and through degrees of the spiritual to the supramental state. Till then, till it has reached the spiritual realisation, there is no reason why it should cease from birth, it cannot in fact so cease. If having reached the spiritual state, it wills to pass out of the terrestrial manifestation, it may indeed make such an exit, — but there is also possible a higher manifestation, in the Knowledge and not in the Ignorance.

Your question therefore does not arise. It is not the naked spirit, but the psychic being that goes to the psychic plane to rest till it is called again to another life. There is therefore no need of a Force to compel it to take birth anew. It is in its nature something that is put forth from the Divine to support the evolution and it must do so till the Divine's purpose in its evolution is accomplished. Karma is only a machinery, it is not the fundamental cause of terrestrial existence — it cannot be, for when the soul first entered this existence, it had no Karma.

What again do you mean by “the all-veiling Maya” or by “losing all consciousness”? The soul cannot lose all consciousness, for its very nature is consciousness though not of the mental kind to which we give the name. The consciousness is merely covered, not lost or abolished by the so-called Inconscience of material Nature and then by the half-conscious ignorance of mind, life and body. It manifests, as the individual mind and life and body grow, as much as may be of the consciousness which it holds in potentiality, manifests it in the outward instrumental nature as far as and in the way that is possible through these instruments and through the outer personality that has been prepared for it and by it — for both are true — for the present life.

I know nothing about any terrible suffering endured by the soul in the process of rebirth; popular beliefs even when they have some foundation are seldom enlightened and accurate.

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1. The psychic being stands behind mind, life and body, supporting them; so also the psychic world is not one world in the scale like the mental, vital or physical worlds, but stands behind all these and it is there that the souls evolving here retire for the time between life and life. If the psychic were only one principle in the rising order of body, life and mind on a par with the others and placed somewhere in the scale on the same footing as the others, it could not be the soul of all the rest, the divine element making the evolution of the others possible and using them as instruments for a growth through cosmic experience towards the Divine. So also the psychic world cannot be one among the other worlds to which the evolutionary being goes for supraphysical experience, it is a plane where it retires into itself for rest, for a spiritual assimilation of what it has experienced and for a replunging into its own fundamental consciousness and psychic nature.

2. For the few who go out of the Ignorance and enter into Nirvana, there is no question of their going straight up into higher worlds of manifestation. Nirvana or Moksha is a liberated condition of the being, not a world — it is a withdrawal

from the worlds and the manifestation. The analogy of Pitriyana and Devayana can hardly be mentioned in this connection.

3. The condition of the souls that retire into the psychic world is entirely static; each withdraws into himself and is not interacting with the others. When they come out of their trance, they are ready to go down into a new life, but meanwhile they do not act upon the earth life. There are other beings, guardians of the psychic world, but they are concerned only with the psychic world itself and the return of the souls to reincarnation, not with the earth.

4. A being of the psychic world cannot get fused into the soul of a human being on earth. What happens sometimes is that a very advanced psychic being sometimes sends down an emanation which resides in a human being and prepares it until it is ready for the psychic being itself to enter into the life. This happens when some special work has to be done and the human vehicle prepared. Such a descent produces a remarkable change of a sudden character in the personality and the nature.

5. Usually, a soul follows continuously the same line of sex. If there are shiftings of sex, it is as a rule a matter of parts of the personality which are not central.

6. As regards the stage at which the soul returning for rebirth enters the new body no rule can be laid down, for the circumstances vary with the individual. Some psychic beings get into relation with the birth-environment and the parents from the time of inception and determine the preparation of the personality and future in the embryo, others join only at the time of delivery, others even later on in the life and in these cases it is some emanation of the psychic being which upholds the life. It should be noted that the conditions of the future birth are determined fundamentally not during the stay in the psychic world but at the time of death — the psychic being then chooses what it should work out in the next terrestrial appearance and the conditions arrange themselves accordingly.

Note that the idea of rebirth and the circumstances of the new life as a reward or punishment for *punya* or *pāpa* is a crude human idea of “justice” which is quite unphilosophical

and unspiritual and distorts the true intention of life. Life here is an evolution and the soul grows by experience, working out by it this or that in the nature, and if there is suffering, it is for the purpose of that working out, not as a judgment inflicted by God or Cosmic Law on the errors or stumblings which are inevitable in the Ignorance.

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It is difficult to give a positive answer to these questions, because no general rule can be laid down applicable to all. The mind makes rigid rules or one rigid rule, but the Manifestation is in reality very plastic and various and many-sided. My answers therefore must not be taken as exhaustive of the subject or complete.

1. He [*a Jivanmukta*] can go wherever his aim was fixed, into a state of Nirvana or one of the divine worlds and stay there or remain, wherever he may go, in contact with the earth-movement and return to it if his will is to help that movement.

This is doubtful [*whether a Jivanmukta can go direct from the world of the soul's present highest achievement to a still higher world*]. If originally he is not a being of the evolution but of some higher world, he could go back to that world. If he wants to go higher, it is logical that he should return to the field of evolution so long as he has not evolved the consciousness proper to that higher plane. The orthodox idea that even the gods have to come to earth if they want salvation may be applied to this ascension also. If he is originally an evolutionary being (Ramakrishna's distinction of the Jivakoti and Ishwarakoti may be extended to this also), he must proceed by the evolutionary path to either the negative withdrawal through Nirvana or some positive divine fulfilment in the increasing manifestation of Sachchidananda.

As to the impossibility of return [*to the earth*], that is a knotty question. A divine being can always return — as Ramakrishna said, the Ishwarakoti can at will ascend or descend the stair between Birth and Immortality. For the others, it is probable that they may rest for a relative infinity of time, *śāśvatīḥ samāḥ*,

if that is the will in them, but a return cannot be barred out unless they have reached their highest possible status.

No [*a Jivanmukta does not take rest in the psychic world before taking birth again on earth*]. That is part of the evolutionary line only, not obligatory for divine returns.

2. An advanced psychic being may mean here [*in the preceding letter*] one who has arrived at the soul's freedom and is immersed in the Divine — immersed does not mean abolished. Such a being does not sleep in the psychic world, but may remain in his state of blissful immersion or come back for some purpose.

The word “descend” has various meanings according to the context — I used it here in the sense of the psychic being “coming down” into the human consciousness and body ready for it; that descent might be at the time of birth or before or it may come down later and occupy the personality it has prepared for itself. I do not quite understand what are these personalities from above¹ — it is the psychic being itself that takes up a body.

3. No, the psychic being cannot take up more than one body. There is only one psychic being for each human being, but the Beings of the higher planes, e.g. the Gods of the Overmind can manifest in more than one human body at a time by sending different emanations into different bodies. These would be called Vibhutis of these Devatas.

4. These [*guardians of the psychic world*] are not human souls nor is this an office to which they are appointed nor are they functionaries — these are beings of the psychic plane pursuing their own natural activity in that plane. My word “guardians” [*in the preceding letter*] was simply a phrase meant to indicate by an image or metaphor the nature of their action.

The New Birth

When there is a new birth one brings all that is necessary from

¹ *The correspondent asked whether the “personalities” of an advanced being “move about in the higher planes”. — Ed.*

past lives but also one gathers what is necessary from the earth consciousness and so too brings in new elements as one develops.

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It is a little difficult to explain. When one gets a new body, the nature which inhabits it, nature of mind, nature of vital, nature of physical, is made up of many personalities, not one simple personality as is supposed — although there is one central being. This complex personality is formed partly by bringing together personalities of past lives, but also by gathering experiences, tendencies, influences from the earth atmosphere — which are taken up by one of the constituent personalities as suitable to his own nature. Such an influence left behind by Vivekananda or one of his disciples may have been taken up by you without your being an incarnation of either.

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The being as it passes through the series of its lives takes on personalities of various kinds and passes through various types of experiences, but it does not carry these on to the next life, as a rule. It takes on a new mind, vital and body. The mental capacities, occupations, interests, idiosyncrasies of the past mind and vital are not taken over by the new mind and vital, except to the extent that is useful for the new life. One may have the power of poetic expression in one life, but in the next have no such power nor any interest in poetry. On the other hand tendencies suppressed or missed or imperfectly developed in one life may come out in the next. There would be therefore nothing surprising in the contrast which you noted. The essence of past experiences is kept by the psychic being but the forms of experience or of personality are not, except such as are needed for the new stage in the soul's progress.

The being in its long course of experience may permit for a time the search after sensual pleasure and afterwards discard it and turn to higher things. This can happen even in the course of a lifetime, *a fortiori* in a second life where the old personalities would not be carried over.

Reincarnation and Soul Evolution

You must avoid a common popular blunder about reincarnation. The popular idea is that Titus Balbus is reborn again as John Smith, a man with the same personality, character, attainments as he had in his former life with the sole difference that he wears coat and trousers instead of a toga and speaks in cockney English instead of popular Latin. That is not the case. What would be the earthly use of repeating the same personality or character a million times from the beginning of time till its end! The soul comes into birth for experience, for growth, for evolution till it can bring the Divine into matter. It is the central being that incarnates, not the outer personality — the personality is simply a mould that it creates for its figures of experience in that one life. In another birth it will create for itself a different personality, different capacities, a different life and career. Supposing Virgil is born again, he may take up poetry in one or two other lives, but he will certainly not write an epic but rather perhaps slight but elegant and beautiful lyrics such as he wanted to write, but did not succeed, in Rome. In another birth he is likely to be no poet at all, but a philosopher and a Yogin seeking to attain and to express the highest truth — for that too was an unrealised trend of his consciousness in that life. Perhaps before he had been a warrior or ruler doing deeds like Aeneas or Augustus before he sang them. And so on — on this side or that the central being develops a new character, a new personality, grows, develops, passes through all kinds of terrestrial experience.

As the evolving being develops still more and becomes more rich and complex, it accumulates its personalities, as it were. Sometimes they stand behind the active elements, throwing in some colour, some trait, some capacity here and there, — or they stand in front and there is a multiple personality, a many-sided character or a many-sided, sometimes what looks like a universal capacity. But if a former personality, a former capacity is brought fully forward, it will not be to repeat what was already done, but to cast the same capacity into new forms and new shapes and fuse it into a new harmony of the being which will not be a

reproduction of what it was before. Thus you must not expect to be what the warrior and the poet were — something of the outer characteristics may reappear but very much changed and new-cast in a new combination. It is in a new direction that the energies will be guided to do what was not done before.

Another thing. It is not the personality, the character that is of the first importance in rebirth — it is the psychic being who stands behind the evolution of the nature and evolves with it. The psychic when it departs from the body, shedding even the mental and vital on its way to its resting place, carries with it the heart of its experiences, — not the physical events, not the vital movements, not the mental buildings, not the capacities or characters, but something essential that it gathered from them, what might be called the divine element for the sake of which the rest existed. That is the permanent addition, it is that that helps in the growth towards the Divine. That is why there is usually no memory of the outward events and circumstances of past lives — for this memory there must be a strong development towards unbroken continuance of the mind, the vital, even the subtle physical; for though it all remains in a kind of seed memory, it does not ordinarily emerge. What was the divine element in the magnanimity of the warrior, that which expressed itself in his loyalty, nobility, high courage, what was the divine element behind the harmonious mentality and generous vitality of the poet and expressed itself in them, that remains and in a new harmony of character may find a new expression or, if the life is turned towards the Divine, be taken up as powers for the realisation or for the work that has to be done for the Divine.

What Survives and What Does Not

Nothing in the nature is carried over [*in the next incarnation*] except the essence of the past experiences and energies as much as is necessary for the new life. The rest is held in reserve, but things so held in reserve can be brought forward in a new form and under new conditions.

If all is centred consciously around the psychic then they [*the mental and vital parts of the being*] survive, otherwise they separate. The vital for instance survives for a time, then breaks up and dissolves into desires and fragmentary bits of vital personality. The mental is usually more lasting — but that too dissolves. It all depends on the person, how far he has developed his mind or vital or connected them with the psychic.

*

If one has had a strong spiritual development, that makes it easier to retain the developed mental or vital after death. But it is not absolutely necessary that the person should have been a Bhakta or a Jnani. One like Shelley or like Plato for instance could be said to have a developed mental being centred round the psychic — of the vital the same can hardly be said. Napoleon had a strong vital but not one organised round the psychic being.

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What you suggest [*that certain forces from a past life or lives may “stick” to a person in the present life*] is true — that is to say when it is some past personality which or part of which is strongly carried over into the present life. It is, I believe, true that you were a revolutionary in a past life or if not a revolutionary, engaged in a violent political action. I can't put a name or a precise form on it. But it was not only the sudden angers and violences, but probably also the desire to help, to reform, to purify and other intensities and vehemences that came from there. When a personality is carried over like that it is not only the undesirable sides that are carried over but things that purified and chastened can be useful.

*

There is no such thing as an insuperable difficulty from past lives. There are formations that help and formations that hamper; the latter have to be dismissed and dissolved, not to be allowed to repeat themselves. The Mother told you that to explain the origin of this tendency and the necessity of getting rid of it —

there was no hint of any insuperable difficulty, quite the contrary.

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For most people [*when they die*] the vital dissolves after a time as it is not sufficiently formed to be immortal. The soul descending makes a new vital formation suitable for the new life.

*

The physical always dissolves and in each new life one gets a new physical formation. To preserve the same physical would mean physical immortality.

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Not *as* they are.² What remains and to what degree depends on the development in each case. Of course the centres themselves remain — for they are in the subtle body and it is from there that they act on the corresponding physical centres.

*

No, the subconscious is an instrument for the physical life and disappears [*after death*]. It is too incoherent to be an organised enduring existence.

Lines of Force and Consciousness

What is exactly your theory? There is one thing — influences — everybody undergoes influences, absorbs them or rejects, makes them disappear in one's own developed [*poetic*] style or else keeps them as constituent strands. There is another thing — lines of Force. In the universe there are many lines of Force on which various personalities or various achievements and formations spring up — e.g. the line Pericles–Caesar–Napoleon or the line Alexander–Jenghiz–Tamerlane–Napoleon — meeting together there — so it may be too in poetry, lines of poetic force prolonging themselves from one poet to another, meeting and

² The disciple asked, "Do the centres remain as they are after death?" — Ed.

diverging. Yours seems to be a third — a daemon or individual Spirit of Poetry migrating from one individual to another, several perhaps meeting together in one poet who gives them all a combined full expression. Is that it? If so, it is an interesting idea and arguable.

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But after all it is a line of consciousness and not a personality that reincarnates; the personality is only for the one life, so it does not bind though it may influence at certain points the present life.

Beings of the Higher Planes

It is always possible for a being of the higher planes to take birth on earth — in that case they create a mind or vital for themselves or else they join a mind, vital and body which has already been prepared under their influence — there are indeed many ways and not one only in which they can manifest here.

*

As there are many personalities in a man in his various ordinary planes of consciousness, so also several beings can associate themselves with his consciousness as it develops afterwards — descending into his higher mind or other higher planes of being and connecting themselves with his personality. That is for the principle. But as for the particular information [*about a certain person*], it is inaccurate. It has probably reference to the period when Mother was bringing down beings to aid in the work.

Fragments of a Dead Person that Reincarnate

All human incarnations or births have naturally a psychic being. It is only other types like the vital beings that have not, and that is precisely the reason why they want to possess men and enjoy physical life without being themselves born here, for so they escape the psychic law of evolution and spiritual progress

and change. But these formations [*the vital fragments of a dead person*] are different, they are things that do not leave the earth and do not possess but simply attach themselves to some human rebirth (of course with a psychic in it) which has some affinity and therefore does not object to or resist their inclusion.

*

The fragments [*of a dead person*] are not of the inner being (who goes on his way to the psychic world) but of his vital sheath which falls away after death. These can join for birth the vital of some other Jiva who is being born or they can be used by a vital being to enter a body in process of birth and partly possess it for the satisfaction of its propensities. The junction can also take place after birth.

Connections from Life to Life

There is a vital connection generally — the psychic is comparatively rare. It is something in past lives usually that determines these connections in this one, but the connection in this life is seldom the same as that of the past which determined it.

Lines of Sex in Rebirth

As far as I know, the births follow usually one line [*of sex*] or the other and do not alternate — that, I think, is the Indian tradition also, though there are purposeful exceptions like Shikhandi's. If there is a change of sex, it is only part of the being that associates itself with the change, not the central being.

*

Not sex exactly [*is present in the psychic being*], but what might be called the masculine and feminine principle. It is a difficult question [*whether a man can be reborn as a woman or a woman as a man*]. There are certain lines the reincarnation follows and so far as my experience goes and general experience goes, one follows usually a single line. But the alteration of sex cannot

be declared impossible. There may be some who do alternate. The presence of feminine traits in a male does not necessarily indicate a past feminine birth — they may come in the general play of forces and their formations. There are besides qualities common to both sexes. Also a fragment of the psychological personality may have been associated with a birth not one's own. One can say of a certain person of the past, "That was not myself, but a fragment of my psychological personality was present in him." Rebirth is a complex affair and not so simple in its mechanism as in the popular idea.

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All the instances I have heard of in the popular accounts of rebirth are of man becoming man and woman becoming woman in the next life — except when they become animal, but even then I think the male becomes a male animal and the female a female animal. There are only stray cases quoted like Shikhandi's in the Mahabharata for variations of sex. The Theosophist conception is full of raw imagination, one Theosophist even going so far as to say that if you are a man in this birth you are obliged to be a woman in the next and so on.

Asuric Births

*Āsurīṣu*³ can't possibly mean "animal". The Gita uses precise terms and if it had meant animal it would have said animal and not Asuric. As for the punishment, it is that they [*Asuric men*] go down in their nature to more depths of Asurism till they touch bottom as it were. But that is a natural result of their uncontrolled tendencies which they freely indulge without any effort to rise out of them while by the cultivation of the higher side of personality one naturally rises and develops towards godhead or the Divine. In the Gita the Divine is regarded as the controller of the whole cosmic action through Nature, so the "I cast" is in

³ *Kṣipāmyajasram aśubhān āsurīṣveva yoniṣu. "I cast down them continually into more and more Asuric births." Gita 16.19.*

harmony with its ideas. The world is a mechanism of Nature, but a mechanism regulated by the presence of the Divine.

Animals and the Process of Rebirth

The soul in the animal evolves its manifestation to a point at which it can pass from the expression in animal to the expression in human consciousness.

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It is when the vital gets broken up, some strong movements of it, desires, greeds, may precipitate themselves into animal forms, e.g., sexual desire with the part of the vital consciousness under its control into a dog or some habitual movement of excessive greed may carry part of the vital consciousness into a pig. The animals represent the vital consciousness with mind involved in the vital, so that it is naturally there that such things would gravitate for satisfaction.

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Mūḍhayoniṣu or *adho gacchanti* [*in the Gita*] does not necessarily refer to animal birth, but it is true that there has been a general belief of that kind [*that a man may be born as an animal in his next birth*] not only in India but wherever “transmigration” or “metempsychosis” was believed in. Shakespeare is referring to Pythagoras’ belief in transmigration when he speaks of the passage of somebody’s grandmother into an animal. But the soul, the psychic being, once having reached the human consciousness cannot go back to the inferior animal consciousness any more than it can go back into a tree or an ephemeral insect. What is true is that some part of the vital energy or the formed instrumental consciousness or nature can and very frequently does so, if it is strongly attached to anything in the earth life. This may account for some cases of immediate rebirth with full memory in human forms also. Ordinarily it is only by Yogic development or by clairvoyance that the exact memory of past lives can be brought back.

Remembering Past Lives

Certainly, the subconscious is formed for this life only and is not carried with it by the soul from one life to another. The memory of past lives is not something that is active anywhere in the being — if by memory is meant the memory of details. That memory of details is quiescent and untraceable except in so far as certain constituent personalities taken over from the past retain the memories of the particular life in which they were manifest. E.g. if some personality that was put forth by one in Venice or Rome remembers from time to time a detail or details of what happened then. But usually it is only the essence of past lives that is activated in the being, not any particular memories. So it is impossible to say that the memory is located in a particular part of the consciousness or in a particular plane.

*

These ideas of past lives are not experiences, they are mental formations trying to give a name and form to something that is true, but you must not attach any importance to the forms the mind gives it. The truth is that there was a connection in past lives, but the forms given by the mind are likely to be mistaken.

*

It is not the ego, but the inner being that remembers the past lives — and the inner being as a rule is perfectly detached about them.

*

The different and contrasting phases through which you pass are obviously due to the emergence of different personalities in you created by past lives. One is full of the zest of life and its ardour, the other has the Nirvanic tendency and a certain incapacity for mastery over the physical existence. This is very self-evident and the putting of a name or a frame to the past lives in which these personalities were formed could hardly add anything of importance. If you yourself remembered the essence

of them (not the details), then it might be of some use for your own consciousness in determining the limits of each influence in you and its place — but that can also be done well enough even without that remembrance.

Unimportance of Past-Life Experience in Yoga

These things (events etc.) [*of past lives*] are not known usually unless they come in some concentrated state of vision of themselves. The Mother nowadays seldom has these states because the whole concentration is on bringing down the supramental principle here. When that work is done then these things may come.

*

The Mother only speaks to people about their past births when she sees definitely some scene or memory of their past in concentration; but this happens rarely nowadays.

What is remembered mainly from past lives is the nature of the personality and the subtle results of the life-experience. Names, events, physical details are remembered only under exceptional circumstances and are of a very minor importance. When people try to remember these outward things, they usually build up a number of romantic imaginations which are not true.

I think you should dismiss this idea about the past lives. If the memory of past personalities comes of itself (without a name or mere outward details) that is sometimes important as giving a clue to something in the present development, but to know the nature of that personality and its share in the present constitution of the character is quite enough. The rest is of little use.

*

It is not of course indispensable to know [*about past lives*]. It is sometimes a matter of interest for knowing the lines of one's past development and how one has come to what one is now. But to overpass this outward development is of course the main aim of the Yoga. We are not to be tied by our past lives.

*

Too much importance must not be given to past lives. For the purpose of this Yoga one is what one is and, still more, what one will be. What one was has a minor importance.

Speculating about Past Lives

It is not necessary to attach any entire belief to these ideas of past births. X's idea of Y's rebirth is evidently a mere idea — nothing else.

When there is any truth in these things, it is most often a perception that some Force once represented in a certain person has also some part in one's own nature — not that the same personality is here.

Of course, there is rebirth, but to establish that one is such a one reborn, a deeper experience is necessary, not a mere mental intuition which may easily be an error.

*

Ideas of this kind about Vivekananda and Ramakrishna are ideas of the mind to which the vital strongly attaches itself — the truth of the past lives cannot be discovered in that way. These mental ideas are not true. You must wait for direct knowledge in a liberated nature before you can know who in past lives you were.

*

It is better not to think of past lives just now. The mind and vital would probably become active and weave things that are not true.

*

Seriously, these historical identifications are a perilous game and open a hundred doors to the play of imagination. Some may, in the nature of things must be true; but once people begin, they don't know where to stop. What is important is the lines, rather than the lives, the incarnation of Forces that explain what one now is — and, as for particular lives or rather personalities, those alone matter which are very definite in one

and have powerfully contributed to what one is developing now. But it is not always possible to put a name upon these; for not one hundred-thousandth part of what has been has still a name preserved by human Time.

Traditional Indian Ideas about Rebirth and Other Worlds

The general Divine Will in the universe is for the progressive manifestation in the universe. But that is the general will — it admits the withdrawal of individual souls who are not ready to persevere in the world.

*

The escape from birth was a universal ideal at that time [*the time of the Gita*] except with one or two sects of the Shaivas, I believe. It is not at all consistent with the Divine taking many births, for the Gita speaks of the highest condition not as a *laya*, but as a dwelling in the Divine. If so there seems to be no reason why the *mukta* and *siddha* who has reached that dwelling in the consciousness of the Divine should fear rebirth and its troubles any more than the Divine does.

*

The Pitriyan is supposed to lead to inferior worlds attained by the Fathers who still belong to the evolution in the Ignorance. By the Devayan one gets beyond the Ignorance into the light. The difficulty about the Pitris is that in the Puranas they are taken as the Ancestors to whom the tarpan is given — it is an old Ancestor worship such as still exists in Japan, but in the Veda they seem to be the Fathers who have gone before and discovered the supraphysical worlds.

European Resistance to the Idea of Reincarnation

But that [*the idea of reincarnation*] is just what is disputed by the Western scientific mind or was up till yesterday and is still considered as unverifiable today. It is contended that the idea of

self is an illusion — apart from the body. It is the experiences of the body that create the idea of a self and the desire to live prolongs itself illusorily in the notion that the self outlasts the body. The West is accustomed besides to the Christian idea that the self is created with the body — an idea which the Christians took over from the Jews who believed in God but not in immortality — so the Western mind is dead set against any idea of reincarnation. Even the religious used to believe that the soul was born in the body, God first making the body then breathing the soul into it (Prana?). It is difficult for Europeans to get over this past mental inheritance.

Section Four

Occult Knowledge and Powers

Chapter One

Occult Knowledge

Occultism and the Supraphysical

[*Occultism:*] The knowledge and right use of the hidden forces of Nature.

*

What did he himself [*Ramakrishna*] say about it — that it was the sins of his disciples which constituted the cancer. There is a physical aspect to things and there is an occult supraphysical aspect — one need not get in the way of the other. All physical things are the expression of the supraphysical. The existence of a body with physical instruments and processes does not, as the 19th century wrongly imagined, disprove the existence of a soul which uses the body even if it is also conditioned by it. Laws of Nature do not disprove the existence of God. The fact of a material world to which our instruments are accorded does not disprove the existence of less material worlds which certain subtler instruments can show to us.

Occult Forces

[*Occult forces:*] The forces that can only be known by going behind the veil of apparent phenomena — especially the forces of the subtle physical and supraphysical planes.

*

Nature-forces are conscious forces — they can very well combine all that is necessary for an action or a purpose and when one means fails, take another.

*

They [*general forces and impulses in the atmosphere*] are able to act with a greater force if they can make a special formation

than by a general psychological action common to all human nature.

*

The forces are conscious. There are besides individualised beings who represent the forces or use them. The wall between consciousness and force, impersonality and personality becomes much thinner when one goes behind the veil of matter. If one looks at a working from the side of impersonal force one sees a force or energy at work acting for a purpose or with a result, if one looks from the side of being one sees a being possessing, guiding and using or else representative of and used by a conscious force as its instrument of specialised action and expression. You speak of the wave, but in modern science it has been found that if you look at the movement of energy, it appears on one side to be a wave and act as a wave, on the other as a mass of particles and to act as a mass of particles each acting in its own way. It is somewhat the same principle here.

*

The experience you had of something going out from the head like an arrow probably indicates something going out of the mental consciousness towards some aim or object. Sometimes it is a part of the mind-consciousness itself that goes like that either upward to a higher plane or somewhere in the world around — and afterwards returns. Sometimes it is a thought-force or a will-force. Forces are always going out from us without our knowing it even, and often they have some effect there. If we think of a person or a place and things happening there, something can go out like that to that person or place. If we have a will or strong mental desire that something should happen, a will-force may go out and try to make that happen. But also forces can go out from the inner mind without any conscious cause on the surface.

The Play of Forces

My experience shows me that human beings are less deliberate

and responsible for their acts than the moralists, novelists and dramatists make them and I look rather to see what forces drove them than what the man himself may have seemed by inference to have intended or purposed — our inferences are often wrong and even when they are right touch only the surface of the matter.

*

All life is the play of universal forces. The individual gives a personal form to these universal forces. But he can choose whether he shall respond or not to the action of a particular force. Only most people do not really choose — they undergo the play of the forces. Your illnesses, depressions etc. are the repeated play of such forces. It is only when one can make oneself free of them that one can be the true person and have a true life — but one can be free only by living in the Divine.

*

Predestination and chance are words — words that obscure the truth by their extreme rigidity of definition. All is done through a play of forces which seems to be a play of different possibles, but there is Something that looks and selects and uses without being either blindly arbitrary (predestination) or capriciously decisive (chance).

*

There is no question of responsibility.¹ The “Something” does not act arbitrarily, paying no heed to the play of forces or the man’s nature. “Selects” does not mean “selects at random”. If a man puts himself on the side of or into the hands of the hostile influences and says, “This way I will go and no other. I want my ego, my greatness, my field of power and action”, has not the Something the right to say, “I agree. Go and find it — if you can”? On the other hand, if the balance of forces is otherwise,

¹ *The correspondent wrote, in regard to the preceding letter: “If there is Something that looks, selects and uses our actions, then it is not the play of forces that is responsible for any action; the ultimate responsibility lies with this Something.”*

less on one side, the selection may be the other way, the saving element being present, and determine another orientation. But to understand the working of this Cosmic Something one must see not only the few outward factors observed by the human eye, but the whole working with all its multitudinous details — that one cannot do unless one is oneself in the cosmic consciousness and with some opening at least to the Overmind.

There is no such thing as “free” will, but there is the power of the Purusha to say “yes” or “no” to any particular pressure of Prakriti and there is the power of the mind, vital etc. to echo feebly or strongly the Purusha’s “yes” or “no” or to resist it. A constant (not a momentary) Yes or No has its effect in the play of the forces and the selection by the Something.

*

No, of course not [*helpful synchronicities are not just accidents*]. But they seem so to all who live in the outward vision only. “Coincidence the scientists do them call.” But anyone with some intelligence and power of observation who lives more in an inward consciousness can see the play of invisible forces at every step which act on men and bring about events without their knowing about the instrumentation. The difference created by Yoga or by an inner consciousness — for there are people like Socrates who develop or have some inner awareness without Yoga — is that one becomes conscious of these invisible forces and can also consciously profit by them or use and direct them. That is all.

*

I have not said [*in the preceding letter*] that everything is rigidly predetermined. Play of forces does not mean that. What I said was that behind visible events in the world there is always a mass of invisible forces at work unknown to the outward minds of men and by Yoga (by going inward and establishing a conscious connection with the cosmic Self and Force and forces) one can become conscious of these forces, intervene consciously in the play, to some extent at least determine things in the result of the play. All that has nothing to do with predetermination. On the

contrary one watches how things develop and gives a push here and a push there when possible or when needed. There is nothing in all that to contradict the dictum of the great scientist Sir C. V. Raman. Raman said once that all these scientific discoveries are only games of chance. Only, when he says these things are games of chance, he is merely saying that human beings don't know how it works out. It is not a rigid predetermination, but it is not a blind unconscious Chance either. It is a play in which there is a working out of possibilities in Time.

*

What X said is true, the play of the forces is very complex and one has to be conscious of them and, as it were, see and watch how they work before one can really understand why things happen as they do. All action is surrounded by a complexity of forces and if one puts a force for one of them to succeed, one must be careful to do it thoroughly and maintain it and not leave doors open for the other contrary ones to find their way in. I left at least two doors open and the forces that wanted him [*a sadhak*] here pushed in through them. As for what they were, it can only be said that it was probably a mixture. Each man is himself a field of many forces — some were working for his sadhana, some were working for his ego and desires. There are besides powers which seek to make a man an instrument for purposes not his own without his knowing it. All of these may combine to bring about a particular result. These forces work each for the fulfilment of its own drive — they need not be at all what we call hostile forces, — they are simply forces of Nature. It is not a fact however that hostile forces cannot bring a man here — e.g. when Y came back and wanted to enter the Asram, there was clearly a hostile force working that wanted to create trouble, but it was not strong enough to do it.

*

X's new consciousness makes him feel more strongly the opposite forces that one contacts when one moves in the world and has to do affairs and meet with others and he is afraid of

a response in his vital which will upset his sadhana or create difficulties. Evidently he is a man who is psychically sensitive or has become so to that thing which you blindly refuse to recognise even when you are in the midst of it — the play of forces. You can feel your friend's atmosphere through the letter "so beautiful, so strengthening, so refreshing" and it has an immediate effect on you. But your mind stares like an owl and wonders, "What the hell can this be?" — I suppose, because your medical books never told you about it and how can things be true which are not known either to the ordinary mind or science? It is by an incursion of an opposite kind of forces that you fall into the Old Man's clutches, but you can only groan and cry, "What's this?" and when they are swept aside in a moment by other forces blink and mutter, "Well, that's funny!" Your friend can feel and know at once when he is being threatened by the opposite forces — and so he can be on his guard and resist Old Nick, because he can detect at once one of his principal means of attack.

*

It is this play of forces that is trying to bring about your removal to Burdwan and, if it succeeds, you have not to be troubled or shaken or disappointed, but to accept and make use of all that happens for your sadhana and progress. For the play of cosmic forces, the will in the cosmos — as one might say — does not always work apparently in favour of a smooth and direct line for the work or the sadhana, it often brings in what seem to be upheavals, sudden turns which break or deflect the line, opposing or upsetting circumstances or perplexing departures from what had been temporarily settled and established. The one thing is to preserve equanimity and make an opportunity and means of progress out of all that happens in the course of the life and the sadhana. There is a higher secret Will transcendent behind the play and will of the cosmic forces — a play which is always a mixture of things favourable and things adverse — and it is that Will which one must wait upon and have faith in; but you must not expect to be able always to understand its workings. The mind wants this or that to be done, the line once

taken to be maintained, but what the mind wants is not at all always what is intended in a larger purpose. One has to follow indeed a fixed central aim in the sadhana and not deviate from it, but not to build on outward circumstances, conditions etc. as if they were fundamental things.

*

One can not only receive a force, but an impulse, thought or sensation. One may receive it from others, from beings in Nature or from Nature herself if she chooses to give her Force a ready-made form of that kind.

*

The force “created” is not yours — it is Prakriti’s — your will sets it in motion, it does not really create it; but once set in motion, it tends to fulfil itself so far as the play of other forces will allow it. So, naturally, if you want to stop it, you have to set a contrary force in motion which will be strong enough to prevail against its momentum.

*

There is one cosmic Force working in all and a vibration of that Force or any one of its movements can awake (it does not always) the same vibration in another.

*

The play of forces can lead to nothing, if the One Force does not take them up and change them.

The Place of Occult Knowledge in Yoga

To know and use the subtle forces of the supraphysical planes is part of the Yoga.

*

You take a very utilitarian view of spiritual things. Whatever develops in the sadhana, provided it is genuine, has its place in

the total experience and knowledge. A knowledge of the occult worlds and occult forces and phenomena has its place also. Visions and voices are only a small part of that vast realm of occult experience. As for utility, for one who has intelligence and discrimination, visions etc. have many uses — but very little use for those who have no discrimination or understanding.

*

Because a great number of people don't know how to use these [*occult*] faculties or misuse them or give them excessive value or nourish their ego by them, does it follow that the faculties themselves have no Yogic use or value?

*

Even by itself it [*the development of the occult faculties*] is a progress in the development of the consciousness though it may not carry with it any spiritualisation of the nature.

*

I do not know what you mean by practical sadhana. If one develops the occult faculty and the occult experience and knowledge, these things can be of great use, therefore practical. In themselves they are a proof of opening of the inner consciousness and also help to open it farther — though they are not indispensable for that.

*

He [*Ramana Maharshi*] discouraged his disciples [*from having any occult dealings*] because his aim was the realisation of the inner Self and the intuition — in other words the fullness of the spiritual Mind — visions and voices belong to the inner occult sense, therefore he did not want them to lay stress on it. I also discourage some from having any dealing with visions and voices because I see that they are being misled or in danger of being misled by false visions and false voices. That does not mean that visions and voices have no value.

*

People who have the occult faculty always tend to give too large a place to it.

Spiritism

About spiritism I think I can say this much for the present. It is quite possible for the dead or rather the departed—for they are not dead—who are still in regions near the earth to have communication with the living. Sometimes it happens automatically, sometimes by an effort at communication on one side of the curtain or the other. There is no impossibility of such communication by the means used by the spiritists; usually however genuine communications or a contact can only be with those who are yet in a world which is a sort of idealised replica of the earth-consciousness in which the same personality, ideas, memories persist that the person had here. But all that pretends to be communication with departed souls is not genuine,—especially when it is done through a paid professional medium. There is there an enormous amount of mixture of a very undesirable kind—for apart from the great mass of unconscious suggestions from the sitters or the contributions of the medium's subliminal consciousness one gets into contact with a world of beings which is of a very deceptive or self-deceptive illusory nature. Many of these come and claim to be the departed souls of relatives, acquaintances, well-known men, famous personalities etc. There are also beings who pick up the discarded feelings and memories of the dead and masquerade with them. There are a great number of beings who come to such séances only to play with the consciousness of men or exercise their powers through this contact with the earth and who dupe the mediums and sitters with their falsehoods, tricks and illusions. (I am supposing of course the case of mediums who are not themselves tricksters.) A contact with such a plane of spirits can be harmful (most mediums become nervously or morally unbalanced) and spiritually dangerous. Of course, all pretended communications with the famous dead of long-past times are in their very nature deceptive and most of those with

the recent ones also — that is evident from the character of these communications. Through conscientious mediums one may get sound results (in the matter of the dead) but even these are very ignorant of the nature of the forces they are handling and have no discrimination which can guard them against trickery from the other side of the veil. Very little genuine knowledge of the nature of the after-life can be gathered from these séances; a true knowledge is more often gained by the experience of individuals who make serious contact or are able in one way or another to cross the border.

*

They [*mediums and clairvoyants*] are most of them in contact with the vital-physical or subtle physical worlds and do not receive anything higher at all.

*

Not much confidence can be placed in all that [*communications from spirit guides on other planes*]. If examined closely it will be seen that these spirit guides only suggest to their subjects what is in the mind of the sitter or sitters or in the air and it comes to very little. Influences from the other worlds there are of course and any number of them, but the central guidance is not of this kind except in very rare cases.

Séances

Automatic writings and spiritualistic séances are a very mixed affair. Part comes from the subconscious mind of the medium and part from that of the sitters. But it is not true that all can be accounted for by a dramatising imagination and memory. Sometimes there are things none present could know or remember; sometimes even, though that is rare, glimpses of the future. But usually these séances etc. put one into rapport with a very low world of vital beings and forces, themselves obscure, incoherent or tricky and it is dangerous to associate with them or to undergo any influence. Ouspensky and others must have gone

through these experiments with too “mathematical” a mind, which was no doubt their safeguard but prevented them from coming to anything more than a surface intellectual view of their significance.

*

The psychic does not give up the mental and other sheaths (apart from the physical) immediately at death. It is said that it takes three years on the whole to get clear away from the zone of communicability with the earth — though there may be cases of slower or quicker passage. The psychic world does not communicate with earth — at any rate not in that way. And the ghost or spirit who turns up at séances is not the psychic being. What comes through the medium is a mixture of the medium’s subconscious mind (using subconscious in the ordinary, not in the Yogic sense), that of the sitters, vital sheaths left by the departed or perhaps occupied or used by some “spirit”, i.e. some vital being, the departed himself in his vital sheath or else something assumed for the occasion (but it is the vital part that communicates), elementals, spirits of the lowest vital physical world near earth, etc. etc. A horrible confusion for the most part — a hotch-potch of all sorts of things coming through a medium of “astral” grey light and shadow. Many communicants seem to be people who have just gone across into some subtle world where they feel surrounded by an improved edition of the earthly life and think that is the real and definitive other world after earth — but it is a mere optimistic prolongation of the ideas and images and associations of the human plane. Hence the next world as depicted by the spiritualist “guides” and other séance communicants.

Ghosts

What do you mean by a ghost? The word “ghost” as used in popular parlance covers an enormous number of distinct phenomena which have no necessary connection with each other. To name a few only —

(1) An actual contact with the soul of a departed human being housed in its subtle body and transcribed to our mind by the appearance of an image or the hearing of a voice.

(2) A mental formation stamped by the thoughts and feelings of a departed human being on the atmosphere of a place or locality, wandering about there or repeating itself—till that formation either exhausts itself or is dissolved by one means or another. This is the explanation of such phenomena as the haunted house in which the scenes attending or surrounding or preceding a murder are repeated over and over again and many similar phenomena.

(3) A being of the lower vital planes who has assumed the discarded vital sheath of a departed human being or a fragment of his vital personality and appears and acts in the form and perhaps with the surface thoughts and memories of that person.

(4) A being of the lower vital plane who by the medium of a living human being or by some other means or agency is able to materialise itself sufficiently so as to appear and act in a visible form or speak with an audible voice or, without so appearing, to move about material things, e.g. furniture or to materialise objects or to shift them from place to place. This accounts for what are called *poltergeists*, phenomena of stone-throwing, tree-inhabiting *bhūtas* and other well-known phenomena.

(5) Apparitions which are the formations of one's own mind but take to the senses an objective appearance.

(6) Temporary possession of people by vital beings who sometimes pretend to be departed relatives etc.

(7) Thought-images of themselves projected, often by people at the moment of death, which appear at that time or a few hours afterwards to their friends or relatives.

You will see that in only one of these cases, the first, can a soul be posited and there no difficulty arises.

Chapter Two

Occult Powers or Siddhis

General Remarks

The *aṣṭasiddhis* as obtained in the ordinary Yoga are vital powers or, as in the Rajayoga, mental siddhis. Usually they are uncertain in their application and precarious depending on the maintenance of the process by which they were attained.

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It is certainly possible to have consciousness of things going on at a distance and to intervene.

The idea that true Yogins do not or ought not to use such powers, I regard as an ascetic superstition. I believe that all Yogins who have these powers do use them whenever they find that they are called on from within to do so. They may refrain if they think the use in a particular case is contrary to the Divine Will or see that preventing one evil may be opening the door to worse or for any other valid reason, or simply because it is outside the scope of their action, but not from any general prohibitory rule. What is forbidden to anyone with a strong spiritual sense is to be a miracle-monger, performing extraordinary things for show, for gain, for fame, out of vanity or pride. It is forbidden to use powers from mere vital motives, to make an Asuric ostentation of them or to turn them into a support for arrogance, conceit, ambition—or any other of the amiable weaknesses to which human nature is prone. It is because half-baked Yogins so often fall into these traps of the hostile forces that the use of Yogic powers is sometimes discouraged as harmful to the user. But it is mostly people who live much in the vital that so fall; with a strong and free and calm mind and a psychic awake and alive, such pettinesses are not likely to occur. As for those who can live in the true divine consciousness, certain powers are not “powers” at all in that sense, not, that is to say, supernatural

or abnormal, but rather their normal way of seeing and acting, part of the consciousness — and how can they be forbidden or refuse to act according to their consciousness and its nature?

I suppose I have had myself an even more completely European education than you and I have had too my period of agnostic denial, but from the moment I looked at these things I could never take the attitude of doubt and disbelief which was for so long fashionable in Europe. Abnormal, otherwise supraphysical experiences and powers, occult or Yogic, have always seemed to me something perfectly natural and credible. Consciousness in its very nature could not be limited by the ordinary physical human-animal consciousness; it must have other ranges. Yogic or occult powers are no more supernatural or incredible than is supernatural or incredible the power to write a great poem or compose great music. Few people can do it, as things are, — not even one in a million; for poetry and music come from the inner being and to write or to compose true and great things one has to have the passage clear between the outer mind and something in the inner being. That is why you got the poetic power as soon as you began Yoga — Yoga-force made the passage clear. It is the same with Yogic consciousness and its powers; the thing is to get the passage clear, — for they are already there within you. Of course the first thing is to believe, aspire and, with the true urge within, make the endeavour.

*

It is not possible to put any credence in the stories about this Swami and Mahabhutan. It is possible that he has practised some kind of Tantric Yoga and obtained a few occult powers, but in all that you have said about him and in the printed papers there is no trace of any spiritual realisation or experience. All that he seems to think about is occult powers and feats of thaumaturgy. Those who take their stand on occult powers divorced from spiritual experience are not Yogis of a high plane of achievement. There are Yogis who behave as if they had no control over themselves — the theory is that they separate the spirit from the nature and live in the inner realisation leaving the nature to a disordered

action “like a child, mad man, pisacha or inert object”. There are others who deliberately use rough or violent speech to keep people at a distance or to test them. But the outbreak of rage of this Swami which you recount seems to have been simply an outburst of fury due to offended egoism. His judgment about Ramana Maharshi is absurd in the extreme.¹ As to his asking for the nail, hair etc. and his presenting of clothes or jumper, it was probably to establish a physical means of establishing an occult influence on you and your wife possibly by some Tantric or magic kriya — in Tibet such magic processes are well known and in common use.

*

There are many Yogins of the Vedantic school who follow both siddhis and the final emancipation — they would say, I suppose, that they take the siddhis on the way to Nirvana. The harmonisation is in the supermind — the Divine Truth at once static and dynamic, a withdrawal and extinction of the Ignorance, a re-creation in the Divine Knowledge.

*

I am unable to see why you should give up Yoga, because you cannot believe in the action of occult laws and forces or in siddhis. The object of Yoga is realisation of the Divine; these other things are side-matters which need be no part of spiritual experience, nor is belief in them necessary for realisation. Everyone has the right of private judgment in these matters; so you need not worry.

Occult Powers Not the Object of Our Yoga

Yes, the object of our Yoga is to establish direct contact with the Divine above and bring down the divine consciousness from above into all the centres. Occult powers belonging to the

¹ Absurd because the greatness of a Yogi does not depend at all on how long he lives or his state of health, but on the height or the depth of his spiritual realisation and experience.

mental, vital and subtle physical planes are not our object. One can have contact with various Divine Forms and Personalities on the way, but there is no need to establish them in the centres, though sometimes that happens automatically (as with the four Personalities of the Mother) for a time in the course of the sadhana. But it is not a rule to do so. Our Yoga is meant to be plastic and to allow all necessary workings of the Divine Power according to the nature, but these in the details may vary with each individual.

*

All these “experiments” of yours are founded upon the vital nature and the mind in connection with it; working on this foundation, there is no security against falsehood and fundamental error. No amount of powers (small or great) developing can be a surety against wandering from the Truth; and, if you allow pride and arrogance and ostentation of power to creep in and hold you, you will surely fall into error and into the power of rajasic Maya and Avidya. Our object is not to get powers, but to ascend towards the divine Truth-consciousness and bring its Truth down into the lower members. With the Truth all the necessary powers will come, not as one’s own, but as the Divine’s. The contact with the Truth cannot grow through rajasic mental and vital self-assertion, but only through psychic purity and surrender.

*

An activity on the astral plane in contact with the astral Forces attended by a leaving of the body is not a spiritual aim but belongs to the province of occultism. It is not a part of the aim of Yoga. Also fasting is not permissible in the Asram, as its practice is more often harmful than helpful to the spiritual endeavour.

This aim suggested to you seems to be part of a seeking for occult powers; such a seeking is looked on with disfavour for the most part by spiritual teachers in India because it belongs to the inferior planes and usually pushes the seeker on a path which

may lead him very far from the Divine. Especially, a contact with the forces and beings of the astral (or, as we term it, the vital) plane is attended with great dangers. The beings of this plane are often hostile to the true aim of spiritual life and establish contact with the seeker and offer him powers and occult experiences only in order that they may lead him away from the spiritual path or else that they may establish their own control over him or take possession of him for their own purpose. Often, representing themselves as divine powers, they mislead, give erring suggestions and impulsions and pervert the inner life. Many are those who, attracted by these powers and beings of the vital plane, have ended in a definitive spiritual fall or in mental and physical perversion and disorder. One comes inevitably into contact with the vital plane and enters into it in the expansion of consciousness which results from an inner opening, but one ought never to put oneself into the hands of these beings and forces or allow oneself to be led by their suggestions and impulsions. This is one of the chief dangers of the spiritual life and to be on one's guard against it is a necessity for the seeker if he wishes to arrive at his goal. It is true that many supraphysical or supernormal powers come with the expansion of the consciousness in Yoga; to rise out of the body consciousness, to act by subtle means on the supraphysical planes etc. are natural activities for the Yogi. But these powers are not sought after, they come naturally, and they have not the astral character. Also, they have to be used on purely spiritual lines, that is by the Divine Will and the Divine Force, as an instrument, but never as an instrumentation of the forces and beings of the vital plane. To seek their aid for such powers is a great error.

Prolonged fasting may lead to an excitation of the nervous being which often brings vivid imaginations and hallucinations that are taken for true experiences; such fasting is frequently suggested by the vital Entities because it puts the consciousness into an unbalanced state which favours their designs. It is therefore discouraged here. The rule to be followed is that laid down by the Gita which says that "Yoga is not for one who eats too much or who does not eat"; a moderate use of food sufficient

for the maintenance and health and strength of the body.

There is no brotherhood of the kind you describe in India. There are Yogis who seek to acquire and practise occult powers but it is as individuals learning from an individual Master. Occult associations, lodges, brotherhoods for such a purpose as described by European occultists are not known in Asia.

As regards secrecy, a certain discretion or silence about the instructions of the Guru and one's own experiences is always advisable, but an absolute secrecy or making a mystery of these things is not. Once a Guru is chosen, nothing must be concealed from him. The suggestion of absolute secrecy is often a trick of the astral Powers to prevent the seeking for enlightenment and succour.

*

Ordinarily, all the more inward and all the abnormal psychological experiences are called psychic. I use the word psychic for the soul as distinguished from the mind and vital. All movements and experiences of the soul would in that sense be called psychic, those which rise from or directly touch the psychic being; where mind and vital predominate, the experience would be called psychological (surface or occult). "Spiritual" has nothing to do with the Absolute, except that the experience of the Absolute is spiritual. All contacts with self, the higher consciousness, the Divine above are spiritual. There are others that could not be so sharply classified and set off against each other.

The spiritual realisation is of primary importance and indispensable. I would consider it best to have the spiritual and psychic development first and have it with the same fullness before entering the occult regions. Those who enter the latter first may find their spiritual realisation much delayed — others fall into the mazy traps of the occult and do not come out in this life. Some no doubt can carry on both together, the occult and the spiritual, and make them help each other; but the process I suggest is the safer.

The governing factors for us must be the spirit and the psychic being united with the Divine — the occult laws and

phenomena have to be known but only as an instrumentation, not as the governing principles. The occult is a vast field and complicated and not without its dangers. It need not be abandoned but it should not be given the first place.

*

You need not think about the occult Power. Let the Mother's consciousness grow in you and her Force work; occult powers are not indispensable, but if they are needed they will come in their proper time.

*

A sincere heart is worth all the extraordinary powers in the world.

Ethical Rules for the Use of Occult Powers

There are a number of rules, really of an ethical, not a spiritual nature, which are necessary for the very safety of the society itself — those, for instance, against an egoistic use of occult secrets; for if that were disregarded, there would be inevitably a clash with other formations on the same plane and consequent disaster.

Thought Reception and Thought Reading

About X's faculty of receiving the thoughts of others, — if this had been of the nature of thought reading, that is to say looking at the minds of others and seeing what is there, the remedy would have been simple; refusal to look would be enough and even the faculty might disappear by atrophy through long discontinuance. But if the thoughts of others come to her of themselves, it may be the psychic opening in her inner mind which it would be difficult to get rid of. If she could remain indifferent or push away these unwelcome visitors behind her and not think of them again, that would be one remedy; it might even be discouraged from coming after a time by this lack of reception. As for why it comes, it is not something that comes but something that is

there, a faculty or a psychic habit of the nature — I use the word psychic in the popular sense, it has nothing to do with what I call the psychic being. If she practises Yoga and is able to make some considerable progress, then it would be possible for her to bar the door to these visitors. At the same time I might say that this power need not be a mere source of trouble; it can be helpful even: for it can give one who has acquired mastery over his own nature the knowledge of the thoughts and feelings around her and she can then help, guide, change what has to be changed in their minds so that they can become more effective for the divine work. I shall await what further you have to tell me about X's experiences before saying anything further about her entry into the field of Yoga.

Occult Powers and Health

Your generalisation cannot stand because it is contradicted by other numerous instances which go to prove the opposite. In my own experience I have found that those who possessed well developed and well organised "psychic" and occult powers were healthy and well poised; indeed they said that in ill health or physical weakness they could do nothing — it impaired their power. These certainly had no lack or deficiency of the red aura.

The woman you speak of was evidently under a vital Influence. A vital Influence always acts by disorganising the system and by disturbing the mental, vital or physical balance. But such cases of phenomena in the vital mind due to a possession or influence have no relation to the true mastery of psychic or occult powers (clairvoyance, clair-audience etc.).

Visions and experiences need not at all depend upon physical weakness or a pathological taint. It is not safe to judge from individual cases. The majority of those who have developed the faculty do not suffer from these defects. Those on the other hand who cannot keep their psychic experiences when in a robust state of health, lose them because then they get into a very external consciousness and feel at ease in it; but the true psychic does not depend for his experiences on disease.

The Power of Healing

I don't know whether I can throw any positive light on X's mystic experiences. The description, at any rate the latter part, is not very easy to follow as it is very allusive in its expressions and not always precise enough to be clear. The first part of the experience indicates a native power of healing of whose action she herself does not know the process. It seems from her account to come from something in herself which should be, from the terms she uses, a larger and higher and brighter and more powerful consciousness with which she is in occasional communion but in which she does not constantly live. On the other hand another sentence seems to point to a Godhead or Divine Presence and it would then be not so much within as above. The language later on would seem to indicate such a Presence giving commands to her to guide others so that they might grow in consciousness. But she distinctly speaks of it as a greater "me" standing behind a blue diamond force. We must fall back then on the idea of a greater consciousness very high up with a feeling of divinity, a sense of considerable light and spiritual authority — perhaps in one of those higher spiritual mental planes of which I speak in *The Life Divine* and the letters. The diamond light could well be native to these planes; it is usually white, but there it might well be blue: it is a light that dispels or drives away all impure things, especially a demoniac possession or the influence of some evil force. Evidently, the use of a power like this should be carefully guarded from the intrusion of any wrong element such as personal love of power, but that need not cause any apprehension as a keen inlook into oneself would be sufficient to reject it or keep it aloof. I think that is all I can say upon the data given in her letter.

*

It is difficult to say [*why Christ healed people*] — it looks from the Bible account as if he did it as a sign that he was one sent by the Divine with power.

Miracles

What do you mean by a miracle? What people call a miracle is only something done in a striking way by a process unknown to them which their minds cannot follow.

*

I have explained that there is no such thing as a miracle. If a higher consciousness opens a higher power in him, the sadhak has to use it as part of the new consciousness but in the right way, without egoism, selfishness, vanity or pride.

Magic

Jādu (magic) is a special practice which is done by professional magicians or those who learn the art of the magician, but it is no part of Yoga. What happens in Yoga is that sometimes or even very commonly certain powers develop in the sadhak by which he can influence others or make them do things or make things happen that he wants. This and other Yogic powers should never be used by the sadhak for egoistic purposes or to satisfy his vital desires. They can only be used when they become part of the realised divine consciousness by the Mother herself or at her command for good and unselfish purposes. There is no harm in Yogic powers that come naturally as a part of the new consciousness and are not used for a wrong personal purpose. For instance you see something in vision or dream and that happens afterwards in the waking state. Well, that is a Yogic power of prevision, knowing future things which often occurs as the consciousness grows; there is nothing wrong in its happening; it is part of the growth in sadhana. So with other powers. Only one must not get proud or boast or misuse the powers for the sake of desire, pride, power or the satisfaction of the ego.

*

By black magic is meant the occultism of the adverse powers—the occultism of the divine Powers is quite different. One is based on unity, the other on division.

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

LETTERS ON YOGA — I, the first of four volumes, contains letters in which Sri Aurobindo speaks about the foundations of his spiritual teaching and method of Yogic practice. The letters have been arranged in five parts dealing with five broad subject areas:

1. The Divine, the Cosmos and the Individual
2. The Parts of the Being and the Planes of Consciousness
3. The Evolutionary Process and the Supermind
4. Problems of Philosophy, Science, Religion and Society
5. Questions of Spiritual and Occult Knowledge

The letters in this volume have been selected from the extensive correspondence Sri Aurobindo carried on with his disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Letters from this corpus appear in seven volumes of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO: *Letters on Poetry and Art* (Volume 27), *Letters on Yoga* (Volumes 28–31), *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* (Volume 32), and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (Volume 35). The titles of these works specify the nature of the letters included in the volumes, but there is some overlap. For example, a number of letters in the present volume are also published in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*.

The Writing of the Letters

Between 1927 and 1950, Sri Aurobindo replied to hundreds of correspondents in tens of thousands of letters, some of them many pages in length, others only a few words long. Most of his replies, however, were sent to just a few dozen disciples, almost all of them resident members of his Ashram; of these disciples, about a dozen received more than half the replies. Sri Aurobindo wrote most of these letters between 1931 and 1937, the prime period of his correspondence. Letters before and after this period were written on a more restricted scale and confined

to a few persons for special reasons.

Disciples in the Ashram wrote to Sri Aurobindo on loose sheets or sent him the notebooks in which they kept diaries as a record of their spiritual endeavour and a means of communicating with him. These notebooks and loose sheets reached Sri Aurobindo via an internal “post” once or twice a day. Letters from outside which his secretary thought he might like to see were sent at the same time. Correspondents wrote in English if they knew the language well enough, but a good number wrote in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi or French, all of which Sri Aurobindo read fluently, or in other languages that were translated into English for him. The disciples usually addressed their letters to the Mother, since Sri Aurobindo had asked them to do so, but most assumed that he would answer them. He generally replied in the notebook or on the sheets sent by the correspondent, writing beneath the correspondent’s remarks or in the margin or between the lines; sometimes, however, he wrote his reply on a separate sheet of paper. In some cases he had his secretary prepare a typed copy of his letter, which he revised before it was sent. For correspondents living outside the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo sometimes addressed his reply not to the correspondent but to his secretary, who quoted, paraphrased or translated the reply and signed the letter himself. In these indirect replies, Sri Aurobindo often referred to himself in the third person.

While going through Sri Aurobindo’s letters, the reader should keep in mind that each letter was written to a specific person at a specific time, in specific circumstances and for a specific purpose. The subjects taken up arose in regard to the needs of the person. Sri Aurobindo varied the style and tone of his replies according to his relationship with the correspondent; to those with whom he was close, he sometimes employed humour, irony and even sarcasm.

Although written to specific recipients, these letters contain much of general interest, which justifies their inclusion in a volume destined for the general public. For the reasons mentioned above, however, the advice in them does not always apply equally to everyone. Aware of this, Sri Aurobindo himself made some cautionary remarks about the proper use of his letters:

I should like to say, in passing, that it is not always safe to

apply practically to oneself what has been written for another. Each sadhak is a case by himself and one cannot always or often take a mental rule and apply it rigidly to all who are practising the Yoga.

The tendency to take what I lay down for one and apply it without discrimination to another is responsible for much misunderstanding. A general statement, too, true in itself, cannot be applied to everyone alike or applied now and immediately without consideration of condition or circumstance or person or time.

It is not a fact that all I write is meant equally for everybody. That assumes that everybody is alike and there is no difference between sadhak and sadhak. If it were so everybody would advance alike and have the same experiences and take the same time to progress by the same steps and stages. It is not so at all.¹

The Typing and Revision of the Letters

Most of the shorter items in this volume, and many of the longer ones, were not typed or revised during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime and are reproduced here directly from his handwritten manuscripts. A good number of the letters, however, as mentioned above, were typed for Sri Aurobindo and revised by him before sending. Other letters were typed by the recipients for their own use or for circulation within the Ashram. At first, circulation of the letters was restricted to members of the Ashram and others whom Sri Aurobindo had accepted as disciples. When these letters were circulated, personal references were removed. Persons mentioned by Sri Aurobindo were indicated by their initials or by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. Copies of these typed letters were kept by Sri Aurobindo's secretary and sometimes presented to Sri Aurobindo for revision before publication. These typed copies sometimes contained errors, most of which were corrected by him while revising.

¹ First and third passages: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 473 and 475. Second passage: *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, volume 32, p. 349.

Sri Aurobindo's revision sometimes amounted merely to making minor changes here and there, sometimes to a complete rewriting of the letter. He generally removed personal references if this had not already been done by the typist. When necessary, he also rewrote the openings or other parts of the replies in order to free them from dependence on the correspondent's question. As a result, some of these letters have an impersonal tone and read more like brief essays than personal communications.

The Publication of the Letters

Around 1933, Sri Aurobindo's secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta began to compile selections from the growing body of letters in order to publish them. During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, four small books of letters were published: *The Riddle of This World* (1933), *Lights on Yoga* (1935), *Bases of Yoga* (1936) and *More Lights on Yoga* (1948). Sri Aurobindo revised the typescripts of most of the letters in these books. During this revision, he continued the process of removing personal references. A letter he wrote in August 1937 alludes to his approach to the revision:

I had no idea of the book being published as a collection of personal letters — if that were done, they would have to be published whole as such without a word of alteration. I understood the book was meant like the others [*i.e.*, like *Bases of Yoga*, *etc.*] where only what was helpful for an understanding of things Yogic was kept with necessary alterations and modifications. . . . With that idea I have been not only omitting but recasting and adding freely. Otherwise as a book it would be too scrappy and random for public interest. In the other books things too personal were omitted — it seems to me the same rule must hold here — except very sparingly where unavoidable.

A number of letters not included in the four books mentioned above were published in the mid and late 1940s in several journals associated with the Ashram: *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, *The Advent* and *Mother India*. Many letters in these journals were revised by Sri Aurobindo before publication.

By the mid-1940s a significant body of letters had been collected, typed and revised. In 1945 plans were made, with Sri Aurobindo's approval, to publish a collection of his letters. The work of compiling and editing these letters was done under his guidance. At that time, many typed or printed copies of letters, some revised, some not, were presented to Sri Aurobindo for approval or revision. The resulting material was arranged and published in a four-volume series entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*. Series One appeared in 1947, Series Two and Three in 1949 and Series Four in 1951. The first, second and fourth series contained letters on Yoga, the third letters on poetry and literature. In 1958, most of these letters on Yoga, along with many additional ones, were published under the titles *On Yoga II: Tome One* and *On Yoga II: Tome Two*, as Volumes VI and VII of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education collection. The first tome, with further additions, was reissued in 1969. In 1970 a new edition of the letters was published under the title *Letters on Yoga*; this edition contained many new letters not included in *On Yoga II*. The three volumes of the enlarged edition constituted volumes 22, 23 and 24 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library.

The present edition, also titled *Letters on Yoga*, incorporates the Centenary Library letters, but also contains a large number of letters that have come to light in the four decades between the two editions. One source of new letters is the correspondences of several disciples which were published in books after the Centenary Library edition had been issued. Govindbhai Patel's correspondence was published in 1974 in a book entitled *My Pilgrimage to the Spirit*; an enlarged edition appeared in 1977. Nagin Doshi's correspondence, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo: Letters to a Young Disciple*, was brought out in three volumes in 1974, 1976 and 1987. *Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* came out in two volumes in 1983 and 1984. Sahana Devi's correspondence came out in 1985 in a book entitled *At the Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*. Prithwi Singh's correspondence came out in 1988 as *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to Prithwi Singh*. Dilip Kumar Roy's correspondence was issued in four volumes in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2011 under the title *Sri Aurobindo to Dilip*. A second source of new material is individual letters and small collections of letters published in Ashram journals and elsewhere after the Centenary

Library had been issued. A third source is letters transcribed from manuscripts or from early typed copies. Many unpublished letters were discovered while reviewing correspondences long held by the Ashram; some of these had never been assessed to find letters for publication; others had been assessed, but relatively few letters were selected at the time. Additional letters were received by the Ashram upon the passing away of disciples. From the three sources mentioned above, many letters have been found that are worthy of publication. The present edition contains about one-third more letters than appear in the Centenary Library.

The Selection, Arrangement and Editing of the Letters

In compiling the present edition, all known manuscripts, typed copies or photographic copies of manuscripts and printed texts of letters were checked. From these sources, letters that seemed to be of general interest were selected. Electronic texts of the letters were then made and carefully checked at least twice against the handwritten, typed, photocopied, and printed versions of the texts.

The selected letters have been arranged according to subject and placed in the four volumes of the present edition. Each volume is divided and subdivided into parts, sections, chapters and groups with descriptive headings; each group, the lowest unit of division, contains one or more letters devoted to the specific subject of the group.

The present volume consists of about 1150 separate items, an "item" being defined as what is published between one heading or asterisk and another heading or asterisk. Many items correspond exactly to individual letters; a good number, however, contain only part of the individual letters; a small number consist of two or more letters (or parts of them) that were joined together by early typists or editors and then revised in that form by Sri Aurobindo.

Whenever possible, the letters are reproduced to their full extent. In some cases, however, portions of the letters have been omitted because they are not of general interest. A number of letters, for example, begin with personal remarks by Sri Aurobindo unrelated to the more substantial remarks which follow; these personal openings have often been removed. In some letters, Sri Aurobindo marked the transition

from one part of a letter to another with a phrase such as “As to”; these transitional phrases have often been retained and stand at the beginning of abbreviated letters — that is, letters in which the first part of the letter has been omitted or placed elsewhere.

A number of letters, or portions of them, have been published in more than one volume of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Most of this doubling of letters occurs between *Letters on Yoga* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. The form of these letters is not always the same in both places. In *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, the manuscript version of a given letter has often been used because it contains Sri Aurobindo’s remarks on himself or the Mother or members of the Ashram. These personal remarks, as noted above, were usually removed by Sri Aurobindo when he revised the letter for publication as a letter on Yoga. This revised form of the letter has generally been reproduced in *Letters on Yoga*. Thus, a number of letters are available both in their original form and their revised form.

As in previous collections of Sri Aurobindo’s letters, the names of Ashram members and others have often been replaced by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. In any given letter, X stands for the first name replaced, Y for the second, Z for the third, A for the fourth, and so on. An X in a given letter has no necessary relation to an X in another letter. Names of Ashram members to whom Sri Aurobindo referred not as sadhaks but as holders of a certain position — notably Nolini Kanta Gupta in his position as Sri Aurobindo’s secretary — are given in full. Sometimes the names of people who played a role in the history of the period are also given.

In his letters Sri Aurobindo sometimes wrote Sanskrit words in the devanagari script; these words have been transliterated into roman script in this edition. Words in Bengali script have likewise been transliterated. This policy is in accord with the practice followed in Sri Aurobindo’s lifetime.

The reader may note that Sri Aurobindo almost always spelled the word “Asram” without an “h” in his manuscripts. Around 1945, due to failing eyesight, he began dictating most of his writings to his amanuensis Nirodbaran; Nirodbaran sometimes spelled the word without an “h”, sometimes with one. In the present edition, the word is always spelled as it occurs in the manuscripts, both those of Sri

Aurobindo and of Nirodbaran. In headings and other editorial matter, the spelling “Ashram” has been used, since this is now the official spelling of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Letters on Yoga II



Sri Aurobindo

Letters on Yoga — II

VOLUME 29

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO

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Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department

Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry

PRINTED IN INDIA

Publisher's Note

Letters on Yoga — II comprises letters written by Sri Aurobindo on the practice of the Integral Yoga. It is the second of four volumes of *Letters on Yoga*, arranged by the editors as follows:

- I. Foundations of the Integral Yoga
- II. Practice of the Integral Yoga
- III. Experiences and Realisations in the Integral Yoga
- IV. Transformation of Human Nature in the Integral Yoga

The letters in these volumes have been selected from the large body of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Other letters from this period are published in *Letters on Poetry and Art* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volumes 27 and 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Letters written before 1927 are reproduced in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS.

During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, relatively few of his letters were published. Three small books of letters on Yoga were brought out in the 1930s. A more substantial collection came out between 1947 and 1951 in a four-volume series entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (including one volume of letters on poetry and literature). In 1958, many more letters were included in the two large tomes of *On Yoga — II*. A further expanded collection in three volumes entitled *Letters on Yoga* was published in 1970 as part of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. The present collection, also entitled *Letters on Yoga*, constitutes volumes 28–31 of THE COMPLETE WORKS. These volumes incorporate previously published letters and contain many new ones as well. About one-third of the letters in the present volume were not published in the Centenary Library.

The present volume is arranged by subject in three parts:

1. The Path of the Integral Yoga
2. The Synthetic Method of the Integral Yoga
3. The Integral Yoga and Other Spiritual Paths

The texts of all the letters have been checked against the available manuscripts, typescripts and printed versions.

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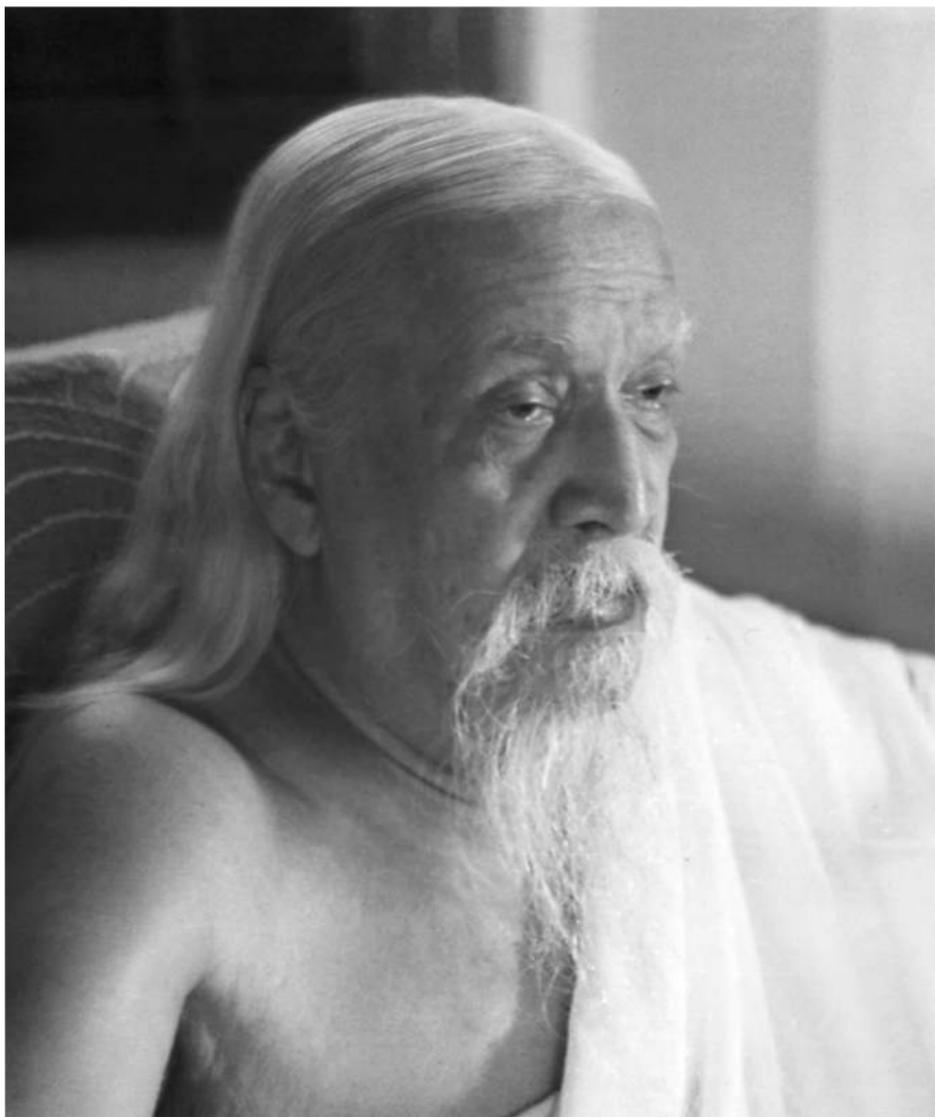
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Sri Aurobindo, 1950

Part One

The Path of the Integral Yoga

Section One

The Path and the Goal

Chapter One

Seeking the Divine

The True Object of Spiritual Seeking

To find the Divine is indeed the first reason for seeking the spiritual Truth and the spiritual life; it is the one thing indispensable and all the rest is nothing without it. The Divine once found, to manifest Him, — that is, first of all to transform one's own limited consciousness into the Divine Consciousness, to live in the infinite Peace, Light, Love, Strength, Bliss, to become that in one's essential nature and, as a consequence, to be its vessel, channel, instrument in one's active nature. To bring into activity the principle of oneness on the material plane or to work for humanity is a mental mistranslation of the Truth — these things cannot be the first or true object of spiritual seeking. We must find the Self, the Divine, then only can we know what is the work the Self or the Divine demands from us. Until then our life and action can only be a help or means towards finding the Divine and it ought not to have any other purpose. As we grow in the inner consciousness, or as the spiritual Truth of the Divine grows in us, our life and action must indeed more and more flow from that, be one with that. But to decide beforehand by our limited mental conceptions what they must be is to hamper the growth of the spiritual Truth within. As that grows we shall feel the Divine Light and Truth, the Divine Power and Force, the Divine Purity and Peace working within us, dealing with our actions as well as our consciousness, making use of them to reshape us into the Divine Image, removing the dross, substituting the pure gold of the Spirit. Only when the Divine Presence is there in us always and the consciousness transformed, can we have the right to say that we are ready to manifest the Divine on the material plane. To hold up a mental ideal or principle and impose that on the inner working brings the danger of limiting ourselves to a mental realisation or of impeding or even falsifying by a

half-way formation the true growth into the full communion and union with the Divine and the free and intimate outflowing of His will in our life. This is a mistake of orientation to which the mind of today is especially prone. It is far better to approach the Divine for the Peace or Light or Bliss that the realisation of Him gives than to bring in these minor things which can divert us from the one thing needful. The divinisation of the material life also as well as the inner life is part of what we see as the Divine Plan, but it can only be fulfilled by an outflowing of the inner realisation, something that grows from within outward, not by the working out of a mental principle.

You have asked what is the discipline to be followed in order to convert the mental seeking into a living spiritual experience. The first necessity is the practice of concentration of your consciousness within yourself. The ordinary human mind has an activity on the surface which veils the real self. But there is another, a hidden consciousness within behind the surface one in which we can become aware of the real self and of a larger, deeper truth of nature, can realise the self and liberate and transform the nature. To quiet the surface mind and begin to live within is the object of this concentration. Of this true consciousness other than the superficial there are two main centres, one in the heart (not the physical heart, but the cardiac centre in the middle of the chest), one in the head. The concentration in the heart opens within and by following this inward opening and going deep one becomes aware of the soul or psychic being, the divine element in the individual. This being unveiled begins to come forward, to govern the nature, to turn it and all its movements towards the Truth, towards the Divine, and to call down into it all that is above. It brings the consciousness of the Presence, the dedication of the being to the Highest and invites the descent into our nature of a greater Force and Consciousness which is waiting above us. To concentrate in the heart centre with the offering of oneself to the Divine and the aspiration for this inward opening and for the Presence in the heart is the first way and, if it can be done, the natural beginning; for its result once obtained makes the spiritual path far more easy and safe than if one begins the other way.

That other way is the concentration in the head, in the mental centre. This, if it brings about the silence of the surface mind, opens up an inner, larger, deeper mind within which is more capable of receiving spiritual experience and spiritual knowledge. But once concentrated here one must open the silent mental consciousness upward to all that is above mind. After a time one feels the consciousness rising upward and in the end it rises beyond the lid which has so long kept it tied in the body and finds a centre above the head where it is liberated into the Infinite. There it begins to come into contact with the universal Self, the Divine Peace, Light, Power, Knowledge, Bliss, to enter into that and become that, to feel the descent of these things into the nature. To concentrate in the head with the aspiration for quietude in the mind and the realisation of the Self and Divine above is the second way of concentration. It is important, however, to remember that the concentration of the consciousness in the head is only a preparation for its rising to the centre above; otherwise one may get shut up in one's own mind and its experiences or at best attain only to a reflection of the Truth above instead of rising into the spiritual transcendence to live there. For some the mental concentration is easier, for some the concentration in the heart centre; some are capable of doing both alternately — but to begin with the heart centre, if one can do it, is the more desirable.

The other side of discipline is with regard to the activities of the nature, of the mind, of the life-self or vital, of the physical being. Here the principle is to accord the nature with the inner realisation so that one may not be divided into two discordant parts. There are here several disciplines or processes possible. One is to offer all the activities to the Divine and call for the inner guidance and the taking up of one's nature by a Higher Power. If there is the inward soul-opening, if the psychic being comes forward, then there is no great difficulty — there comes with it a psychic discrimination, a constant intimation, finally a governance which discloses and quietly and patiently removes all imperfections, brings the right mental and vital movements and reshapes the physical consciousness also. Another method

is to stand back detached from the movements of the mind, life, physical being, to regard their activities as only a habitual formation of general Nature in the individual imposed on us by past workings, not as any part of our real being; in proportion as one succeeds in this, becomes detached, sees mind and its activities as not oneself, life and its activities as not oneself, the body and its activities as not oneself, one becomes aware of an inner Being within us — inner mental, inner vital, inner physical — silent, calm, unbound, unattached which reflects the true Self above and can be its direct representative; from this inner silent Being proceeds a rejection of all that is to be rejected, an acceptance only of what can be kept and transformed, an inmost Will to perfection or a call to the Divine Power to do at each step what is necessary for the change of the Nature. It can also open mind, life and body to the inmost psychic entity and its guiding influence or its direct guidance. In most cases these two methods emerge and work together and finally fuse into one. But one can begin with either, the one that one feels most natural and easy to follow.

Finally, in all difficulties where personal effort is hampered, the help of the Teacher can intervene and bring about what is needed for the realisation or for the immediate step that is necessary.

Motives for Seeking the Divine

Obviously to seek the Divine *only* for what one can get out of Him is not the proper attitude; but if it were absolutely forbidden to seek Him for these things, most people in the world would not turn towards Him at all. I suppose therefore it is allowed so that they may make a beginning — if they have faith, they may get what they ask for and think it a good thing to go on and then one day they may suddenly stumble upon the idea that this is after all not quite the one thing to do and that there are better ways and a better spirit in which one can approach the Divine. If they do not get what they want and still come to the Divine and trust in Him, well, that shows they are getting ready.

Let us look on it as a sort of infants' school for the unready. But of course that is not the spiritual life, it is only a sort of elementary religious approach. For the spiritual life to give and not to demand is the rule. The sadhak however can ask for the Divine Force to aid him in keeping his health or recovering it if he does that as part of his sadhana so that his body may be able and fit for the spiritual life and a capable instrument for the Divine Work.

*

First, it is a great exaggeration to deduce from your difficulties any idea of unfitness or of going away or being sent away or giving up the Yoga. I am certainly not going to pronounce you unfit because you want the Ananda; on such grounds I would have to pronounce myself unfit, because I have myself wanted it and many other things besides. And if I were to send you away because you are not entirely disinterested in the approach to the Divine, I should have, to be consistent, to send practically the whole Asram packing. I do not know why you are allowing yourself to indulge in such black and despondent thoughts—there is no ground for them at all, and I do not think I gave any grounds for them in my letter. Whatever your difficulties, the Mother and I have every intention of seeing you through them, and I think that you too, whatever suggestions your vital depression may make to you at the moment, have every intention of going through to the end of the Path. I imagine you have gone too far on it to go back and, if you wanted to, your psychic being which has persistently pushed you towards it, would not allow such a retreat.

Next, it was not my intention to say that it was wrong to aspire for the Ananda. What I wanted to point out was the condition for the permanent possession of the Ananda (intimations, visits, downrushes of it one can have before); the essential condition for it is a change of consciousness, the coming of peace, light, etc., all that brings about the transition from the normal to the spiritualised nature. And that being so, it is better to make this change of consciousness the first object of the sadhana. On

the other hand, to press for the constant Ananda immediately in a consciousness which is not yet able to retain it, still more to substitute for it lesser (vital) joys and pleasures may very well stop the flow of these spiritual experiences which make the continuous ecstasy eventually possible. But I certainly never intended to say that the Ananda was not to be attained or to insist on your moving towards a *nirānanda* (joyless) Brahman. On the contrary, I said that Ananda was the crown of the Yoga, which surely means that it was part of the highest final *siddhi*.

Whatever one wants sincerely and persistently from the Divine, the Divine is sure to give. If then you want Ananda and go on wanting, you will surely have it in the end. The only question is what is to be the chief power in your seeking, a vital demand or a psychic aspiration manifesting through the heart and communicating itself to the mental and vital and physical consciousness. The latter is the greatest power and makes the shortest way — and besides one has to come to that way sooner or later.

*

Let us first put aside the quite foreign consideration of what we would do if the union with the Divine brought eternal joylessness, Nirananda or torture. Such a thing does not exist and to drag it in only clouds the issue. The Divine is Anandamaya and one can seek him for the Ananda he gives; but he has also in him many other things and one may seek him for any of them, for peace, for liberation, for knowledge, for power, for anything else of which one may feel the pull or the impulse. It is quite possible for someone to say: "Let me have Power from the Divine and do His work or His will and I am satisfied, even if the use of Power entails suffering also." It is possible to shun bliss as a thing too tremendous or ecstatic and ask only or rather for peace, for liberation, for Nirvana. You speak of self-fulfilment, — one may regard the Supreme not as the Divine but as one's highest Self and seek fulfilment of one's being in that highest Self; but one need not envisage it as a self of bliss, ecstasy, Ananda — one may envisage it as a self of freedom, vastness, knowledge,

tranquillity, strength, calm, perfection — perhaps too calm for a ripple of anything so disturbing as joy to enter. So even if it is for something to be gained that one approaches the Divine, it is not a fact that one can approach Him or seek union only for the sake of Ananda and nothing else.

That involves something which throws all your reasoning out of gear. For these are aspects of the Divine Nature, powers of it, states of his being, — but the Divine Himself is something absolute, someone self-existent, not limited by his aspects, — wonderful and ineffable, not existing by them, but they existing because of him. It follows that if he attracts by his aspects, all the more he can attract by his very absolute selfness which is sweeter, mightier, profounder than any aspect. His peace, rapture, light, freedom, beauty are marvellous and ineffable, because he is himself magically, mysteriously, transcendently marvellous and ineffable. He can then be sought after for his wonderful and ineffable self and not only for the sake of one aspect or another of him. The only thing needed for that is, first, to arrive at a point when the psychic being feels this pull of the Divine in himself and, secondly, to arrive at the point when the mind, vital and each thing else begins to feel too that that was what it was wanting and the surface hunt after Ananda or what else was only an excuse for drawing the nature towards that supreme magnet.

Your argument that because we know the union with the Divine will bring Ananda, therefore it must be for the Ananda that we seek the union, is not true and has no force. One who loves a queen may know that if she returns his love it will bring him power, position, riches and yet it need not be for the power, position, riches that he seeks her love. He may love her for herself and could love her equally if she were not a queen; he might have no hope of any return whatever and yet love her, adore her, live for her, die for her simply because she is she. That has happened and men have loved women without any hope of enjoyment or result, loved steadily, passionately after age has come and beauty has gone. Patriots do not love their country only when she is rich, powerful, great and has much to give them; their love for country has been most ardent, passionate, absolute when the

country was poor, degraded, miserable, having nothing to give but loss, wounds, torture, imprisonment, death as the wages of her service; yet even knowing that they would never see her free, men have lived, served and died for her — for her own sake, not for what she could give. Men have loved Truth for her own sake and for what they could seek or find of her, accepted poverty, persecution, death itself; they have been content even to seek for her always, not finding, and yet never given up the search. That means what? That men, country, Truth and other things besides can be loved for their own sake and not for anything else, not for any circumstance or attendant quality or resulting enjoyment, but for something absolute that is either in them or behind their appearance and circumstance. The Divine is more than a man or woman, a stretch of land or a creed, opinion, discovery or principle. He is the Person beyond all persons, the Home and Country of all souls, the Truth of which truths are only imperfect figures. And can He then not be loved and sought for his own sake, as and more than these have been by men even in their lesser selves and nature?

What your reasoning ignores is that which is absolute or tends towards the absolute in man and his seeking as well as in the Divine — something not to be explained by mental reasoning or vital motive. A motive, but a motive of the soul, not of vital desire; a reason not of the mind, but of the self and spirit. An asking too, but the asking that is the soul's inherent aspiration, not a vital longing. That is what comes up when there is the sheer self-giving, when "I seek you for this, I seek you for that" changes to a sheer "I seek you for you." It is that marvellous and ineffable absolute in the Divine that Krishnaprem means when he says, "Not knowledge nor this nor that, but Krishna." The pull of that is indeed a categorical imperative, the self in us drawn to the Divine because of the imperative call of its greater Self, the soul ineffably drawn towards the object of its adoration, because it cannot be otherwise, because it is it and He is He. That is all about it.

I have written all that only to explain what we mean when we speak of seeking the Divine for himself and not for anything

else — so far as it is explicable. Explicable or not, it is one of the most dominant facts of spiritual experience. The call to self-giving is only an expression of this fact. But this does not mean that I object to your asking for Ananda. Ask for that by all means, so long as to ask for it is a need of any part of your being — for these are the things that lead on towards the Divine so long as the absolute inner call that is there all the time does not push itself to the surface. But it is really that that has drawn from the beginning and is there behind — it is the categorical spiritual imperative, the absolute need of the soul for the Divine.

I am not saying that there is to be no Ananda. The self-giving itself is a profound Ananda and what it brings, carries in its wake an inexpressible Ananda — and it is brought by this method sooner than by any other, so that one can say almost, “A self-less self-giving is the best policy.” Only one does not do it out of policy. Ananda is the result, but it is done not for the result, but for the self-giving itself and for the Divine himself — a subtle distinction, it may seem to the mind, but very real.

*

No, what you write in your letter was not at all what the Mother was trying to tell you. The question of *ahaitukī bhakti* and its opposite was settled long ago and the Mother did not intend to return upon it; it is understood that whatever the motive immediately pushing the mind or the vital, an asking for Ananda or knowledge or power, yet if there is a true seeking for the Divine in the being, it must lead eventually to the realisation of the Divine. The soul within has always the inherent (*ahaitukī*) yearning for the Divine; the *hetu* or special motive is simply an impulsion used by it to get the mind and the vital to follow the inner urge. If the mind and the vital can feel and accept the soul's sheer love for the Divine for his own sake, then the sadhana gets its full power and many difficulties disappear; but even if they do not, they will get what they seek after in the Divine and through it they will come to realise something, even perhaps to pass beyond the limit of their original desire. I may say that the idea of a joyless God is an absurdity which only the ignorance of

the mind could engender; the Radha love is not based upon any such thing, but means simply that whatever comes on the way to the Divine, pain or joy, *milana* or *viraha*, and however long the sufferings may last, the Radha love is unshaken and keeps its faith and certitude pointing fixedly like a star to the supreme object of Love.

All this, however, has nothing to do with what the Mother wished to say in the morning. What she told you was that you seemed to have a fixed notion about the Divine, as of a rather distant Being somewhere whom you expect to give you an article called Ananda, and, when there is some prospect of his giving it to you, you are on good terms with him, but when he doesn't, you quarrel and revolt and call him names! And she said a notion of the kind was in itself an obstacle, — because it is rather far from the Truth, — in the way of realising the Divine. What is this Ananda that you seek, after all? The mind can see in it nothing but a pleasant psychological condition, — but if it were only that, it would not be the rapture which the bhaktas and the mystics find in it. When the Ananda comes into you, it is the Divine who comes into you; just as when the Peace flows into you, it is the Divine who is invading you, or when you are flooded with Light, it is the flood of the Divine Himself that is around you. Of course, the Divine is something much more; many other things besides and in them all a Presence, a Being, a Divine Person; for the Divine is Krishna, is Shiva, is the Supreme Mother. But through the Ananda you can perceive the Anandamaya Krishna; for the Ananda is the subtle body and being of Krishna; through the Peace you can perceive the Shantimaya Shiva; in the Light, in the delivering Knowledge, the Love, the fulfilling and uplifting Power you can meet the presence of the Divine Mother. It is this perception that makes the experiences of the bhaktas and mystics so rapturous and enables them to pass more easily through the nights of anguish and separation — when there is this soul-perception, it gives to even a little or brief Ananda a force or value it would not otherwise have and the Ananda itself gathers by it a growing power to stay, to return, to increase. This was what the Mother meant

when she said, “Don’t ask the Divine to give you Ananda, ask Him to give you Himself” — signifying that in the Ananda and through the Ananda it would be Himself that He would give you. There would then be no cause to say, “I do not know the Divine. I have never felt or met Him”; it would be a gate too for other experiences and make it easier to see the Divine in the material object, in the human form, in the body.

It was not a condition that the Mother was laying down when she said this; it was simply a suggestion which, if something in you could seize and profit by it, would make things less slow and difficult than they actually are.

Dedication to the Spiritual Life

This Yoga demands a total dedication of the life to the aspiration for the discovery and embodiment of the Divine Truth and to nothing else whatever. To divide your life between the Divine and some outward aim and activity that has nothing to do with the search for the Truth is inadmissible. The least thing of that kind would make success in the Yoga impossible.

You must go inside yourself and enter into a complete dedication to the spiritual life. All clinging to mental preferences must fall away from you, all insistence on vital aims and interests and attachments must be put away, all egoistic clinging to family, friends, country must disappear if you want to succeed in Yoga. Whatever has to come as outgoing energy or action, must proceed from the Truth once discovered and not from the lower mental or vital motives, from the Divine Will and not from personal choice or the preferences of the ego.

*

It is a universally accepted principle of the spiritual endeavour that one must be prepared to sacrifice everything without reserve in order to reach the Divine through a spiritualised consciousness. If self-development on the mental, vital and physical plane is his aim that is another matter — that life is the life of the ego with the soul kept behind undeveloped or half developed.

But for the spiritual seeker the only development he seeks is the development of the psychic and spiritual consciousness and that too, only because it is necessary to reach and to serve the Divine, not for its own sake. Whatever mental, vital, physical development or use of faculties can be made part of the spiritual life and an instrumentation for the Divine can be kept on condition of surrender of them for transformation and restatement on the spiritual basis. But they must not be kept for their own sake or for the sake of the ego or considered as one's own possession or used for one's own purpose but only for the sake of the Divine.

As for James' statement¹ it is of course true except in so far as the politician can indulge in other things as hobbies for his leisure hours, but if he wants to succeed as a politician he must give his best energies to politics. Conversely if Shakespeare or Newton had spent part of their energies in politics they would not have been able to reach such heights in poetry and in science or even if they had they would have done much less. The main energies have to be concentrated on one thing; the others can only be minor pursuits at leisure or for distraction or interests rather than pursuits useful for keeping up a general culture.

*

All depends on the aim of the life. To one whose aim is to discover and possess the highest spiritual truth and the divine life, I do not think a University post can count for much, nor do I see that there can be any practical connection between them. It might be different if the aim were the life of a writer and thinker on the intellectual level only without any higher flight or deeper seeking. I do not see that your unwillingness to commit yourself to this kind of work is due to any weakness. It is rather that only a small part of your nature, and that not the deepest or strongest part, would be satisfied with it or with the atmosphere in which it would have to be done.

¹ *The correspondent wrote: "Prof. James even says [in Principles of Psychology] about the 'social me' and other 'me's, that one has to suppress several of them in order to achieve one or two main aims in life. A politician, in order to concentrate on politics alone, has to let go his tendency for music or painting or social fame or family affections."* — Ed.

In these matters it is not the thinking mind but the vital being — the life-force and the desire nature — or some part of it at least, that usually determines men's action and their choice — when it is not some outward necessity or pressure that compels or mainly influences the decision. The mind is only an interpreting, justifying and devising agent. By your taking up the sadhana this part of your vital being has had a pressure put upon it from above and within which has discouraged its old turn of desires and tendencies, its past grooves, those which would have decided its direction before; this vital has, as is often one first result, fallen silent and neutral. It is no longer strongly moved towards the ordinary life; it has not yet received from or through the psychic centre and the higher mental will a sufficient illumination and impulse to take up a new vital movement and run vigorously on the road to a new life. That is the reason for the listlessness of which you speak and the mistiness of the future. Men do not know themselves and have not learned to distinguish these different parts of the being which are usually lumped together as mind; they do not understand their own states and actions, or, if at all, then only on the surface. It is part of the foundation of Yoga to become conscious of the complexity of the nature, see the different forces that move it and get over it a control of directing knowledge.

The remedy can only come from the parts of the being that are already turned towards the Light. To call in the light of the divine consciousness, bring the psychic being to the front and kindle a flame of aspiration which will awaken spiritually the outer mind and set on fire the vital being, is the way out. It is usually a psychic awakening or a series of strong experiences by which the sadhak comes out of this intermediary no man's land of the quiescent vital (few can avoid altogether this passage through a neutral vital indifference) into the full dynamic course of the spiritual movement.

*

It is not absolutely necessary to abandon the ordinary life in order to seek after the Light or to practise Yoga. This is usually

done by those who want to make a clean cut, to live a purely religious or exclusively inner and spiritual life, to renounce the world entirely and to depart from the cosmic existence by cessation of the human birth and a passing away into some higher state or into the transcendental Reality. Otherwise it is only necessary when the pressure of the inner urge becomes so great that the pursuit of the ordinary life is no longer compatible with the pursuit of the dominant spiritual objective. Till then what is necessary is a power to practise an inner isolation, to be able to retire within oneself and concentrate at any time on the necessary spiritual purpose. There must also be a power to deal with the ordinary outer life from a new inner attitude and one can then make the happenings of that life itself a means for the inner change of nature and the growth in spiritual experience.

Chapter Two

The Aim of the Integral Yoga

A Yoga of Divine Life

You have apparently a call and may be fit for Yoga; but there are different paths and each has a different aim and end before it. It is common to all the paths to conquer the desires, to put aside the ordinary relations of life, and to try to pass from uncertainty to everlasting certitude. One may also try to conquer dream and sleep, thirst and hunger etc. But it is no part of my Yoga to have nothing to do with the world or with life or to kill the senses or entirely inhibit their action. It is the object of this Yoga to transform life by bringing down into it the Light, Power and Bliss of the divine Truth and its dynamic certitudes. This Yoga is not a Yoga of world-shunning asceticism, but of divine Life. Your object, on the other hand, can only be gained by entering into Samadhi and ceasing in it from all connection with world-existence.

*

The way of Yoga followed here has a different purpose from others, — for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter. This is an exceedingly difficult aim and difficult Yoga; to many or most it will seem impossible. All the established forces of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness are opposed to it and deny it and try to prevent it, and the sadhak will find his own mind, life and body full of the most obstinate impediments to its realisation. If you can accept the ideal whole-heartedly, face all the difficulties, leave the past and its ties behind you and are ready to give up everything and risk everything for this divine

possibility, then only can you hope to discover by experience the Truth behind it.

The sadhana of this Yoga does not proceed through any set mental teaching or prescribed forms of meditation, mantras or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an Influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the Divine Presence in the heart, and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come.

*

The aim of the Yoga is to open the consciousness to the Divine, to live in the inner consciousness more and more while acting from it on the external life, to bring the inmost psychic into the front and by the power of the psychic to purify and change the being so that it may become ready for transformation and in union with the Divine Knowledge, Will and Love. Secondly, to develop the Yogic consciousness — i.e. to universalise the being on all the planes, become aware of the cosmic being and cosmic forces and be in union with the Divine on all the planes up to the Overmind. Thirdly, to come into contact with the transcendent Divine, beyond the Overmind, through the supramental consciousness, supramentalise the consciousness and the nature and make oneself an instrument for the realisation of the dynamic Divine Truth and its transforming descent into the earth-nature.

A Yoga Not for Ourselves

Well, I once wrote in my callow days, “Our Yoga is not for ourselves but humanity” — that was in the *Bande Mataram* times. To get out of the hole self-created I had to explain that it was no longer for humanity, but for the Divine. The “not for ourselves” remained intact.

*

Quite possible and practical and a very rapturous thing [*is absolute surrender to the Divine*] as anyone who has done it can tell you. It is also the easiest and most powerful way of “getting the Divine”. So it is the best policy also. The phrase [*for the Divine*], however, means that the object of the Yoga is to enter into and be possessed by the Divine Presence and Consciousness, to love the Divine for the Divine’s sake alone, to be turned in our nature into nature of the Divine and in our will and works and life to be the instrument of the Divine. Its object is not to be a great Yogi or a superman (although that may come) or to grab at the Divine for the sake of the ego’s power, pride or pleasure. It is not for salvation though liberation comes by it and all else may come; but these must not be our objects. The Divine alone is our object.

*

To come to this Yoga merely with the idea of being a superman would be an act of vital egoism which would defeat its own object. Those who put this object in the front of their preoccupations invariably come to grief, spiritually and otherwise. The aim of this Yoga is, first, to enter into the divine consciousness by merging into it the separative ego (incidentally, in doing so one finds one’s true individual self which is not the limited, vain and selfish human ego but a portion of the Divine) and, secondly, to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth to transform mind, life and body. All else can be only a result of these two aims, not the primary object of the Yoga.

The extreme difficulty of these two aims has never been concealed from the sadhakas; on the contrary, difficulties and dangers have been overemphasised, rather than minimised. If still they choose and persist in this path, it is supposed that they are ready to risk everything, sacrifice everything, surrender everything in order to achieve this end or help towards its achievement.

*

You must get out of certain wrong ideas that you seem to have

about Yoga, for these are dangerous and ought to be thrown away by every sadhak:

(1) The object of Yoga is not to become “like” Sri Aurobindo or the Mother. Those who cherish this idea easily come to the further idea that they can become their equals and even greater. This is only to feed the ego.

(2) The object of Yoga is not to get power or to be more powerful than others or to have great siddhis or to do great or wonderful or miraculous things.

(3) The object of Yoga is not to be a great Yogi or a superman. This is an egoistic way of taking the Yoga and can lead to no good; avoid it altogether.

(4) To talk about the supramental and think of bringing it down in yourself is the most dangerous of all. It may bring an entire megalomania and loss of balance. What the sadhak has to seek is the full opening to the Divine, the psychic change of his consciousness, the spiritual change. Of that change of consciousness, selflessness, desirelessness, humility, bhakti, surrender, calm, equality, peace, quiet, sincerity are necessary constituents. Until he has the psychic and spiritual change, to think of being supramental is an absurdity and an arrogant absurdity.

All these egoistic ideas, if indulged, can only aggrandise the ego, spoil the sadhana and lead to serious spiritual dangers. They should be rejected altogether.

*

Making fulfilment etc. the aim encourages an ego-centric attitude. Fulfilment, liberation, bliss etc. will come, but as a result of union with the Divine, not as a personal object of the sadhana.

Not Liberation But Transformation

Peace is a necessary basis, but peace is not sufficient. Peace if it is strong and permanent can liberate the inner being which can become a calm and unmoved witness of the external movements. That is the liberation of the Sannyasin. In some cases it can liberate the external also, throwing the old nature out into

the environmental consciousness, but even this is liberation, not transformation.

*

Spiritual liberation means to be free from ego and from the imprisonment in the mind and vital and physical nature and to be conscious of the spiritual Self and live in that consciousness.

Spiritual perfection and fulfilment means that the nature should be spiritualised, new-formed in the consciousness of the free Self and the divine consciousness of infinity, purity, light, power, bliss and knowledge.

*

In the Brahmanic condition one feels the self to be untouched and pure — but the nature remains imperfect. The ordinary Sannyasin does not care about that, because it is not his object to perfect the nature, but to separate himself from it.

*

The negative means [*of sadhana*] are not evil — they are useful for their object which is to get away from life. But from the positive point of view, they are disadvantageous because they get rid of the powers of the being instead of divinising them for the transformation of life.

Divinisation and Transformation

The fundamental difference is in the teaching that there is a dynamic divine Truth (the Supermind) and that into the present world of Ignorance that Truth can descend, create a new Truth-consciousness and divinise Life. The old Yogas go straight from mind to the absolute Divine, regard all dynamic existence as Ignorance, Illusion or Lila: when you enter the static and immutable Divine Truth, they say, you pass out of cosmic existence.

*

They [*the ancient Yogas*] aimed at realisation and did not care

about divinisation, except the Tantric and some others. The aim however even in these was rather to become saints and siddhas than anything else.

*

If your soul always aspires for the transformation, then that is what you have to follow after. To seek the Divine or rather some aspect of the Divine — for one cannot entirely realise the Divine if there is no transformation — may be enough for some, but not for those whose soul's aspiration is for the entire divine change.

*

Unless the external nature is transformed, one may go as high as possible and have the largest experiences — but the external mind remains an instrument of the Ignorance.

*

If the presence of the Divine is established, it means that the being is ready for the transformation which proceeds naturally.

*

The full transformation is the result of union with the divine consciousness.

*

To be in full union with the Divine is the final aim. When one has some kind of constant union, one can be called a Yogi, but the union has to be made complete. There are Yogis who have only the union on the spiritual plane, others who are united in mind and heart, others in the vital also. In our Yoga our aim is to be united too in the physical consciousness and on the supramental plane.

Section Two

Basic Requisites of the Path

Chapter One

The Call and the Capacity

The Call

This Yoga is a special way to a high and difficult spiritual achievement. It is given only when there is sufficient evidence of capacity or an irresistible call. Inner peace is not its object; that is only one of the elementary conditions for it.

*

The goal of Yoga is always hard to reach, but this one is more difficult than any other, and it is only for those who have the call, the capacity, the willingness to face everything and every risk, even the risk of failure, and the will to progress towards an entire selflessness, desirelessness and surrender.

*

This Yoga implies not only the realisation of God, but an entire consecration and change of the inner and outer life till it is fit to manifest a divine consciousness and become part of a divine work. This means an inner discipline far more exacting and difficult than mere ethical and physical austerities. One must not enter on this path, far vaster and more arduous than most ways of Yoga, unless one is sure of the psychic call and of one's readiness to go through to the end.

*

By readiness I did not mean capacity but willingness. If there is the will within to face all difficulties and go through, no matter how long it takes, then the path can be taken.

*

A mere restless dissatisfaction with the ordinary life is not a sufficient preparation for this Yoga. A positive inner call, a

strong will and a great steadiness are necessary for success in the spiritual life.

*

Knowledge of the way is not enough — one must tread it, or if one cannot do that, allow oneself to be carried along it. The human vital and physical external nature resist to the very end, but if the soul has once heard the call, it arrives, sooner or later.

*

What you write [*about the urge of the soul*] is quite accurate about the true soul, the psychic being. But people mean different things when they speak of the soul. Sometimes it is what I have called in the *Arya* the desire soul, — that is the vital with its mixed aspirations, desires, hungers of all kinds good and bad, its emotions, finer and grosser, or sensational urges crossed by the mind's idealisings and psychic stresses. But sometimes it is also the mind and vital under the stress of a psychic urge. The psychic so long as it is veiled must express itself through the mind and vital and its aspirations are mixed and coloured there by the vital and mental stuff. Thus the veiled psychic urge may express itself in the mind by a hunger in the thought for the knowledge of the Divine, what the Europeans call the intellectual love of God. In the vital it may express itself as a hunger or hankering after the Divine. This can bring much suffering because of the nature of the vital, its unquiet passions, desires, ardours, troubled emotions, cloudings, depressions, despairs. The psychic can have a psychic sorrow when things go against its diviner yearnings, but this sorrow has in it no touch of torment, depression or despair. Nevertheless all cannot approach, at least cannot at once approach the Divine in the pure psychic way — the mental and vital approaches are often necessary beginnings and better from the spiritual point of view than an insensitiveness to the Divine. It is in both cases a call of the soul, the soul's urge — it only takes a form or colour due to the stress of the mind or vital nature.

*

For those who have within them a sincere call for the Divine, however the mind or vital may present difficulties or attacks come or the progress be slow and painful, — even if they fall back or fall away from the path for a time, the psychic always prevails in the end and the Divine Help proves effective. Trust in that and persevere — then the goal is sure.

*

There is only one logic in spiritual things: when a demand is there for the Divine, a sincere call, it is bound one day to have its fulfilment. It is only if there is a strong insincerity somewhere, a hankering after something else — power, ambition, etc. — which counterbalances the inner call that the logic is no longer applicable. Supramental realisation is another matter: I am speaking now of the realisation of the Divine, of the contact with the Divine, through whatever lever, heart or mind, or both. In your case it is likely to come through the heart, through increase of bhakti or psychic purification of the heart: that is why I was pressing the psychic way upon you. I do not mean that nothing can come through meditation for you, but probably — barring the unexpected — only after the heart-experience.

Do not allow these wrong ideas and feelings to govern you or your state of depression to dictate your decisions: try to keep a firm central will for the realisation — you can do so if you make up your mind to it — these things are not impossible for you; they are within the scope of your nature which is strong. You will find that the obstinate spiritual difficulty disappears in the end like a mirage. It belongs to the maya and, where the inner call is sincere, cannot hold even the outer consciousness always: its apparent solidity will dissolve.

Turning towards the Divine

An idealistic notion or a religious belief or emotion is something quite different from getting spiritual light. An idealistic notion might turn you towards getting spiritual light, but it is not the light itself.

It is true however that “the spirit bloweth where it listeth”, and that one can get some initial impulse or touch of mental realisation of spiritual things from almost any circumstance, as Bilwamangal got it from the words of his courtesan mistress. Obviously it happens because something is ready somewhere, — if you like, the psychic being waiting for its chance and taking some opportunity in mind, vital or heart to knock open a window somewhere.

*

Mental idealism can only have an effect if one has a strong will in the mind capable of forcing the vital to follow.

*

The push to drown oneself in the Divine is very rare. It is usually a mental idea, a vital fumbling or some quite inadequate reason that starts the thing — or else no reason at all. The only reality is the occult psychic push behind of which the surface consciousness is not aware or else hardly aware.

*

Your influence on him for turning towards the Yoga was good, but it was not able to change his vital nature. No human influence — which can only be mental and moral — can do that. You can see that he is just what he was before. It is only from the sadhak’s own soul turning towards the Divine [*that the change can come*].

*

It is so with everybody. Part of the nature turns to the Divine, another part does not give its consent at all; it either revolts or remains dully discontented or only pretends to acquiesce. It is only by making the whole being turn whole-heartedly to the Divine that one can enter fully into the Yoga.

Spiritual Destiny

When someone is destined for the Path all circumstances,

through all the deviations of mind and life, help in one way or another to lead him to it. It is his own psychic being within him and the Divine Power above that use to that end the vicissitudes both of mind and outward circumstance.

*

A spiritual opportunity is not a thing that should be lightly thrown away with the idea that it will be all right some other time — one cannot be so sure of the other time. Besides, these things leave a mark and at the place of the mark there can be a recurrence.

*

The spiritual destiny always stands — it may be delayed or seem to be lost for a time, but it is never abolished.

Capacity for Yoga

All can do some kind of Yoga according to their nature, if they have the will to it. But there are few of whom it can be said that they have capacity for this Yoga. Only some can develop a capacity, others cannot. What X wants is peace and something to carry her through the trials of life — she is not ready for more.

*

In sadhana it is not by the personal capacity that things are done. It is the Divine Power that works and if one makes oneself its instrument, even what is impossible for the personal capacity can be done.

*

When one once enters into the true (Yogic) consciousness, then you see that everything can be done, even if at present only a slight beginning has been made; but a beginning is enough, once the Force, the Power are there. It is not really on the capacity of the outer nature that success depends, (for the outer nature all self-exceeding seems impossibly difficult), but on the inner being and to the inner being all is possible. One has only to get

into contact with the inner being and change the outer view and consciousness from the inner — that is the work of the sadhana and it is sure to come with sincerity, aspiration and patience.

*

You must realise that these moods are attacks which should be rejected at once — for they repose on nothing but suggestions of self-distrust and incapacity which have no meaning, since it is by the Grace of the Divine and the aid of a Force greater than your own, not by personal capacity and worth that you can attain the goal of the sadhana. You have to remember that and dissociate yourself from these suggestions when they come, never accept or yield to them. No sadhak even if he had the capacity of the ancient Rishis and Tapaswis or the strength of a Vivekananda can hope to keep during the early years of his sadhana a continuous good condition or union with the Divine or an unbroken call or height of aspiration. It takes a long time to spiritualise the whole nature and until that is done, variations must come. A constant trust and patience must be cultivated — must be acquired — not least when things go against — for when they are favourable, trust and patience are easy.

*

Spiritual capacity means simply a natural capacity for true spiritual experience and development. It can be had on any plane, but the natural result is that one gets easily into touch with the Self and the higher planes.

Fitness for Yoga

Nobody is fit for the sadhana — i.e. nobody can do it by his sole capacity. It is a question of preparing oneself to bring in fully the Force not one's own that can do it with one's consent and aspiration.

*

It is useless to raise the question of fitness. No one is fit — for all human beings are full of faults and incapacities — even the greatest sadhaks are not free. It is a question only of aspiration, of believing in the divine Grace and letting the Divine work in you, not making a refusal.

*

It is difficult to say that any particular quality makes one fit or the lack of it unfit. One may have strong sex impulses, doubts, revolts and yet succeed in the end, while another may fail. If one has a fundamental sincerity, a will to go through in spite of all things and a readiness to be guided, that is the best security in the sadhana.

*

Fitness for Yoga is a very relative term — the real fitness comes by the soul's call and the power to open oneself to the Divine. If you have that, you have the fitness, and your past actions cannot stand in the way: the past cannot bind the future. Of course, you have to finish with it, reject it and turn into the new ways — otherwise the past remains the present. But that is the question of the will in you and the soul's call. If you are faithful to your soul's call there is no reason why you should not be able to do Yoga. All that you have to do is to keep your aspiration and not lose the inner connection that has been made — then the Mother's thought and the help will be with you and you will find your way.

*

You speak of your possible unfitness, but it is not a question of fitness or unfitness. There is nobody who can go on in his own strength or by right of his fitness to the goal of the sadhana. It is only by the Divine Grace and reliance on the Divine Grace that it can be done. It is in a strength greater than your own that you must put your first and last reliance. If your faith falters you have to call on that to sustain you; if your force is insufficient against the ill-will and opposition that surround

you, open yourself to receive that force in its place.

*

The Mother's help and mine are always there for you. You have only to turn fully towards it and it will act on you.

What has come across is these wrong ideas about your unfitness, about bad things in you that prevent you from receiving the Mother's grace, about the lack of aspiration which prevents you from having realisation and experience. These thoughts are quite wrong and untrue — they are not even your own thoughts, they are suggestions thrown on you just as they are thrown on the other sadhaks and intended to produce depression. There is no unfitness, no bad thing inside that comes across, no lack of aspiration causing the cessation of experience. It is the depression, the self-distrust, the readiness to despair which are the only cause; there is no other. To all sadhaks, as I wrote to you, even to the best and strongest there come interruptions in the flow of the sadhana; that is not a cause for thinking oneself unfit and wanting to go away with the idea that there is no hope. A little quietude would bring back the flow. You were having the necessary experiences, the necessary progress and it was only a coming forward of some difficulties of the physical consciousness that stopped them for a time. That happens to all and is not particular to you, as I explained to you. These difficulties always come and have to be overcome. Once overcome by the working of the Force, the sadhana goes on as before. But you began to entertain this wrong idea of unfitness and lack of aspiration as the cause and got entirely depressed. You must shake all that off and refuse to believe in the thought-suggestions that come to you. No sadhak ought ever to indulge thoughts of unfitness and hopelessness — they are quite irrelevant because it is not one's personal fitness and worthiness that makes one succeed, but the Mother's grace and power and the consent of the soul to her grace and the workings of her Force.

Turn from these dark thoughts and look to the Mother only, not with impatience for the result and desire, but with trust and confidence and let her workings bring you quietude

and the renewal of the progress towards the psychic opening and realisation. That will bring surely and without doubt the fuller faith and the love which you seek.

*

I repeat what I said before (though your physical mind does not yet believe) that these experiences show at once that your inner being is a Yogi capable of trance, ecstasy, intensest bhakti, fully aware of Yoga and Yoga consciousness, and showing himself the very moment you get inside yourself, even as the outer man is very much the other way round, modernised, externalised, vigorously outward-vital (for the Yogi is inward-vital and psychic) and knowing nothing of Yoga or the world of inner experience. I could see at once when I saw you that there was this inner Yogi and your former experiences here were quite convincing to anyone who knows anything at all about these things. When there is this inner Yogi inside, the coming to the way of Yoga is sure and not even the most externalised surface consciousness — not even a regular *homo Russelicus* outside and you are not that, only a little *Russelicatus* on the surface, — can prevent final success in the Yoga. But the tussle between the inward and the outward man can create a lot of trouble, because the inward man pushes towards the Divine and will not let go and the outward man regrets, repines, pulls back, asks what is this shadowy thing to which he is being brought, this Unknown, this (to him) far-off Ineffable. That, and not merely sex, food or society, is the genesis of the struggle and trouble in you. And yet it is all a misunderstanding — for if the outer gave way entirely to the inner Yogi, he would find that what he lost or thought he was losing would be repaid a hundredfold — though he would get it in another spirit and consciousness, not any longer the transient and deceptive delight of the world for its own sake, but the delight of the Divine in the world, a thousand times more intense, sweet and desirable.

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The vision of the Light and the vision of the Lord in the form of

Jagannath are both of them indications that he has the capacity for Yoga experience and that there is a call of the Divine on his inner being. But capacity is not enough; there must be also the will to seek after the Divine and courage and persistence in following the path. Fear is the first thing that must be thrown away and, secondly, the inertia of the outer being which has prevented him from responding to the call.

The Light is the light of the Divine Consciousness. The aim of this Yoga is first to come into contact with this consciousness and then to live in its light and allow the light to transform the whole nature, so that the being may live in union with the Divine and the nature become a field for the action of the Divine Knowledge, the Divine Power and the Divine Ananda.

He can succeed in that only if he makes it the supreme object of his life and is prepared to subordinate everything else to this one aim. Otherwise all that can be done is only to make some preparation in this life — a first contact and some preliminary spiritual change in part of the nature.

Capacity of Westerners for Yoga

The best way to answer your letter will be, I think, to take separately the questions implied in it. I will begin with the conclusion you have drawn of the impossibility of the Yoga for a non-Oriental nature.

I cannot see any ground for such a conclusion; it is contrary to all experience. Europeans throughout the centuries have practised with success spiritual disciplines which were akin to Oriental Yogas and have followed too ways of the inner life which came to them from the East. Their non-Oriental nature did not stand in their way. The approach and experiences of Plotinus and the European mystics who derived from him were identical, as has been shown recently, with the approach and experiences of one type of Indian Yoga. Especially, since the introduction of Christianity Europeans have followed its mystic disciplines which were one in essence with those of Asia, however much they may have differed in forms, names and symbols.

If the question be of Indian Yoga itself in its own characteristic forms, here too the supposed inability is contradicted by experience. In early times Greeks and Scythians from the West as well as Chinese and Japanese and Cambodians from the East followed without difficulty Buddhist or Hindu disciplines; at the present day an increasing number of occidentals have taken to Vedantic or Vaishnava or other Indian spiritual practices and this objection of incapacity or unsuitableness has never been made either from the side of the disciples or from the side of the Masters. I do not see, either, *why* there should be any such unbridgeable gulf; for there is no essential difference between spiritual life in the East and spiritual life in the West, — what difference there is has always been of names, forms and symbols or else of the emphasis laid on one special aim or another or on one side or another of psychological experience. Even here differences are often alleged which do not exist or else are not so great as they appear. I have seen it alleged by a Christian writer (who does not seem to have shared your friend X's objection to these scholastic (?) distinctions) that Hindu spiritual thought and life acknowledged or followed after only the Transcendent and neglected the Immanent Divinity while Christianity gave due place to both Aspects; but, in matter of fact, Indian spirituality, even if it laid the final stress on the Highest beyond form and name, yet gave ample recognition and place to the Divine immanent in the world and the Divine immanent in the human being. Indian spirituality has, it is true, a wider and more minute knowledge behind it; it has followed hundreds of different paths, admitted every kind of approach to the Divine and has thus been able to enter into fields which are outside the less ample scope of occidental practice; but that makes no difference to the essentials, and it is the essentials alone that matter.

Your explanation of the ability of many Westerners to practise Indian Yoga seems to be that they have a Hindu temperament in a European or American body. As Gandhi is inwardly a moralistic Westerner and Christian, so, you say, the other non-Oriental members of the Asram are essentially Hindus in outlook. But

what exactly is this Hindu outlook? I have not myself seen anything in them that can be so described nor has the Mother. My own experience contradicts entirely your explanation. I knew very well Sister Nivedita (she was for many years a friend and a comrade in the political field) and met Sister Christine, — the two closest European disciples of Vivekananda. Both were Westerners to the core and had nothing at all of the Hindu outlook; although Sister Nivedita, an Irishwoman, had the power of penetrating by an intense sympathy into the ways of life of the people around her, her own nature remained non-Oriental to the end. Yet she found no difficulty in arriving at realisation on the lines of Vedanta. Here in this Asram I have found the members of it who came from the West (I include especially those who have been here longest) typically occidental with all the quality and also all the difficulties of the Western mind and temperament and they have had to cope with their difficulties, just as the Indian members have been obliged to struggle with the limitations and obstacles created by *their* temperament and training. No doubt, they have accepted in principle the conditions of the Yoga; but they had no Hindu outlook when they came and I do not think they have tried to acquire one. Why should they do so? It is not the Hindu outlook or the Western that fundamentally matters in Yoga, but the psychic turn and the spiritual urge, and these are the same everywhere.

What are the differences after all from the viewpoint of Yoga between the sadhak of Indian and the sadhak of occidental birth? You say the Indian has his Yoga half done for him, — first, because he has his psychic much more directly open to the Transcendent Divine. Leaving out the adjective, (for it is not many who are by nature drawn to the Transcendent, most seek more readily the Personal, the Divine immanent here, especially if they can find it in a human body), there is there no doubt an advantage. It arises simply from the strong survival in India of an atmosphere of spiritual seeking, and a long tradition of practice and experience, while in Europe the atmosphere has been lost, the tradition interrupted and both have to be rebuilt. There is an absence too of the *essential* doubt which so much afflicts

the minds of Europeans or, it may be added, of Europeanised Indians, although that does not prevent a great activity of a practical and very operative kind of doubt in the Indian sadhak. But when you speak of indifference to fellow human beings in any deeper aspect, I am unable to follow your meaning. My own experience is that the attachment to persons — to mother, father, wife, children, friends — not out of sense of duty or social relationship, but through close heart-ties is quite as strong as in Europe and often more intense; it is one of the great stumbling blocks in the way, some succumbing to the pull and many even advanced sadhaks being still unable to get it out of their blood and their vital fibre. The impulse to set up a “spiritual” or a “psychic” relationship with others — very usually covering a vital mixture which distracts them from the one aim — is a persistently common feature. There is no difference here between Western and Eastern human nature. Only the teaching in India is of old standing that all must be turned towards the Divine and everything else either sacrificed or changed into a subordinate and ancillary movement or made by sublimation a first step only towards the seeking for the Divine. This no doubt helps the Indian sadhak if not to become single-hearted at once, yet to orientate himself more completely towards the goal. It is not always for him the Divine alone, though that is considered the highest state, but the Divine chief and first is easily grasped by him as the ideal.

The Indian sadhak has his own difficulties in his approach to the Yoga — at least to this Yoga — which a Westerner has in less measure. Those of the occidental nature are born of the dominant trend of the European mind in the immediate past. A greater readiness of essential doubt and sceptical reserve; a habit of mental activity as a necessity of the nature which makes it more difficult to achieve a complete mental silence; a stronger turn towards outside things born of the plenitude of active life (while the Indian commonly suffers from defects born rather of a depressed or suppressed vital force); a habit of mental and vital self-assertion and sometimes an aggressively vigilant independence which renders difficult any completeness of internal

surrender even to a greater Light and Knowledge, even to the divine Influence — these are frequent obstacles. But these things are not universal in Westerners, and they are on the other hand present in many Indian sadhaks, and they are, like the difficulties of the typical Indian nature, superstructural formations, not the very grain of the being. They cannot permanently stand in the way of the soul, if the soul's aspiration is strong and firm, if the spiritual aim is the chief thing in the life. They are impediments which the fire within can easily burn away if the will to get rid of them is strong, and which it will surely burn away in the end, — though less easily — even if the outer nature clings long to them and justifies them — provided that central will, that deeper impulse is behind all, real and sincere.

This conclusion of yours about the incapacity of the non-Oriental for Indian Yoga is simply born of a too despondently acute sense of your own difficulties, — you have not seen those, equally great, that have long troubled or are still troubling others. Neither to Indian nor to European can the path of Yoga be smooth and easy; their common human nature is there to see to that. To each his own difficulties seem enormous and radical and even incurable by their continuity and persistence and induce long periods of despondency and crises of despair. To have faith enough or enough psychic sight to react at once or almost at once and prevent these attacks is given hardly to two or three in a hundred. But one ought not to settle down into a fixed idea of one's own incapacity or allow it to become an obsession; for such an attitude has no true justification and unnecessarily renders the way harder. Where there is a soul that has once become awake, there is surely a capacity within that can outweigh all surface defects and can in the end conquer.

If your conclusion were true, the whole aim of this Yoga would be a vain thing; for we are not working for a race or a people or a continent or for a realisation of which only Indians or only Orientals are capable. Our aim is not, either, to found a religion or a school of philosophy or a school of Yoga, but to create a ground and a way of spiritual growth and experience which will bring down a greater Truth beyond the mind but not

inaccessible to the human soul and consciousness. All can pass who are drawn to that Truth, whether they are from India or elsewhere, from the East or from the West. All may find great difficulties in their personal or common human nature; but it is not their physical origin or their racial temperament that can be an insuperable obstacle to their deliverance.

*

I am not sure about the last matter.¹ After all India with her mentality and method has done a hundred times more in the spiritual field than Europe with her intellectual doubts and questionings. Even when a European overcomes the doubt and questioning, he does not find it as easy to go as fast and far as an Indian with the same force of personality because the stir of mind is still greater. It is only when he can get beyond that that he arrives, but for him it is not so easy.

On the other hand however your statement is correct. It [*the tendency to doubt and question*] is “natural considering the times” and the occidental mentality prevalent everywhere. It is also probably necessary that this should be faced and overcome before any supramental realisation is possible in the earth-consciousness — for it is the attitude of the physical mind to spiritual things and as it is in the physical that the resistance has to be overcome before the mind can be overpassed in the way required for this Yoga, the strongest possible representation of its difficulties was indispensable.

¹ *The correspondent suggested that in this Yoga a disciple with an occidental mentality might be “even better off” than a disciple with a traditional Indian mentality of humility and respect for the Guru. — Ed.*

Chapter Two

Qualities Needed for Sadhana

Indispensable Qualities

It goes without saying that the qualities you speak of are helpful in the approach to the spiritual path, while the defects you enumerate are each a serious stumbling-block in the way. Sincerity especially is indispensable to the spiritual endeavour, and crookedness a constant obstacle. The sattwic nature has always been held to be the most apt and ready for the spiritual life, while the rajasic nature is encumbered by its desires and passions. At the same time, spirituality is something above the dualities, and what is most needed for it is a true upward aspiration. This may come to the rajasic man as well as to the sattwic. If it does, he can rise by it above his failings and desires and passions, just as the other can rise beyond his virtues, to the Divine Purity and Light and Love. Necessarily this can only happen if he conquers his lower nature and throws it from him; for if he relapses into it, he is likely to fall from the path or at least to be, so long as the relapse lasts, held back by it from inner progress. But for all that the conversion of great sinners into great saints, of men of little or no virtue into spiritual seekers and God-lovers has frequently happened in religious and spiritual history — as in Europe St. Augustine, in India Chaitanya's Jagai and Madhai, Bilwamangal and many others. The house of the Divine is not closed to any who knock sincerely at its gates, whatever their past stumbles and errors. Human virtues and human errors are bright and dark wrappings of a divine element within which once it pierces the veil, can burn through both towards the heights of the Spirit.

Humility before the Divine is also a *sine qua non* of the spiritual life, and spiritual pride, arrogance, or vanity and self-assurance press always downward. But confidence in the Divine and a faith in one's spiritual destiny (i.e. since my heart and

soul seek for the Divine, I cannot fail one day to reach Him) are much needed in view of the difficulties of the Path. A contempt for others is out of place, especially since the Divine is in all. Evidently, the activities and aspirations of men are not trivial and worthless, for all life is a growth of the soul out of the darkness towards the Light. But our attitude is that humanity cannot grow out of its limitations by the ordinary means adopted by the human mind, politics, social reform, philanthropy, etc., — these can only be temporary or local palliatives. The only true escape is a change of consciousness, a change into a greater, wider and purer way of being, and a life and action based upon that change. It is therefore to that that the energies must be turned, once the spiritual orientation is complete. This implies no contempt, but the preference of the only effective means over those which have been found ineffective.

*

Such qualities as faith, sincerity, aspiration, devotion etc. make up the perfection indicated in our language of the flowers.¹ In ordinary language it would mean something else such as purity, love, benevolence, fidelity and a host of other virtues.

Conditions of the Yoga

I have never said that this Yoga was a safe one — no Yoga is. Each has its dangers as has every great attempt in human life. But it can be carried through if one has a central sincerity and a fidelity to the Divine. These are the two necessary conditions.

*

The first conditions of this Yoga are:

(1) A complete sincerity and surrender in the being. The divine life and the transformation of the lower human into the higher divine nature must be made the sole aim of all the life.

¹ *The Mother named the Plumeria flower "Psychological perfection" and said that its five elements were faith, sincerity, aspiration, devotion and surrender. — Ed.*

No attachments, desires or habits of the mind, heart, vital being or body should be clung to which come in the way of this one aspiration and one object of the life. One must be ready to renounce all these completely as soon as the demand comes from above and from the divine Shakti.

(2) A fundamental calm, peace and purity in the mind, vital being and all the nature.

The hours of meditation should be devoted to the formation of these two conditions in you, by aspiration and by self-observation and rejection of all that disturbs the nature or keeps it troubled, confused and impure. Aspiration if rightly done, quietly, earnestly and sincerely, brings the divine help from above to effect this object.

As to the hours devoted to work, needs, family, etc., they can be made an aid only on the following conditions.

(1) To regard all these things as not belonging to yourself, your inner being, but as things external, work to be done so long as it remains on your shoulders to the best of your ability without desire or attachment of any kind.

(2) To do all work as a sacrifice without any egoistic motive.

(3) To establish and deepen the inner calm and quiet. If that is done, all these things will be felt more and more as external and the falling off of desire and attachment will become possible.

For getting rid of passion the same condition. If you separate yourself from these movements and establish calm and peace inside, the passions may still rise on the surface, but they will be felt to be external movements and you can deal with them or call down the divine aid to get rid of them. So long as the mind does not fall quiet, it is not possible to deal finally with the vital being from which these forces rise.

*

The way to realise is through a quiet mind and a vital free from desires. To reject the desires and demands of the vital and to quiet the excessive activity of the mind, so that a true consciousness and spiritual perception and knowledge may take the place of the mind's activity, are the requisite conditions of the Yoga.

The further method is, — (1) To concentrate in the heart and aspire and (2) to call to the divine Mother to enter there and purify the mind and vital and unveil the psychic being so that her constant guidance and presence in it may be felt always and (3) to concentrate in the quiet mind and (in the head) open oneself first to the divine force and light which is always above the mind and call to it to descend into the body and the whole being — either of these or both, according to the capacity of the sadhaka.

Yoga must be done not for oneself or what one can get but for the sake of the Divine and to be united with the Divine.

If he can do any of these things (not minding how long it takes) in this spirit, then let him do Yoga; if he cannot, then there is no use in doing it.

Chapter Three

Purity

Purification of the Nature

A certain amount of purification is necessary before there can be any realisation of the Divine and that is what has been going on in you. It is after all not a very long time since the real purification began and it is never an easy work. So the impatience may be natural, but it is not exactly reasonable.

*

Purification — rejecting from one's nature all that is egoistic or of the nature of rajasic desire.

Aspiration for peace and calm and a perfect equality.

Purification and a basis of calm are the first necessary steps in the spiritual life.

*

The aspiration must be for entire purification, especially (1) purification from sex, so that no sex imaginations may enter and the sex impulse may cease, (2) purification from desires and demands, (3) purification from depression which is the result of disappointed desires. It is the most important for you. Particularly what you must aspire for is peace in all the being, complete equanimity, samata. The feeling that peace is not enough must go. Peace and purity and equanimity once established, all the rest must be the Mother's free gift, not a result of the demand from the being.

You can mix normally with people keeping as much as possible an inner quietude. In future when the purification is done and a continuous experience possible we can reconsider the matter.

*

Very often the earlier stage of the sadhana is successful, because there is an opening of the mind to first workings of the Force — afterwards the lower vital consciousness and the physical rise up and if these are not ready or inclined for the sadhana, it ceases. The sadhaka has first to purify and open them and call in the Force to work there and make all ready until he can bring the true consciousness and experience there. Yoga implies a long and difficult work and one must be ready to accept the necessity of years of preparation and purification and increasing consecration before the greater results can come.

*

By meditation alone and trying to concentrate you will never succeed. There must be an aspiration from the heart and a giving up of all yourself to Krishna.

In your nature there are many obstacles, chiefly a great activity of the outward-going mind and a thick crust of the impure lower Prakriti that covers the heart and the vital being. Quieting of the mind and purification of the nature are what you must have before you can fulfil your aim. Aspire for these two things first; ask for them constantly from above. You will not be able to achieve them by your own unaided effort.

*

As for the way out of the impasse, I know only of the quieting of the mind which makes meditation effective, purification of the heart which brings the divine touch and in time the divine presence, humility before the Divine which liberates from egoism and the pride of the mind and of the vital, the pride that imposes its own reasonings on the ways of the spirit and the pride that refuses or is unable to surrender, sustained persistence in the call within and reliance on the Grace above. Meditation, japa, prayer or aspiration from the heart can all succeed, if they are attended by these or even some of these things. But I do not know that you can be promised what you always make the condition of any inner endeavour, an immediate or almost immediate realisation or beginning of concrete realisation. I fully

believe on the other hand that one who has the call in him cannot fail to arrive, if he follows patiently the way towards the Divine.

*

I can only hope that the depression and the suggestions it brings will pass away soon. You were making very good progress before it touched you. There is no impossibility in the purification of the heart which was the thing you were trying for and when the heart is purified, other things which seemed impossible before become easy — even the inner surrender which now seems to you impracticable. I at any rate will go on trusting in your spiritual destiny until the performance of the “miracle”.

The Meaning of Purity

Purity is to accept no other influence but only the influence of the Divine.

*

It [*purity*] is more a condition than a substance. Peace helps to purity — since in peace disturbing influences cease and the essence of purity is to respond only to the Divine Influence and not to have an affinity with other movements.

*

Purity means freedom from soil or mixture. The divine Purity is that in which there is no mixture of the turbid ignorant movements of the lower nature. Ordinarily purity is used to mean (in the common language) freedom from vital passion and impulse.

*

The Divine Purity is a more wide and all-embracing experience than the psychic.

*

Purity or impurity depends upon the consciousness; in the divine

consciousness everything is pure, in the ignorance everything is subject to impurity, not the body only or part of the body, but mind and vital and all. Only the self and the psychic being remain always pure.

*

A pure mind means a mind quiet and free from thoughts of a useless or disturbing character.

*

X pretends to be pure and surrendered to the will of God. How can he be pure when his whole trouble has come from the indulgence of impure desires? He pretends to act according to God's will, but his actions are moved by three things, desire, vanity and self-will. The devil makes suggestions supported by one or another of these three motives and persuades him that it is the will of God.

Ignorance is not a state of innocence or purity; that is an old blunder. Only a consciousness full of light can be pure. For instance, when you are conscious, your mind is clear and you have the right ideas about things and people; your mind is pure of ignorance. But when the mind is clouded by some impurity, — say, anger, jealousy or pride or some unreasonable desire, — you at once become ignorant and mistake and misunderstand everything.

Again, when your heart is turned to the Mother and satisfied with her love, when you are full of peace, contentment and happiness, then there is no room for wrong feelings and desires; your heart is pure.

This is what the Mother meant by purity; to be free from false ideas, wrong feelings, desires, demands etc. is to be pure.

*

Purity in the consciousness and purity in the conduct is what is usually meant by these terms [*inner and outer purity*].

Chapter Four

Sincerity

The Meaning of Sincerity

There is one indispensable condition, sincerity.

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What is meant by “sincere”? Sincerity means to accept the Divine influence only and not that of lower forces.

*

Sincerity means to be turned wholly to the Divine and accept only the Divine impulses — it means also the true and constant will or effort to be like this.

*

Sincere is simply an adjective meaning that the will must be a true will. If you simply think “I aspire” and do things inconsistent with the aspiration, or follow your desires or open yourself to contrary influences, then it is not a sincere will.

*

Sincerity means more than mere honesty. It means that you mean what you say, feel what you profess, are earnest in your will. As the sadhak aspires to be an instrument of the Divine and one with the Divine, sincerity in him means that he is really in earnest in his aspiration and refuses all other will or impulse except the Divine’s.

*

[*Sincerity*:] To allow no part of the being to contradict the highest aspiration towards the Divine.

*

All sincere aspiration has its effect; if you are sincere, you will grow into the divine life.

To be entirely sincere means to desire the divine Truth only, to surrender yourself more and more to the Divine Mother, to reject all personal demand and desire other than this one aspiration, to offer every action in life to the Divine and do it as the work given without bringing in the ego. This is the basis of the divine life.

One cannot become altogether this at once, but if one aspires at all times to it and calls in always the aid of the Divine Shakti with a true heart and straightforward will, one grows more and more into this consciousness.

Sincerity in Sadhana

Men are always mixed and there are qualities and defects mingled together almost inextricably in their nature. What a man wants to be or wants others to see in him or what he is sometimes on one side of his nature or in some relations can be very different from what he is in the actual fact or in other relations or on another side of his nature. To be absolutely sincere, straightforward, open, is not an easy achievement for human nature. It is only by spiritual endeavour that one can realise it — and to do it needs a severity of introspective self-vision, an unsparing scrutiny of self-observation of which many sadhaks or Yogins even are not capable and it is only by an illumining Grace that reveals the sadhak to himself and transforms what is deficient in him that it can be done. And even then only if he himself consents and lends himself wholly to the divine working.

*

It is quite natural that there should be much mixture in the attitude till all is clear — the ordinary nature clings to the action and the transformation in its completeness cannot be sudden. What is necessary is that the basic consciousness should become firmly established in the Divine, then the mixture in the rest can

be seen and steadily weeded out. To have this outwardly as well as inwardly is a great progress.

*

It is true that a central sincerity is not enough except as a beginning and a base; the sincerity must spread as you describe through the whole nature. But still unless there is a double nature (without a central harmonising consciousness) the basis is usually sufficient for that to happen.

*

I do not think there is any reason for anxiety about your sadhana. We feel always a great depth and sincerity of aspiration in you which keeps you in constant and close relation with us, and where there is this depth and sincerity and this closeness the progressive opening of the being is assured; for the openness already exists.

*

You speak of insincerity in your nature. If insincerity means the unwillingness of some part of the being to live according to the highest light one has or to equate the outer with the inner man, then this part is always insincere in all. The only way is to lay stress on the inner being and develop in it the psychic and spiritual consciousness till that comes down in it which pushes out the darkness from the outer man also.

*

It is not sincerity to express only what the adverse forces suggest or what you feel when you are in a bad condition full of obscurity and a wrong outlook. When you are in the Truth, you feel quite the opposite and it is not insincerity to cling to that and recall it. It is only by bringing it back that the Truth can grow in you.

The trouble in your chest comes only from a vital resistance and it continues because you identify yourself with that resistance. It is only by quietude and opening to the Mother that these things can disappear. There is no other way to progress.

If you have not got quietude, you can always aspire first and a sincere aspiration will bring it back.

*

All need vital sincerity, it is the most difficult to have and the most needful.

*

To perceive one's own weaknesses is one result of sincerity.

*

One cannot be perfect in discrimination at once or in rejection either. The one indispensable thing is to go on trying sincerely till there comes the full success. So long as there is complete sincerity, the Divine Grace will be there and assist at every moment on the way.

*

If he [*the sadhak*] is sincere, there is bound to be devotion. Sincerity in Yoga means to respond to the Divine alone and if he has no devotion he cannot do it.

*

It is difficult for the ordinary Christian to be of a piece, because the teachings of Christ are on quite another plane from the consciousness of the intellectual and vital man trained by the education and society of Europe — the latter, even as a minister or priest, has never been called upon to practise what he preached in entire earnest. But it is difficult for the human nature anywhere to think, feel and act from one centre of true faith, belief or vision. The average Hindu considers the spiritual life the highest, reveres the Sannyasi, is moved by the Bhakta; but if one of the family circle leaves the world for spiritual life, what tears, arguments, remonstrances, lamentations! It is almost worse than if he had died a natural death. It is not conscious mental insincerity — they will argue like Pandits and go to Shastra to prove you in the wrong; it is unconsciousness, a vital insincerity which

they are not aware of and which uses the reasoning mind as an accomplice.

That is why we insist so much on sincerity in the Yoga — and that means to have all the being consciously turned towards the one Truth, the one Divine. But that for human nature is one of the most difficult of tasks, much more difficult than a rigid asceticism or a fervent piety. Religion itself does not give this complete harmonised sincerity — it is only the psychic being and the one-souled spiritual aspiration that can give it.

Earnestness and Straightforwardness

In the major part of your being you are very much in earnest. But of course there are always parts or rather parts of parts that are not equally ready to change. But that is not hypocrisy. It is so with everybody, otherwise there would be no difficulty in the transformation.

*

Straightforwardness means simply to be honest with oneself and with the Divine and not to be crooked in one's ways.

Self-justification is unwillingness to recognise a mistake and an attempt to prove oneself right even against the censure of the Mother.

Chapter Five

Aspiration

The Value of Aspiration

What you say is quite true. A simple, straight and sincere call and aspiration from the heart is the one important thing and more essential and effective than capacities. Also to get the consciousness to turn inwards, not remain outward-going is of great importance — to arrive at the inner call, the inner experience, the inner Presence.

The help you ask will be with you. Let the aspiration grow and open the inner consciousness altogether.

*

One has only to aspire sincerely and keep oneself as open as possible to the Mother's Force. Then whatever difficulties come, they will be overcome — it may take some time, but the result is sure.

*

One has to suppose that [*the Mother's*] force everywhere around and call it in — if one feels it, so much the better, but even otherwise if there is faith and power in the call, it can flow in.

*

One must rely on the Divine and yet do some enabling sadhana — the Divine gives the fruits, not by the measure of the sadhana but by the measure of the soul and its aspiration. Also worrying does no good — “I shall be this, I shall be that, what shall I be?” Say “I am ready to be not what I want, but what the Divine wants me to be” — all the rest should go on that base.

*

I mean by the measure of the soul's sincerity a yearning after the

Divine and its aspiration towards the higher life.

*

But why allow *anything* to come in the way between you and the Divine, any idea, any incident; when you are in full aspiration and joy, let nothing count, nothing be of any importance except the Divine and your aspiration. If one wants the Divine quickly, absolutely, entirely, that must be the spirit of approach, absolute, all-engrossing, making that the one point with which nothing else must interfere.

What value have mental ideas about the Divine, ideas about what he should be, how he should act, how he should not act — they can only come in the way. Only the Divine Himself matters. When your consciousness embraces the Divine, then you can know what the Divine is, not before. Krishna is Krishna, one does not care what he did or did not do; only to see Him, meet Him, feel the Light, the Presence, the Love, the Ananda is what matters. So it is always for the spiritual aspiration — it is the law of the spiritual life.

Don't waste time any longer in these ideas of the mind or in any starts of the vital — blow these clouds away. Keep fixed on the one thing indispensable.

The Meaning of Aspiration

There is no deep meaning [*of aspiration*] — the meaning is plain. It is the call of the being for higher things — for the Divine, for all that belongs to the higher or Divine Consciousness.

*

It [*aspiration*] is the call in the being for the Divine or for the higher things that belong to the Divine Consciousness. (To “aspire” always means to call for higher things.)

*

Aspiration is a turning upward of the inner being with a call, yearning, prayer for the Divine, for the Truth, for the

Consciousness, Peace, Ananda, Knowledge, descent of Divine Force or whatever else is the aim of one's endeavour.

*

Aspiration is to call the forces. When the forces have answered, there is a natural state of quiet receptivity concentrated but spontaneous.

*

Aspiration is a call to the Divine, — will is the pressure of a conscious force on Nature.

*

Aspiration is a call in the being, it is not opening.

The Object of Aspiration

The aspiration should be for the full descent of the Truth and the victory over falsehood in the world.

*

Aspire for the constant contact and the light. It is in the Light that the being will get organised in the Truth.

*

Aspire for your will to be one with the Divine will, concentrate in the heart and be plastic to whatever experience comes, neither forcing nor resisting any spiritual experience.

*

The aspiration for the supramental would be premature. What you have to aspire for is for the psychic change and the spiritual change of the whole being — which is the necessary condition before one can even think of the supramental.

*

To want to be a superman is a mistake, it only swells the ego.

One can aspire for the Divine to bring about the supramental transformation, but that also should not be done till the being has become psychic and spiritualised by the descent of the Mother's peace, force, light and purity.

No Need of Words in Aspiration

There is no need of words in aspiration. It can be expressed or unexpressed in words.

*

The aspiration need not be in the form of thought — it can be a feeling within that remains even when the mind is attending to the work.

The Necessity of Aspiration

It depends on the stage which one has reached. Personal aspiration is necessary until there is the condition in which all comes automatically and only a certain knowledge and assent is necessary for the development.

*

Even if there is no rising up, the aspiration connects you with the higher consciousness and helps or prepares to bring down something from it.

*

It [*the higher consciousness*] may not come exactly according to the aspiration, but the aspiration is not ineffective. It keeps the consciousness open, prevents an inert state of acquiescence in all that comes and exercises a sort of pull on the sources of the higher consciousness.

*

Aspiration during the period of experience is not so necessary.

It is in the intervals that it should be there.

*

Why do you write “If I get” [*aspiration*] — one can always aspire. It is your mistake to think that everything must come of itself and nothing is within your own power to do. This kind of belief in the necessity of passivity to all movements should be thrown aside. Will, aspiration, surrender are things that you must do yourself — although even in doing them you must call in the Divine Power to help your will, aspiration and surrender and make them effective.

*

Why “getting” aspiration? Aspiration is an act of the will and one can always aspire.

*

Activity in aspiration, tapasya, rejection of the wrong forces, passivity to the true working, the working of the Mother’s force are the right things in sadhana.

*

One has to aspire to the Divine and surrender and leave it to the Divine to do what is true and right with the Adhar once it is perfected.

Intensity of Aspiration and Vital Impatience

Intense aspiration is always good, but let there also be calm and peace and joy in the mind and heart, and a confidence that all will be done in its due time.

*

There can be an intense but quiet aspiration which does not disturb the harmony of the inner being.

*

Yes — that is the way. The intensity of the aspiration brings

the intensity of the experience and by repeated intensity of the experience the change.

*

The impatience and restless inquietude come from the vital which brings that even into the aspiration. The aspiration must be intense, calm and strong (that is the nature of the true vital also) and not restless and impatient, — then alone it can be stable.

*

It is the psychic that gives the true aspiration — if the vital is purified and subjected to the psychic, then the vital gives intensity — but if it is unpurified it brings in a rajasic intensity with impatience and reactions of depression and disappointment. As for the calm and equality needed, it must come down from above through the mind.

*

That [*fiery aspiration*] is all right, that is the psychic aspiration, the psychic fire. Where the vital comes in is in the impatience for result and dissatisfaction if the result is not immediate. That must cease.

Aspiration and Desire

One should be satisfied with what one gets and still aspire quietly, without struggle, for more — till all has come. No desire, no struggle — aspiration, faith, openness — and the grace.

*

There is no doubt the mixture of desire in what you do, even in your endeavour of sadhana, that is the difficulty. The desire brings a movement of impatient effort and a reaction of disappointment and revolt when difficulty is felt and the immediate result is not there and other confusing and disturbing feelings. Aspiration should be not a form of desire, but the feeling of an

inner soul's need, and a quiet settled will to turn towards the Divine and seek the Divine. It is certainly not easy to get rid of this mixture of desire entirely — not easy for anyone; but when one has the will to do it, this also can be effected by the help of the sustaining Force.

*

If there are good desires, bad desires will come also. There is a place for will and aspiration, not for desire.

If there is desire there will be attachment, demand, craving, loss of equanimity, sorrow at not getting, all that is unyogic.

Aspiration and Pulling

Pulling comes usually from a desire to get things for oneself — in aspiration there is a self-giving for the higher consciousness to descend and take possession — the more intense the call, the greater the self-giving.

*

It is certainly a mistake to bring down the light by force — to pull it down. The supramental cannot be taken by storm. When the time is ready it will open of itself — but first there is a great deal to be done and that must be done patiently and without haste.

Lack of Aspiration

Naturally the more one-pointed the aspiration the swifter the progress. The difficulty comes when either the vital with its desires or the physical with its past habitual movements comes in — as they do with almost everyone. It is then that the dryness and difficulty of spontaneous aspiration come. This dryness is a well-known obstacle in all sadhana. But one has to persist and not be discouraged. If one keeps the will fixed even in these barren periods, they pass and after their passage a greater force of aspiration and experience becomes possible.

*

You are finding it still difficult to bear the interval periods when all is quiet and nothing being done on the surface. But such interval periods come to all and cannot be avoided. You must not cherish the suggestion that it is because of your want of aspiration or any other unfitness that it is so and, if you had the constant ardent aspiration, then there would be no such periods and there would be an uninterrupted stream of experiences. It is not so. Even if the aspiration were there, the interval periods would come. If even in them one can aspire, so much the better — but the main thing is to meet them with quietude and not become restless, depressed or despondent. A constant fire can be there only when a certain stage has been reached, that is when one is always inside consciously living in the psychic being, but for that all this preparation of the mind, vital, physical is necessary. For this fire belongs to the psychic and one cannot command it always merely by the mind's effort. The psychic has to be fully liberated and that is what the Force is working to make fully possible.

*

No doubt the true and strong aspiration is needed, but it is not a fact that the true thing is not there in you. If it had not been, the Force could not have worked in you. But this true thing was seated in the psychic and in the heart and whenever these were active in the meditation it showed itself. But for the sake of completeness the working had to come down into the physical consciousness and establish the quietude and the openness there. The physical consciousness is always in everybody in its own nature a little inert and in it a constant strong aspiration is not natural, it has to be created. But first there must be the opening, a purification, a fixed quietude, otherwise the physical vital will turn the strong aspiration into over-eagerness and impatience or rather it will try to give it that turn. Do not therefore be troubled if the state of the nature seems to you to be too neutral and quiet, not enough aspiration and movement in it. This is a passage necessary for the progress and the rest will come.

Aspiration and Conversion

Those who come here have an aspiration and a possibility — something in their psychic being pushes and if they follow it, they will arrive; but that is not conversion. Conversion is a definite turning of the being away from lower things towards the Divine.

*

Aspiration can lead hereafter to conversion; but aspiration is not conversion.

*

Conversion is a spontaneous movement of the consciousness, a turning of it away from external things towards the Divine. It comes usually as the result of a touch from within and above. Self-consecration may help to open one to the touch or the touch may come of itself. But conversion may also come as the culmination of a long process of aspiration and tapasya. There is no fixed rule in these things.

If the psychic being comes to the front, then conversion becomes easy or may come instantaneously or the conversion may bring the psychic being to the front. Here again there is no rule.

Chapter Six

Rejection

Rejection of the Lower Impulses

It is no part of the sadhana to accept the uglinesses of the lower nature on the ground that they exist — if that is what is meant by realism. Our object is not to accept or enjoy these things but to get rid of them and create a life of spiritual beauty and perfection. So long as we accept these things, that cannot be done. To observe that these things are there and reject them, refusing to allow them to touch you, is one thing; to accept and acquiesce in them is quite another.

*

Who is able to reject the lower nature fully? All one can do is to aspire and reject the lower impulses and call in the Divine to do the rest.

*

There are no right positive vibrations of devious impulses — these are wrong vibrations of the mind or vital. The right vibrations I speak of are those that come from the psychic or from the spiritual above or take place in the mind or vital under the influence of the psychic or spiritual. If one aspires sincerely and rejects what has to be rejected, as far as one can, then the psychic and spiritual influences will more and more work, bring more and more true discrimination, support, stimulate and create the right vibrations, detect, discourage and eliminate the wrong ones. That is the method the Mother and I advise to all.

*

Rejection is a principle element in this sadhana. But what I say is that one can reject best by bringing in the positive psychic

and spiritual forces through the pursuit of positive things like brahmacharya and the rest.

*

I do not know what you mean by dissolution [*of desires*]. The principle of the Yoga is rejection — throwing out of the being. It is true that rejected from the mind it often goes to the vital, rejected by the vital, to the physical, rejected by the physical to the subconscious. Rejected from the subconscious also, it can still linger in the environmental consciousness — but there it has no longer any possession of the being and can be thrown away altogether.

*

That is a known fact that everything comes from outside, from universal Nature. But the individual is not bound to accept everything that comes; he can accept and he can reject. The rejection may not succeed at once, if there is a strong habit of past acceptance; but if it is steadily persisted in, the rejection will succeed in the end.

What you should do, is always to reject the lower experiences and concentrate on a fixed and quiet aspiration towards the one thing needed, the Light, the Calm, the Peace, the Devotion that you felt for two or three days. It is because you get interested in the lower vital experiences and in observing and thinking about them that they take hold, and then comes the absence of the Contact and the confusion. You have surely had enough of this kind of experience already and should make up your mind to steadily reject it when it comes.

*

The effort should be to reject the restlessness and its suggestions altogether. These things come to everybody in the early stages of the sadhana and are sometimes very persistent, even later on they continue — but the sadhak rejects them and regards them as no part of his true consciousness or worthy to determine his action and life, but as untrue suggestions which he has to overcome. If

that is always done, they begin after a time to lose their force of invasion and become superficial things; finally they disappear.

*

The peace and the equality are there above you, you have to call them down into the mind and the vital and the body. And whenever something disturbs you have to reject the thing that disturbs and the disturbance.

*

What do you mean by active means [*to overcome inertia*]? The power to refuse, to reject is always there in the being and to go on rejecting till the rejection is effective. Nothing can obstruct a quiet aspiration except one's own acquiescence in the inertia.

*

The practice of rejection prevails in the end; but with personal effort only, it may take a long time. If you can feel the Divine Power working in you, then it should become easier.

There should be nothing inert or tamasic in the self-giving to the guidance and it should not be made by any part of the vital into a plea for not rejecting the suggestions of lower impulse and desire.

Chapter Seven

Surrender

The Meaning of Surrender

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

*

Surrender is giving oneself to the Divine — to give everything one is or has to the Divine and regard nothing as one's own, to obey only the Divine will and no other, to live for the Divine and not for the ego.

*

Self-surrender is to give up yourself and all that is yours, mind and everything else to the Divine, so that the Divine Force may take everything and change it.

*

Surrender means to consecrate everything in oneself to the Divine, to offer all one is and has, not to insist on one's ideas, desires, habits etc., but to allow the divine Truth to replace them by its knowledge, will and action everywhere.

*

Surrender means to be entirely in the Mother's hands and not to resist in any way by egoism or otherwise her Light, Knowledge, Will, the working of her Force etc.

*

The essence of surrender is not to ask the Mother before doing anything — but to accept whole-heartedly the influence and the

guidance, when the joy and peace come down to accept them without question or cavil and let them grow, when the Force is felt at work to let it work without opposition, when the Knowledge is given to receive and follow it, when the Will is revealed to make oneself its instrument.

*

To believe that one is being constantly guided by the Divine in the heart is not necessarily surrender. It is necessary to be detached, to see what are the divine forces and undivine and to reject the undivine forces. It is only by this discrimination that one can make a true surrender to the Divine in the heart.

*

It [*true surrender*] begins when there is the true self-offering.

A Free Surrender

The Divine can lead, he does not drive. There is an internal freedom permitted to every mental being called man to assent or not to assent to the Divine leading — how else can any real spiritual evolution be done?

*

All the play in this world is based on a certain relative free will in the individual being. Even in the sadhana it remains and his consent is necessary at each step — even though it is by surrender to the Divine that he escapes from ignorance and separateness and ego, it must be at every step a free surrender.

*

Each person has his own freedom of choice up to a certain point — unless he makes the full surrender — and as he uses the freedom, has to take the spiritual or other consequences. The help can only be offered, not imposed. Silence, absence of frank confession, means a desire in the vital to go its own way. When there is no longer concealment, when there is the physical

self-opening to the Divine, then the Divine can intervene.

The Will to Surrender

All can be done by the Divine, the heart and nature purified, the inner consciousness awakened, the veils removed, if one gives oneself to the Divine with trust and confidence — and even if one cannot do so fully at once, yet the more one does so, the more the inner help and guidance comes and the contact and the experience of the Divine grows within. If the questioning mind becomes less active and humility and the will to surrender grow in you, this ought to be perfectly possible. No other strength and tapasya are then needed, but this alone.

*

Surrender cannot be made at once — it is not so easy; for there is much in the being that resists. But one must have the will to surrender. It is the same with becoming an instrument. If one has the will and calls on the Mother and opens oneself as much as possible to her, then gradually these things develop in the nature.

*

If the difficulties that arise are in the nature itself, it is inevitable that they should rise and manifest themselves. Surrender is not easy, it is resisted by a large part of the nature. If the mind forms the will to surrender, all these inner obstacles are bound to show themselves; the sadhak has then to observe them and detach himself from them, reject them from his nature and overcome. This may take a very long time but it has to be done.

Outer obstacles cannot prevent the inner surrender unless they are supported by a resistance in the nature itself.

The Inner Surrender

It was never my intention to suggest that there was only a faint hope of your sadhana depending on the *if* of surrender. I have always said the contrary, that since your soul wants the Divine

truly, you are sure to reach him; only if you give up — and that is why I strongly object to these despondencies apart from the suffering they inflict, because they try to drive you to that — can it be frustrated or rather postponed to a far future.

What I wrote was in answer to your statement about your former idea of the Yoga that if one wanted the Divine, the Divine himself would take up the purifying of the heart and develop the sadhana and give the necessary experiences. I meant to say that it can and does happen in that way if one has trust and confidence in the Divine and the will to surrender. For such a taking up involves one's putting oneself in the hands of the Divine rather than trusting to one's own efforts alone and it implies one's putting one's trust and confidence in the Divine and a progressive self-giving. It is in fact the principle of sadhana that I myself followed and it is the central part of the Yoga as I envisage it. It is, I suppose, what Ramakrishna meant by the method of the baby cat in his image. But all cannot follow that at once; it takes time for them to arrive at it — it grows most when the mind and vital fall quiet.

What I meant by surrender was this inner surrender of the mind and vital. There is of course the outer surrender also, the giving up of all that is found to conflict with the spirit or need of the sadhana, the offering, the obedience to the guidance of the Divine, whether directly, if one has reached that stage, or through the psychic or to the guidance of the Guru. I may say that *prāyopaveśana* does not seem to me to have anything to do with surrender; it is a form of tapasya of a very austere and in my opinion very excessive kind, often dangerous. But what I was speaking of in my letter was the inner surrender.

The core of this inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. One takes the attitude, "I want the Divine and nothing else." I do not know why you should think that you can be asked to give up that — if there is not that, then the Yoga cannot be done. "I want to give myself entirely to him and since my soul wants that, it cannot be but that I shall meet him and realise him. I ask nothing but that and his action in me to bring me to him, his action secret or open, veiled or manifest. I do not insist

on my own time and way; let him do all in his own time and way, I shall believe in him, accept his will, aspire steadily for his light and presence and joy, go through all difficulties and delays relying on him and never giving up. Let my mind be quiet and turn to him and let him open it to his light; let my vital be quiet and turn to him alone and let him open it to his calm and joy. All for him and myself for him. Whatever happens, I will keep to this aspiration and self-giving and go on in perfect reliance that it will be done." That is the attitude into which one must grow; for, certainly, it cannot be made perfect at once; mental and vital movements come across; but if one keeps the will to it, it will grow in the being. The rest is a matter of obedience to the guidance when it makes itself manifest — not allowing one's mental or vital movements to interfere.

It was not my intention to say that this way is the only way and sadhana cannot be done otherwise — there are so many others by which one can approach the Divine. But this is the only one I know by which the taking up of the sadhana by the Divine becomes a sensible fact before the preparation of the nature is done. In other methods the Divine action and help may be felt from time to time, but it remains mostly behind the veil till all is ready. In some sadhanas the Divine action is not recognised; all must be done by tapasya. In most there is a mixing of the two, the tapasya finally calling the direct help and intervention. The idea and experience of the Divine doing all belongs to the Yogas based on surrender.

But whatever way is followed, the one thing to be done is to be faithful and go to the end. You have so often taken that decision — stand by it, do not let the storms of the vital quench the aspiration of your soul.

*

It depends on the sadhak [*whether the surrender should begin from within*]. Some may find it necessary to surrender the external activities first so as to bring the inner surrender.

The Central Surrender

I have said that if one has the principle of surrender and union in the mind and heart there is no difficulty in extending it to the obscurer parts of the physical and the subconscious. As you have this central surrender and union, you can easily complete it everywhere. A quiet aspiration for complete consciousness is all that is needed. Then the material and subconscious will become penetrated by the light like the rest and there will come in a quietude, wideness, harmony free from all reactions that will be the basis of the final change.

*

When the psychic being and the heart and the thinking mind have surrendered, the rest is a matter of time and process — and there is no reason for disturbance. The central and effective surrender has been made.

Complete or Absolute Surrender

If you are surrendered only in the higher consciousness, with no peace or purity in the lower, certainly that is not enough and you have to aspire for the peace and purity everywhere.

*

It [*surrender*] cannot be absolutely complete in the beginning, but it can be true — if the central will is sincere and there is the faith and the Bhakti. There may be contrary movements, but these will be unable to stand for long and the imperfection of the surrender in the lower part will not seriously interfere with the power and pervasiveness of the inner attitude.

*

A complete surrender is not possible in so short a time, — for a complete surrender means to cut the knot of the ego in each part of the being and offer it, free and whole, to the Divine. The mind, the vital, the physical consciousness (and even each

part of these in all its movements) have one after the other to surrender separately, to give up their own way and to accept the way of the Divine. But what one can do is to make from the beginning a central resolve and self-dedication and to implement it in whatever way one finds open, at each step, taking advantage of each occasion that offers itself to make the self-giving complete. A surrender in one direction makes others easier, more inevitable; but it does not of itself cut or loosen the other knots, and especially those which are very intimately bound up with the present personality and its most cherished formations may often present great difficulties, even after the central will has been fixed and the first seals put on its resolve in practice.

*

You can get the full surrender only by degrees. Meanwhile you have to go on the straight path not regarding the suggestions that are put into you through the vital or physical parts.

*

It is on that consciousness of complete surrender that the psychic foundation of sadhana can be made. If once it fixes itself, then, whatever difficulties remain to be overcome, the course of the sadhana becomes perfectly easy, sunlit, natural like the opening of a flower. The feeling you have is an indication of what can and must develop in you.

*

It depends on what is meant by absolute surrender — the experience of it in some part of the being or the fact of it in all parts of the being. The former may easily come at any time; it is the latter that takes time to complete.

*

The absolute surrender must be not only an experience in meditation, but a fact governing all the life, all the thoughts, feelings, actions. Till then the use of one's own will and effort is necessary, but an effort in which also there is the spirit of surrender, calling

in the Force to support the will and effort and undisturbed by success or failure. When the Force takes up the sadhana, then indeed effort may cease, but still there will be the necessity of the constant assent of the being and a vigilance so that one may not admit a false Force at any point.

*

It is never too early to make the complete surrender. Some things may need to wait, but not that.

The Surrender of the Vital

The surrender of the vital is always difficult, because of the unwillingness of the forces of the universal vital Ignorance. But that does not mean a fundamental incapacity.

*

The ordinary vital is never willing to surrender. The true inmost vital is different — surrender to the Divine is as necessary to it as to the psychic.

*

If there is any identification with the vital demands or outcries, that necessarily diminishes the surrender for the time.

*

What is this surrender to which there is no response? Surrender and demands don't go together. Evidently the vital is not afraid of thinking illogical and self-contradictory nonsense. So long as the vital keeps up its demand, these things will come.

*

It was from your description of the reaction that I said there was a vital demand. In the pure psychic or spiritual self-giving there are no reactions of this kind, no despondency or despair, no saying, "What have I gained by seeking the Divine?", no anger, revolt, abhiman, wish to go away — such as you describe

here — but an absolute confidence and a persistence in clinging to the Divine under all conditions. That is what I wanted you to have; it is the only basis in which one is free from troubles and reactions and goes steadily forward.

*

Not to impose one's mind and vital will on the Divine but to receive the Divine's will and follow it, is the true attitude of sadhana. Not to say, "This is my right, want, claim, need, requirement, why do I not get it?" but to give oneself, to surrender and to receive with joy whatever the Divine gives, not grieving or revolting, is the better way. Then what you receive will be the right thing for you.

*

The Divine is not bound to do that [*supply all one's real needs*], He can give or not give; whether He gives or does not give makes no difference to the one who is surrendered to Him. Otherwise, there is an *arrière-pensée* in the surrender which is not then complete.

*

Most of the sadhaks have similar thoughts [*of hostility and ingratitude*] — or had them at one time or another. They rise from the vital ego which either does not want the Divine or wants It for its own purpose and not for the Divine's purpose. It gets furious when it is pressed to change or when its desires are not satisfied — that is at the root of all these things. That is why we insist on surrender in this Yoga — because it is only by the surrender (especially of the vital ego) that these things can go — to accept the Divine for the Divine's sake and for no other motive and in the Divine's way and not in one's own way or on one's own conditions.

*

Difficult? It is the first principle of our sadhana that surrender is the means of fulfilment and so long as ego or vital demand

and desire are cherished, complete surrender is impossible — the self-giving is incomplete. We have never concealed that. It may be difficult and it is; but it is the very principle of the sadhana. Because it is difficult it has to be done steadily and patiently till the work is complete.

*

Your mind and psychic being are concentrated on the spiritual aim and open to the Divine — that is why the Influence comes down into the head and as far as the heart. But the vital being and nature and the physical consciousness are under the influence of the lower nature. As long as the vital and physical being are not surrendered or do not on their own account call for the higher life, this struggle is likely to continue.

Surrender everything, reject all other desires or interests, call on the divine Shakti to open the vital nature and bring down calm, peace, light, Ananda into all the centres. Aspire, await with faith and patience the result. All depends on a complete sincerity and an integral consecration and aspiration.

The world will trouble you so long as any part of you belongs to the world. It is only if you belong entirely to the Divine that you can become free.

Surrender and the Psychic

For surrender it is necessary not to insist on the mind's opinions, ideas and preferences, the vital's desires and impulses, the physical's habitual actions, the life of the ego — all such insistence is contrary to surrender. All egoism and self-will has to be abandoned and one must seek to be governed only by the Divine Shakti. No complete surrender is possible without the psychic opening.

*

It is impossible to become like a child giving oneself entirely until the psychic is in control and stronger than the vital.

*

It is the psychic coming forward that brings the force of surrender.

*

The power of experience is not gone — but what is most important now is to develop the psychic condition of surrender, devotion, love and cheerful confidence in the Mother, an unshaken faith and a constant inner closeness, and also to bring down from above the peace, wideness, purity etc. of the higher Self which is that of the Mother's consciousness. It is these things that are the basis of the siddhi in this Yoga — other experiences are only a help, not the basis.

*

It is the psychic surrender in the physical that you have begun to experience.

All the parts are essentially offered, but the surrender has to be made complete by the growth of the psychic self-offering in all of them and in all their movements separately and together.

To be enjoyed by the Divine is to be entirely surrendered so that one feels the Divine Presence, Power, Light, Ananda possessing the whole being rather than oneself possessing these things for one's own satisfaction. It is a much greater ecstasy to be thus surrendered and possessed by the Divine than oneself to be the possessor. At the same time by this surrender there comes also a calm and happy mastery of self and nature.

*

No surrender to the psychic being is demanded, the surrender is to the Divine. One approaches the Divine through faith; concrete experience comes as a result of sadhana. One cannot demand a direct experience without doing anything to prepare the consciousness for it. If one feels the call, one follows it — if there is no call, then there is no need to seek the Divine. Faith is sufficient to start with — the idea that one must first understand and realise before one can seek is a mental error and if it were true would make all sadhana impossible — realisation can come

only as a result of sadhana, not as its preliminary.

*

There is no need of all this complication. If the psychic manifests, it will not ask you to surrender to it, but to surrender to the Mother.

*

The surrender must be to the Mother — not even to the Force, but to the Mother herself.

Surrender and Bhakti

Surrender and love-bhakti are not contrary things — they go together. It is true that at first surrender can be made through knowledge by the mind, but it implies a mental bhakti and, as soon as the surrender reaches the heart, the bhakti manifests as a feeling and with the feeling of bhakti love comes.

*

Self-surrender at first comes through love and bhakti, more than through Atmajnana. But it is true that with Atmajnana the complete surrender becomes more possible.

Surrender and the Brahmic Condition

There can be [*devotion and surrender on the higher spiritual planes*], but it is not inevitable as in the psychic. In the higher mind one may be too conscious of identity with the “Brahman” to have devotion or surrender.

*

The Brahmic condition brings a negative peace of shanti and mukti in the soul. Self-giving brings a positive freedom which can become also a dynamic force of action in the nature.

*

One can have the Brahmic condition without self-giving, because it is the impersonal Brahman to which one turns. Renunciation of desires and of all identification with Nature is its condition. One can have self-giving of the nature to the Divine as well as of the soul and reach by it the Brahmic condition which is not only negative but positive, a release of the nature itself and not only a release from the nature.

Surrender and Transformation

If there is no surrender, there can be no transformation of the whole being.

*

A surrender by any means is good, but obviously the impersonal is not enough — for surrender to that may be limited in result to the inner experience without any transformation of the outer nature.

Passive or Tamasic Surrender

Active surrender is when you associate your will with the Divine Will, reject what is not the Divine, assent to what is the Divine. Passive surrender is when everything is left entirely to the Divine — that few can really do, because in practice it turns out that you surrender to the lower nature under pretext of surrendering to the Divine.

*

I wanted to stress two things, that is why I have written so much about them.

(1) There must be no tamasic (inert, passive) surrender to the Mother — for that will bring as its reaction a passive inert helplessness before the lower or hostile forces or suggestions, an unresisting or helplessly resisting acquiescence or sufferance of these inroads. A passive condition can bring much peace, quietude, joy even, but it disperses the being instead of concentrating it in wideness and the will becomes atrophied. Surrender

must be luminous, active, a willed offering to the Mother and reception of her Force and support to its workings, at the same time a strong vigilant will to reject all that is not hers. Too many sadhaks cry before the attacks of their lower nature, “I am helpless, I cannot react, it comes and makes me do what it wants.” This is a wrong passivity.

(2) One must not get into the habit of a state in which one is always in a struggle with suggestions and forces. People very easily fall into this and make it a habit—the vital part takes a sort of glowing satisfaction in crying out, “I am attacked, overborne, suffering, miserable! How tragic is my fate! Why do you not help, O Divine? There is no help, nor divine Grace? I am left to my misery and downfall etc. etc. etc.” I do not want one more sadhak to fall into this condition—that is why I am calling Halt! before you get entangled in this kind of habit of constant struggle. It is what these forces want—to make you feel helpless, defeated, overborne. You must not allow it.

*

You are always expecting the Mother to do it [*remove vital dissatisfaction and revolt*]—and here again the laziness and tamas come in—it is the spirit of tamasic surrender. If the Mother puts you back into a good condition, your vital pulls you down again. How is that to stop so long as you say Yes to the vital and accept its discouragement and restlessness and anguish and the rest of it as your own? Detachment is absolutely necessary.

*

Talk of surrender or a mere idea or tepid wish for integral consecration will not do; there must be the push for a radical and total change.

It is not by taking a mere mental attitude that this can be done or even by any number of inner experiences which leave the outer man as he was. It is this outer man who has to open, to surrender and to change. His every least movement, habit, action has to be surrendered, seen, held up and exposed to the divine Light, offered to the divine Force for its old forms and

motives to be destroyed and the divine Truth and the action of the transforming consciousness of the Divine Mother to take their place.

*

It [*the idea that the sadhana is done by the Divine rather than by oneself*] is a truth but a truth that does not become effective for the consciousness until or in proportion as it is realised. The people who stagnate because of it are those who accept the idea but do not realise — so they have neither the force of tapasya nor that of the Divine Grace. On the other hand those who can realise it feel even behind their tapasya and in it the action of the Divine Force.

Surrender and Tapasya

Yoga is an endeavour, a tapasya — it can cease to be so only when one surrenders sincerely to a higher Action and keeps the surrender and makes it complete. It is not a fantasia, devoid of all reason and coherence or a mere miracle. It has its laws and conditions and I do not see how you can demand of the Divine to do everything by a violent miracle.

*

When the will and energy are concentrated and used to control the mind, vital and physical and change them or to bring down the higher consciousness or for any other Yogic purpose or high purpose, that is called Tapasya.

*

Tapasya has predominated in your sadhana, for you have a fervour and active energy which predisposes you to that. No way is entirely easy, and in that of surrender the difficulty is to make a true and complete surrender. Once it is made, it certainly makes things easier — not that things are all done in no time or that there are no difficulties, but there is an assurance, a support, an absence of tension which gives the consciousness rest as well

as strength and freedom from the worst forms of resistance.

*

Yes, of course you are right. The process of surrender is itself a Tapasya. Not only so, but in fact a double process of Tapasya and increasing surrender persists for a long time even when the surrender has fairly well begun. But a time comes when one feels the Presence and the Force constantly and more and more feels that that is doing everything — so that the worst difficulties cannot disturb this sense and personal effort is no longer necessary, hardly even possible. That is the sign of the full surrender of the nature into the hands of the Divine. There are some who take this position in faith even before there is this experience and if the Bhakti and the faith are strong it carries them through till the experience is there. But all cannot take this position from the beginning — and for some it would be dangerous since they might put themselves into the hand of a wrong Force thinking it to be the Divine. For most it is necessary to grow through Tapasya into surrender.

*

Yes, if there is the sense of the Divine Will behind all the Tapasya and receiving it and bestowing the fruit — it is at least a first form of surrender.

Surrender and Personal Effort

There are always two ways of doing the Yoga — one by the action of a vigilant mind and vital seeing, observing, thinking and deciding what is or is not to be done. Of course it acts with the Divine Force behind it, drawing or calling in that Force — for otherwise nothing much can be done. But still it is the personal effort that is prominent and assumes most of the burden.

The other way is that of the psychic being, the consciousness opening to the Divine, not only opening the psychic and bringing it forward, but opening the mind, the vital and the physical, receiving the Light, perceiving what is to be done, feeling and

seeing it done by the Divine Force itself and helping constantly by its own vigilant and conscious assent to and call for the Divine working.

Usually there cannot but be a mixture of these two ways until the consciousness is ready to be entirely open, entirely submitted to the Divine's origination of all its action. It is then that all responsibility disappears and there is no personal burden on the shoulders of the sadhak.

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There are two possibilities, one of purification by personal effort, which takes a long time, another by a direct intervention of the Divine Grace which is usually rapid in its action. For the latter there must be a complete surrender and self-giving and for that again usually it is necessary to have a mind that can remain quite quiet and allow the Divine Force to act supporting it with its complete adhesion at every step, but otherwise remaining still and quiet. This last condition which resembles the baby cat attitude spoken of by Ramakrishna, is difficult to have. Those who are accustomed to a very active movement of their thought and will in all they do, find it difficult to still the activity and adopt the quietude of mental self-giving. This does not mean that they cannot do the Yoga or cannot arrive at self-giving — only the purification and the self-giving take a long time to accomplish and one must have the patience and steady perseverance and resolution to go through.

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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.

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In the early part of the sadhana — and by early I do not mean a short part — effort is indispensable. Surrender of course, but surrender is not a thing that is done in a day. The mind has its

ideas and it clings to them; the human vital resists surrender, for what it calls surrender in the early stages is a doubtful kind of self-giving with a demand in it; the physical consciousness is like a stone and what it calls surrender is often no more than inertia. It is only the psychic that knows how to surrender and the psychic is usually very much veiled in the beginning. When the psychic awakes, it can bring a sudden and true surrender of the whole being, for the difficulty of the rest is rapidly dealt with and disappears. But till then effort is indispensable. Or else it is necessary till the Force comes flooding down into the being from above and takes up the sadhana, does it for one more and more and leaves less and less to individual effort — but even then, if not effort, at least aspiration and vigilance are needed till the possession of mind, will, life and body by the Divine Power is complete. I have dealt with this subject, I think, in one of the chapters of *The Mother*.

On the other hand, there are some people who start with a genuine and dynamic will for a total surrender. It is those who are governed by the psychic or are governed by a clear and enlightened mental will which having once accepted surrender as the law of the sadhana will stand no nonsense about it and insists on the other parts of the being following its direction. Here there is still effort, but it is so ready and spontaneous and has so much the sense of a greater Force behind it that the sadhak hardly feels that he is making an effort at all. In the contrary case of a will in mind or vital to retain self-will, a reluctance to give up your independent movement, there must be struggle and endeavour until the wall between the instrument in front and the Divinity behind or above is broken. No rule can be laid down which applies without distinction to everybody — the variations in human nature are too great to be covered by a single trenchant rule.

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It is not possible to get rid of the stress on personal effort at once — and not always desirable; for personal effort is better than tamasic inertia.

The personal effort has to be transformed progressively into

a movement of the Divine Force. If you feel conscious of the Divine Force, then call it in more and more to govern your effort, to take it up, to transform it into something not yours, but the Mother's. There will be a sort of transfer, a taking up of the forces at work in the personal adhar — a transfer not suddenly complete but progressive.

But the psychic poise is necessary: the discrimination must develop which sees accurately what is the Divine Force, what is the element of personal effort, and what is brought in as a mixture from the lower cosmic forces. And until the transfer is complete, which always takes time, there must always be as a personal contribution, a constant consent to the true Force, a constant rejection of any lower mixture — that is very important.

At present to give up personal effort is not what is wanted, but to call in more and more the Divine Power and govern and guide by it the personal endeavour.

*

It is not advisable in the early stages of the sadhana to leave everything to the Divine or expect everything from it without the need of one's own endeavour. That is only possible when the psychic being is in front and influencing the whole action (and even then vigilance and a constant assent are necessary) or else, later on in the ultimate stages of the Yoga when a direct or almost direct supramental force is taking up the consciousness; but this stage is very far away as yet. Under other conditions this attitude is likely to lead to stagnation and inertia. (See *The Mother*, Part I.)

It is only the more mechanical parts of the being that can truly say they are helpless: the physical (material) consciousness, especially, is inert in its nature and moved either by the mental and vital or by the higher forces. But one has always the power to put the mental will or vital push at the service of the Divine. One cannot be sure of the immediate result, for the obstruction of the lower Nature or the pressure of the adverse forces can often act successfully for a time, even for a long time, against

the necessary change. One has then to persist, to put always the will on the side of the Divine, rejecting what has to be rejected, opening oneself to the true Light and the true Force, calling it down quietly, steadfastly, without tiring, without depression or impatience, until one feels the Divine Force at work and the obstacles beginning to give way.

You say you are conscious of your ignorance and obscurity. If it is only a general consciousness, that is not enough. But if you are conscious of it in the details, in its actual working, then that is sufficient to start with; you have to reject steadfastly the wrong workings of which you are conscious and make your mind and vital a quiet and clear field for the action of the Divine Force.

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Certainly one ought not to fret [*about whether one will achieve one's end*] — and certainly one ought to dedicate [*one's desire to achieve it*] to the Divine. But our experience is that merely leaving the Divine to do everything (to fulfil) does not carry one very far. There must be a cooperation, a consent, an aspiration, a will to change.

*

If there were no conditions at all [*in Yoga*], then there would be no need of sadhana; all would be done automatically by the Force or help without any need of effort by the sadhak. The help is always there and it has pulled you out of many difficulties and attacks. It is, I suppose, because of the feeling “I do not want to do anything” that you have not been able to receive the help, but that is a temporary inertia of the physical mind and will. I do not see the use of your going back for a few months to a life which could not now satisfy you. The only course is to shake off the inertia of the will and persevere.

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So long as there is not the full presence and conscious working of the higher Force, some amount of personal effort is

indispensable. To do the sadhana for the sake of the Divine and not for one's own sake is of course the true attitude.

*

Faith, reliance upon God, surrender and self-giving to the Divine Power are necessary and indispensable. But reliance upon God must not be made an excuse for indolence, weakness and surrender to the impulses of the lower nature; it must go along with untiring aspiration and a persistent rejection of all that comes in the way of the Divine Truth. The surrender to the Divine must not be turned into an excuse, a cloak or an occasion for surrender to one's own desires and lower movements or to one's ego or to some Force of the ignorance and darkness that puts on a false appearance of the Divine.

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It is always better to make an effort in the right direction; even if one fails the effort bears some result and is never lost.

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For those who do not make any effort, — that absence of effort is itself a difficulty — they do not progress.

Chapter Eight

Faith

Faith, Belief, Confidence, Trust

Faith is a general word = *śraddhā* — the soul's belief in the Divine's existence, wisdom, power, love and grace — confidence and trust are aspects of faith and results of it.

Confidence is a feeling of sureness that the Divine will hear when sincerely called and help and that all the Divine does is for the best.

Trust is the mind's and heart's complete reliance on the Divine and its guidance and protection.

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Faith — a dynamic entire belief and acceptance.

Belief — intellectual acceptance only.

Conviction — intellectual belief held on what seem to be good reasons.

Reliance — dependence on another for something, based on trust.

Trust — the feeling of sure expectation of another's help and reliance on his word, character etc.

Confidence — the sense of security that goes with trust.

*

Faith is a feeling in the whole being, belief is mental; confidence means trust in a person or in the Divine or a feeling of surety about the result of one's seeking or endeavour.

*

You have seized the right principle again, to be all for the Mother and to have full confidence that one has only to go on quietly in that confidence and all will come that needs to come and all be done that the Divine wills to be done. The workings of the

world are too subtle and strange and complex for the human mind to understand it — it is only when the knowledge comes from above and one is taken into the higher consciousness that the understanding can come. Meanwhile what one has to follow is the dictates of the deeper psychic heart within based on that faith and love which is the only sure guiding star.

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Faith in its essence is a light in the soul which turns towards the truth even when the mind doubts or the vital revolts or the physical consciousness denies it. When this extends itself to the instruments, it becomes a fixed belief in the mind, a sort of inner knowledge which resists all apparent denial by circumstances or appearances, a complete confidence, trust, adhesion in the vital and in the physical consciousness, an invariable clinging to the truth in which one has faith even when all is dark around and no cause of hope seems to be there.

*

Faith in the spiritual sense is not a mental belief which can waver and change. It can wear that form in the mind, but that belief is not the faith itself, it is only its external form. Just as the body, the external form, can change but the spirit remains the same, so it is here. Faith is a certitude in the soul which does not depend on reasoning, on this or that mental idea, on circumstances, on this or that passing condition of the mind or the vital or the body. It may be hidden, eclipsed, may even seem to be quenched, but it reappears again after the storm or the eclipse; it is seen burning still in the soul when one has thought that it was extinguished for ever. The mind may be a shifting sea of doubts and yet that faith may be there within and, if so, it will keep even the doubt-racked mind in the way so that it goes on in spite of itself towards its destined goal. Faith is a spiritual certitude of the spiritual, the divine, the soul's ideal, something that clings to that even when it is not fulfilled in life, even when the immediate facts or the persistent circumstances seem to deny it. This is a common experience in the life of the human being; if

it were not so, man would be the plaything of a changing mind or a sport of circumstance.

A Problem of Faith

How to conciliate these two notions:

- (1) that the Divine's Will is behind all movements and happenings,
- (2) that the Divine Will is distorted in the manifestation.

There are two kinds of faith:

The faith that calls down the equanimity and the faith that calls down the realisation.

These two faiths correspond to two different aspects of the Divine.

There is the Transcendent Divine and there is the Cosmic Divine.

The Will of realisation is that of the Transcendent Divine.

The Cosmic Divine is what is concerned with the actual working out of things under the present circumstances. It is the Will of that Cosmic Divine which is manifested in each circumstance, each movement of this world.

The Cosmic Will is not, to our ordinary consciousness, something that acts as an independent power doing whatever it chooses; it works through all these beings, through the forces at play in the world and the law of these forces and their results. It is only when we open ourselves and get out of the ordinary consciousness that we can feel it intervening as an independent power and overriding the ordinary play of the forces.

Then too we can see that even in the play of the forces and in spite of their distortions the Cosmic Will is working towards the eventual realisation of the Will of the Transcendent Divine.

The supramental realisation is the Will of the Transcendent Divine which we have to work out. The circumstances under which we have to work it out are those of an inferior consciousness in which things can be distorted by our own ignorance, weaknesses and mistakes, and by the clash of conflicting forces. That is why faith and equanimity are indispensable.

We have to have the faith that in spite of our ignorance and errors and weaknesses and in spite of the attacks of hostile forces and in spite of any immediate appearance of failure the Divine Will is leading us, through every circumstance, towards the final realisation. This faith will give us equanimity; it is a faith that accepts what happens not definitively but as something that has to be gone through on the way. Once equanimity is established there can be established too another kind of faith, supported by it, which can be made dynamic with something from the supramental consciousness and can overcome the present circumstances and determine what will happen and help to bring down the realisation of the Will of the Transcendent Divine.

The faith that goes to the Cosmic Divine is limited in the power of its action by the necessities of the play.

To get entirely free from these limitations one must reach the Transcendent Divine.

Faith and Knowledge

Faith is a thing that precedes knowledge, not comes after knowledge. It is a glimpse of a truth which the mind has not yet seized as knowledge.

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Until we know the Truth (not mentally but by experience, by change of consciousness) we need the soul's faith to sustain us and hold on to the Truth — but when we live in the knowledge, this faith is changed into knowledge.

Of course I am speaking of direct spiritual knowledge. Mental knowledge cannot replace faith; so long as there is only mental knowledge, faith is still needed.

*

The phrase [*“blind faith”*] has no real meaning. I suppose they mean they will not believe without proof — but the conclusion formed after proof is not faith, it is knowledge or it is a mental opinion. Faith is something which one has before proof or

knowledge and it helps you to arrive at knowledge or experience. There is no proof that God exists, but if I have faith in God, then I can arrive at the experience of the Divine.

Faith and Experience

Mental theories are of no fundamental importance, for the mind forms or accepts the theories that support the turn of the being. What is important is that turn and the call within you.

The knowledge that there is a Supreme Existence, Consciousness and Bliss which is not merely a negative Nirvana or a static and featureless Absolute, but dynamic, the perception that this Divine Consciousness can be realised not only beyond but here, and the consequent acceptance of a divine life as the aim of Yoga, do not belong to the mind. It is not a question of mental theory — even though mentally this outlook can be as well supported as any other, if not better, — but of experience and, before the experience comes, of the soul's faith bringing with it the mind's and the life's adhesion. One who is in contact with the higher Light and has the experience can follow this way, however difficult it may be for the lower members to follow; one who is touched by it, without having the experience, but having the call, the conviction, the compulsion of the soul's adherence, can also follow it.

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There is much in your letter that would need long explanation for an adequate reply — but I want to say something about the faith which you say you don't have and can't have in the absence of experience. First of all, faith does not depend upon experience; it is something that is there before experience. When one starts the Yoga, it is not usually on the strength of experience, but on the strength of faith. It is so not only in Yoga and the spiritual life, but in ordinary life also. All men of action, discoverers, inventors, creators of knowledge proceed by faith and, until the proof is made or the thing done, they go on in spite of disappointment, failure, disproof, denial, because of something

in them that tells them that this *is* the truth, the thing that must be followed and done. Ramakrishna even went so far as to say, when asked whether blind faith was not wrong, that blind faith was the only kind to have, for faith is either blind or it is not faith but something else — reasoned inference, proved conviction or ascertained knowledge.

Faith is the soul's witness to something not yet manifested, achieved or realised, but which yet the Knower within us, even in the absence of all indications, feels to be true or supremely worth following or achieving. This thing within us can last even when there is no fixed belief in the mind, even when the vital struggles and revolts and refuses. Who is there that practises the Yoga and has not his periods, long periods of disappointment and failure and disbelief and darkness — but there is something that sustains him and even goes on in spite of himself, because it feels that what it followed after was yet true and it more than feels, it knows. The fundamental faith in Yoga is this, inherent in the soul, that the Divine exists and the Divine is the one thing to be followed after — nothing else in life is worth having in comparison with that. It was this faith growing in you that made you come for Yoga and this faith has not died or diminished — to judge from what you say in your letters, it has become more insistent and abiding. So long as a man has that, he is marked for the spiritual life and I will say that, even if his nature is full of obstacles and crammed with denials and difficulties, and even if he has many years of struggle, he is marked out for success in the spiritual life.

What you really have not yet a fixed faith in is the guidance of the Divine, his will to manifest to you or your capacity to receive him. It is this that the adverse attacks which began when you were on the threshold of the inner experience — as so often happens in the Yoga — try constantly to fix in your brain. They want to have a fixed mental formation there, so that whenever you make the attempt there will be in the physical mind an expectation of difficulty, a dwelling on the idea of difficulty and unsuccess and incapacity, if not always in the front of the mind, yet at the back and by that they hope to prevent the experience

from coming. It is these mental formations that you must reject, for they are a much greater obstacle than the vital failings to which you give such an exaggerated importance. It is not a fact that you have not had experiences — you had them but you did not give them their full value, because you were expecting something else. Otherwise the sense of the Divine Guidance and the faith in attainment would have formed in spite of difficulties and relapses such as everyone has in the Yoga. It is this faith that you need to develop, — a faith which is in accordance with reason and common sense — that if the Divine exists and has called you to the Path, as is evident, then there must be a Divine Guidance behind and that through and in spite of all difficulties you will arrive. Not to listen to the hostile voices that suggest failure or to the voices of impatient vital haste that echo them, not to believe that because great difficulties are there, there can be no success or that because the Divine has not yet shown himself he will never show himself, but to take the position that everyone takes when he fixes his mind on a great and difficult goal, “I will go on till I succeed and I will succeed — all difficulties notwithstanding.” To which the believer in the Divine adds, “The Divine exists, he is there, and since he exists, my following after the Divine cannot fail. I will go on through everything till I find him.”

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I am rather surprised at Krishnaprem’s surprise about my statement of faith. I thought he had said once you should not hanker after experiences. As for experience being necessary for faith and no faith possible without it, that contradicts human psychology altogether. Thousands of people have faith before they have experience and it is the faith that helps them to the experience. The doctrine “No belief without proof” applies to physical science, it would be disastrous in the field of spirituality — or for that matter in the field of human action. The saints or bhaktas have the faith in God long before they get the experience of God — the man of action has the faith in his cause long before his cause is crowned with success — otherwise they would not have been able to struggle persistently towards their end in spite of defeat,

failure and deadly peril. I don't know what Krishnaprem means by true faith. For me faith is not intellectual belief but a function of the soul; when my belief has faltered, failed, gone out the soul has remained steadfast, obstinately insisting, "This path and no other; the Truth I have felt is the Truth whatever the mind may believe or not believe." On the other hand experiences do not necessarily lead to faith. One sadhak writes to me, "I feel the grace of the Mother descending into me, but I cannot believe it because it may be a vital imagination." Another has experiences for years together, then falls down because he has, he says, "lost faith". All these things are not my imagination, they are facts and tell their own tale.

All that, however, is by the way. I have no objection to you or anybody having experiences. I am not a fool. Let everybody have as many experiences as possible. What I say is that the hankering for experiences should not be there in such a way as to replace the true attitude and bring disappointment and revolt. Bhakti is not an experience, it is a state of the heart and soul. It is a state which comes when the psychic being is awake and prominent. It is for that reason that I asked you to cleave to the psychic way and not go back to that of vital desire. I have not said that your psychic being was "in front" in such a way as to be proof against all attack. What I said was that it was becoming awake and active, giving you the right attitude and helping you towards the change of your nature. I certainly did not mean a moral but a spiritual change. Freedom from ego is not a moral but a spiritual change — a moral man may be chock full of ego, an ego increased by his sense of goodness and rectitude. Freedom from ego is spiritually valuable because then one can be centred, no longer in one's personal self, but in the Divine, and that too is the condition of bhakti.

The Gospel of Faith

I spoke of a strong central and if possible complete faith because your attitude seemed to be that you only cared for the full response — that is, realisation, the Presence, regarding all else as

quite unsatisfactory, and your prayer was not bringing you that. But prayer by itself does not usually bring that at once — only if there is a burning faith at the centre or a complete faith in all the parts of the being. That does not mean that those whose faith is not so strong or surrender complete cannot arrive, but usually they have to go at first by small steps and to face the difficulties of their nature until by perseverance or tapasya they make a sufficient opening. Even a faltering faith and a slow and partial surrender have their force and their result, otherwise only the rare few could do sadhana at all. What I mean by the central faith is a faith in the soul or the central being behind, a faith which is there even when the mind doubts and the vital despairs and the physical wants to collapse, and after the attack is over, reappears and pushes on the path again. It may be strong and bright, it may be pale and in appearance weak, but if it persists each time in going on, it is the real thing. Fits of despair and darkness are a tradition in the path of sadhana — in all Yogas oriental and occidental they seem to have been the rule. I know all about them myself — but my experience has led me to the perception that they are an unnecessary tradition and could be dispensed with if one chose. That is why whenever they come in you or others I try to lift up before them the gospel of faith. If still they come, one has only to get through them as soon as possible and get back into the sun. Your dream of the sea was a perfectly true one — in the end the storm and swell do not prevent the arrival of the state of Grace in the sadhak and with it the arrival of the Grace itself. That I suppose is what something in you is always asking for — the suprarational miracle of Grace, something that is impatient of the demand for tapasya and self-perfection and long labour. Well, it can come, it has come to several here after years upon years of blank failure and difficulty or terrible internal struggles. But it comes usually in that way — as opposed to a slowly developing Grace — after much difficulty and not at once. If you go on asking for it in spite of the apparent failure of response, it is sure to come.

Faith and Doubt

I see you have let the demons of self-doubt and doubt in general and melancholy get inside again and sit down at your table. There is no other reason for your troubles than this readiness to listen to their knock and open the door. You speak of X, but that is why X gets on because when they knock, he turns them out at once. If you resolutely do that, you will arrive also at security and perfect ease — for there are only two things that create insecurity — doubt and desire. If you desire only the Divine, there is an absolute certitude that you will reach the Divine. But all these questionings and repinings at each moment because you have not yet reached, only delay and keep an impeding curtain before the heart and the eyes. For at every step when one makes an advance, the opposite forces will throw this doubt like a rope between the legs and stop one short with a stumble — it is their *métier* to do that. One must not give them that advantage. Instead of saying, “I want only the Divine, why is the Divine not already here?”, one must say, “Since I want only the Divine, my success is sure, I have only to walk forward in all confidence and his own hand will be there secretly leading me to him by his own way and at his own time.” That is what you must keep as your constant mantra and it is besides the only logical and reasonable thing to do — for anything else is an irrational self-contradiction of the most glaring kind. Anything else one may doubt — whether the supermind will come down, whether this world can ever be anything but a field of struggle for the mass of men, — these can be rational doubts — but that he who desires only the Divine shall reach the Divine is a certitude much more certain than that two and two make four. That is the faith every sadhak must have in the bottom of his heart, supporting him through every stumble and blow and ordeal. It is only false ideas still casting their shadow on your mind that prevent you from having it. Push them aside for good and see this simple inner truth in a simple and straightforward way — the back of the difficulty will be broken.

As for the doubts, such occurrences happen to almost all sadhaks from time to time so long as there is not such a fixity of continuous experience as makes any fundamental doubt impossible, although there may still be questionings about this or that until the knowledge and experience are made complete.

The nature of the doubts and misbeliefs were such as are always suggested to everybody when this kind of Influence envelops — the part of the mind which responds to them is the physical mind — for the other parts are covered over at such times and the physical mind left to itself naturally doubts everything supraphysical and believes only in its own domain.

Mental faith is very helpful, but it is a thing that can always be temporarily shaken or quite clouded — until the higher consciousness and experience get fixed for good. What endures even if concealed is the inner being's aspiration or need for something higher which is the soul's faith. That too may be concealed for a time but it reasserts itself — it undergoes eclipse but not extinction.

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It is quite sufficient if there is the firm and constant will towards faith and self-offering. It is understood that it is not possible for the human nature to be always without movements of doubt, obscurity or things not yet offered until the inner consciousness has sufficiently grown to make these impossible. It is because it is so that the will is necessary so that the Force may work to remove these things with full consent and will of the mind and heart of the sadhak. To try to reject these things and make the will permanent is sufficient, — for it is this effort that brings eventually the permanence.

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It is possible for anyone to attain to a complete and living faith in the Divine if he has the sincere will to do so, even though he may not be sattwic in his nature; but, if he is sattwic, it will be easier for him — he will not be hampered by doubts and revolts such as afflict the rajasic man on his way.

Types of Faith

Mental faith combats doubt and helps to open to the true knowledge; vital faith prevents the attacks of the hostile forces or defeats them and helps to open to the true spiritual will and action; physical faith keeps one firm through all physical obscurity, inertia or suffering and helps to open to the foundation of the true consciousness; psychic faith opens to the direct touch of the Divine and helps to bring union and surrender.

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Faith can be tamasic and ineffective, e.g. “I believe the Mother will do everything, so I will do nothing. When she wants, she will transform me.” That is not a dynamic but a static and inert faith.

Faithfulness

When I spoke of being faithful to the light of the soul and the divine Call, I was not referring to anything in the past or to any lapse on your part. I was simply affirming the great need in all crises and attacks, — to refuse to listen to any suggestions, impulses, lures and to oppose to them all the call of the Truth, the imperative beckoning of the Light. In all doubt and depression, to say “I belong to the Divine, I cannot fail”; to all suggestions of impurity and unfitness, to reply “I am a child of Immortality chosen by the Divine; I have but to be true to myself and to Him — the victory is sure; even if I fell, I would be sure to rise again”; to all impulses to depart and serve some smaller ideal, to reply “This is the greatest, this is the Truth that alone can satisfy the soul within me; I will endure through all tests and tribulations to the very end of the divine journey.” This is what I mean by faithfulness to the Light and the Call.

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I do not see how the method of faith in the cells can be likened to eating a slice of the moon. Nobody ever got a slice of the

moon, but the healing by faith in the cells is an actual fact and a law of Nature and has been demonstrated often enough even apart from Yoga. The way to get faith and everything else is to insist on having them and refuse to flag or despair or give up until one has them — it is the way by which everything has been got since this difficult world began to have thinking and aspiring creatures upon it. It is to open always, always to the Light and turn one's back on the darkness. It is to refuse the voices that cry persistently, "You cannot, you shall not, you are incapable, you are the puppet of a dream" — for these are the enemy voices, they cut one off from the result that was coming by their strident clamour and then triumphantly point to the barrenness of result as a proof of their thesis. The difficulty of the endeavour is a known thing, but the difficult is not the impossible — it is the difficult that has always been accomplished and the conquest of difficulties makes up all that is valuable in the earth's history. In the spiritual endeavour also it shall be so.

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For the sadhana, your strong distaste (to say the least) for the methods which we find most useful but you find grim and repellent, makes a great obstacle. But I maintain my idea that if you remain faithful to the seeking for the Divine, the day of grace and opening will come. Nobody will be more pleased than ourselves if it comes over there in the Himalayas, or for that matter anywhere. The place does not matter — the thing itself is all.

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I ask you to have faith in the Divine, in the Divine Grace, in the truth of the sadhana, in the eventual triumph of the spirit over its mental and vital and physical difficulties, in the Path and the Guru, in the existence of things other than are written in the philosophy of Haeckel or Huxley or Bertrand Russell, because if these things are not true, there is no meaning in the Yoga.

*

If his faith depends on the perfection of the sadhaks, obviously it must be a rather shaky thing! Sadhaks and sadhikas are not supposed to be perfect. It is only siddhas for whom one can claim perfection and even then not according to a mental standard.

Keep Firm Faith

Do not allow any discouragement to come upon you and have no distrust of the Divine Grace. Whatever difficulties are outside you, whatever weaknesses are inside you, if you keep firm hold on your faith and your aspiration, the secret Power will carry you through and bring you back here. Even if you are oppressed with opposition and difficulties, even if you stumble, even if the way seems closed to you, keep hold on your aspiration; if faith is clouded for a time, turn always in mind and heart to us and it will be removed. As for outer help in the way of letters we are perfectly ready to give it to you. But keep firm on the way — then in the end things open out of themselves and circumstances yield to the inner spirit.

*

Whatever adverse things present themselves you must meet them with courage and they will disappear and the help come. Faith and courage are the true attitude to keep in life and work always and in the spiritual experience also.

*

In moments of trial faith in the Divine protection and the call for that protection; at all times the faith that what the Divine wills is the best.

It is what turns you towards the Divine that must be accepted as good for you — all is bad for you that turns you away from the Divine.

*

That is the true resolution. Keep it firm inside you even if waves of other consciousness cover on the surface. If one plants a faith

or resolution like that firmly in oneself, then it remains and even if the mind for a time gets clouded or the resolution dimmed, yet one finds it reemerging automatically like a ship out of a covering wave, and goes invincibly on with the journey through all vicissitudes till it reaches the harbour.

*

They [*faith, surrender and samata*] have to be put into every part and atom of the being so that there may be no possibility of a contrary vibration anywhere.

*

You must keep the faith always that however the lower nature may rise or hostile forces attack, victory will be yours and the transformation is sure.

*

Keep firm faith in the victory of the Light and face with calm equanimity the resistances of Matter and human personality to their own transformation.

*

Even if there is much darkness — and this world is full of it and the physical nature of man also — yet a ray of the true Light can prevail eventually against a tenfold darkness. Believe that and cleave to it always.

Chapter Nine

Consecration and Offering

Consecration

Consecration is a process by which one trains the consciousness to give itself to the Divine.

*

The general principle of self-consecration and self-giving is the same for all in this Yoga, but each has his own way of consecration and self-giving. The way that X takes is good for X, just as the way that you take is the right one for you because it is in consonance with your nature. If there were not this plasticity and variety, if all had to be cut in the same pattern, Yoga would be a rigid mental machinery, not a living power.

When you can sing out of your inner consciousness in which you feel the Mother moving all your actions, there is no reason why you should not do it. The development of capacities is not only permissible but right, when it can be made part of the Yoga; one can give not only one's soul, but all one's powers to the Divine.

*

It is very evident that X has had a sudden opening to spiritual experience — a surprisingly sudden opening, one would think, but it happens often in that way, especially if there is a sceptical mind outside and a soul ready for experience within. In such cases also it comes often after a blow such as his brother's illness, but I think there was already a turning of the mind which prepared it. This sudden and persistent visualisation also shows that there is a faculty within that has broken the gates which shut it in — the faculty of supraphysical vision. The coming up of the word "consecration" is also a familiar phenomenon of these experiences — it is what I call the voice of the psychic, an intimation from his own soul to the mind as to what it wants

him to do. Now he has to accept it, for the assent of the nature, of the outward man to the inner voice, is necessary so that it may be effective. He is standing at the turning point and has been given an indication of the new road his inner being, the Antaratman, wants him to follow — but, as I say, the assent of his mind and vital is necessary. If he can decide to consecrate, he must make the *sañkalpa* of consecration, offer himself to the Divine and call for the help and the guidance. If he is not able to do that at once let him wait and see, but keeping himself open, as it were, to the continuation and development of the experience that has begun till it becomes definitely imperative to his own feeling. He will receive help and, if he becomes conscious of it, then there can be no further question — it will be easy for him to proceed on the way.

Offering

One offers to the Divine in order to get rid of the illusion of separation — the very act of offering implies that all belongs to the Divine.

*

Have attachment to nothing [*in order to offer all to the Divine*] — aspire until you get the consciousness of the Divine — call on the Divine to control and take up all you are and have.

*

(1) Offer yourself more and more — all the consciousness, all that happens in it, all your work and action.

(2) If you have faults and weaknesses, hold them up before the Divine to be changed or abolished.

(3) Try to do what I told you, concentrate in the heart till you constantly feel the Presence there.

*

Remain quiet, put your will always on the side of the Truth, offer yourself entirely to the Divine.

Chapter Ten

Opening

The Meaning of Opening

Opening is a change of the consciousness by which it becomes receptive to the Divine.

*

Opening means that the consciousness becomes opened to the Truth or the Divine to which it is now shut — it indicates a state of receptivity.

*

Opening is a thing that happens of itself by sincerity of will and aspiration. It means to be able to receive the higher forces that come from the Mother.

*

Opening means only to be able to receive the Mother's force. Whether one is open or not is shown by two things. If one is conscious of the force working in one, then one is open. But even if one is not conscious, yet if results of the working happen, then that also means that in the inner being some opening has been made. Aspiration, sincerity and the quietude of the mind are the three best conditions for opening.

*

These [*calling the Mother, praying to her*] are acts of the mind, openness is a *state* of consciousness which keeps it turned to the Mother, free from other movements, expecting and able to receive what may come from the Divine.

*

There is a state in which the sadhak is conscious of the Divine Force working in him or of its results at least and does not

obstruct its descent or its action by his own mental activities, vital restlessness or physical obscurity and inertia. That is openness to the Divine. Surrender is the best way of opening; but aspiration and quietness can do it up to a certain point so long as there is not the surrender.

*

The object of the self-opening is to allow the force of the Divine to flow in bringing light, peace, Ananda etc. and to do the work of transformation. When the being so receives the Divine Shakti and it works in him, produces its results (whether he is entirely conscious of the process or not), then he is said to be open.

Opening to the Divine

In this Yoga the whole principle is to open oneself to the Divine Influence. It is there above you and, if you can once become conscious of it, you have then to call it down into you. It descends into the mind and into the body as Peace, as a Light, as a Force that works, as the Presence of the Divine with or without form, as Ananda. Before one has this consciousness, one has to have faith and aspire for the opening. Aspiration, call, prayer are forms of one and the same thing and are all effective; you can take the form that comes to you or is easiest to you. The other way is concentration; you concentrate your consciousness in the heart (some do it in the head or above the head) and meditate on the Mother in the heart and call her in there. One can do either and both at different times — whatever comes naturally to you or you are moved to do at the moment. Especially in the beginning the one great necessity is to get the mind quiet, reject at the time of meditation all thoughts and movements that are foreign to the sadhana. In the quiet mind there will be a progressive preparation for the experience. But you must not become impatient if all is not done at once; it takes time to bring entire quiet into the mind; you have to go on till the consciousness is ready.

*

In this Yoga all depends on whether one can open to the Influence or not. If there is a sincerity in the aspiration and a patient will to arrive at the higher consciousness in spite of all obstacles, then the opening in one form or another is sure to arrive. But it may take a long or a short time according to the prepared or unprepared condition of the mind, heart and body; so if one has not the necessary patience, the effort may be abandoned owing to the difficulty of the beginning. There is no method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness; one can concentrate also in the head or between the eyebrows, but for many this is a too difficult opening. When the mind falls quiet and the concentration becomes strong and the aspiration intense, then there is a beginning of experience. The more the faith, the more rapid the result is likely to be. For the rest one must not depend on one's own efforts only, but succeed in establishing a contact with the Divine and a receptivity to the Mother's Power and Presence.

*

A Fire in the heart is usually the psychic fire and that should rather grow and be fed by the tendency or aspiration to the personal sadhana. The main principle of the personal sadhana is the surrender, the aspiration to the Divine touch, presence, control in the heart—the opening of the psychic being from within and its coming in front to govern and change mind, vital, physical consciousness. There are two openings that are necessary, one from above, the other from within. The one from above which can come by the impersonal Path or by the personal and impersonal together, seems to have come to you. Your feeling about the Personal probably comes from the push from within for the psychic to emerge fully. It is this aspiration therefore that should be the beginning of the personal path and a reliance on the Inner Power to guide and do what is needed.

*

Well, that is the idea in Yoga — that by a right passivity one opens oneself to something greater than one's limited self, and effort is only useful for getting that condition. There is also a notion that even in the ordinary life the individual is only an instrument in the hands of a Universal Energy though his ego takes the credit of all he does.

*

It is the law of the sadhana to open to the influences of the higher worlds.

*

It is true that through whatever is strongest in him a sadhak can most easily open to the Divine.

*

In the practice of Yoga, what you aim at can only come by the opening of the being to the Mother's force and the persistent rejection of all egoism and demand and desire, all motives except the aspiration for the Divine Truth. If this is rightly done, the Divine Power and Light will begin to work and bring in the peace and equanimity, the inner strength, the purified devotion and the increasing consciousness and self-knowledge which are the necessary foundation for the siddhi of the Yoga.

*

Open with sincerity. That means to open integrally and without reservation: not to give one part of you to the divine working and keep back the rest; not to make a partial offering and keep for yourself the other movements of your nature. All must be opened wide; it is insincerity to hold back any part of you or keep it shut to the Divine.

Open with faithfulness. That means to be open constantly and always; not to open one day and withdraw the next.

*

The opening is the same for all. It begins with an opening of the

mind and heart, then of the vital proper — when it reaches the lower vital and physical the opening is complete. But with the opening there must be the full self-giving to what comes down, which is the condition of the complete change. It is this last stage that is the real difficulty and it is there that everyone stumbles about till it is overcome.

*

It takes time to open all the parts fully. Let the mind and heart remain open and the rest will follow. Clouds that pass and coverings that come cannot prevent it.

*

It is certainly not by merely repeating “to will” and “to open” (with the mental idea), that the will or the opening will come. It is by using the will that the will becomes effective, it is by using the aspiration and the will also that the opening comes. The first thing is to call down the calm into the mind and the vital; with the calm established or in course of preparation to invite more and more the Mother’s workings and grow conscious of them within you and give your assent to them and refuse all else. All the rest then comes in its time and by the proper process.

*

It is by confidence in the Mother that the opening needed will come when your consciousness is ready. There is no harm in arranging your present work so that there will be time and energy for some meditation, but it is not by meditation alone that what is needed will come. It is by faith and openness to the Mother.

*

Keep yourself open to the Mother, remember her always and let her Force work in you, rejecting all other influences — that is the rule for Yoga.

Chapter Eleven

Patience and Perseverance

Patience

It is certain that an ardent aspiration for the Divine helps to progress, but patience is also needed. For it is a very big change that has to be made and, although there can be moments of great rapidity, it is never all the time like that. Old things try to stick as much as possible; the new that come have to develop and the consciousness takes time to assimilate them and make them normal to the nature.

Keep this firm faith in your mind that the thing needed is being done and will be done fully. There can be no doubt about that.

*

There are always difficulties and a hampered progress in the early stages and a delay in the opening of the inner doors until the being is ready. If you feel whenever you meditate the quiescence and the flashes of the inner Light and if the inward urge is growing so strong that the external hold is decreasing and the vital disturbances are losing their force, that is already a great progress. The road of Yoga is long, every inch of ground has to be won against much resistance and no quality is more needed by the sadhak than patience and single-minded perseverance with a faith that remains firm through all difficulties, delays and apparent failures.

*

Determination is needed and a firm patience, not to be discouraged by this or that failure. It is a change in the habit of the physical nature and that needs a long patient work of detail.

*

One who has not the courage to face patiently and firmly life and its difficulties will never be able to go through the still greater inner difficulties of the sadhana. The very first lesson in this Yoga is to face life and its trials with a quiet mind, a firm courage and an entire reliance on the Divine Shakti.

*

It is true that a great patience and steadfastness is needed. Be then firm and patient and fixed on the aims of the sadhana, but not over-eager to have them at once. A work has to be done in you and is being done; help it to be done by keeping an attitude of firm faith and confidence. Doubts rise in all, they are natural to the human physical mind — reject them. Impatience and over-eagerness for the result at once are natural to the human vital; it is by firm confidence in the Mother that they will disappear. The love, the belief in her as the Divine to whom your life is given, — oppose with that every contrary feeling and then those contrary feelings will after a time no longer be able to come to you.

*

It is an impatience and restlessness in the vital which makes it feel as if it were no use staying here because things are not moving forward. Sadhana is a thing which takes time and needs patience. There are often periods of quiescence in which a working is going on behind of which the mind is not aware — all seems then to be inert and dull; but if one has patience and confidence, the consciousness passes through these periods to new openings and things which seemed to be impossible to effect at that time, get done. The impulse to rush away is always a mistake — perseverance in the path is the one rule to cling to and with that finally all obstacles are overcome.

*

Impatience is always a mistake, it does not help but hinders. A quiet happy faith and confidence is the best foundation for sadhana; for the rest a constant opening wide of oneself to receive with an aspiration which may be intense, but must always be

calm and steady. Full Yogic realisation does not come all at once, it comes after a long preparation of the Adhara which may take a long time.

*

In a more deep and spiritual sense a concrete realisation is that which makes the thing realised more real, dynamic, intimately present to the consciousness than any physical thing can be. Such a realisation of the personal Divine or of the impersonal Brahman or of the Self does not usually come at the beginning of a sadhana or in the first years or for many years. It comes so to a very few; mine came fifteen years after my first pre-Yogic experience in London and in the fifth year after I started Yoga. That I consider extraordinarily quick, an express train speed almost — though there may no doubt have been several quicker achievements. But to expect and demand it so soon and get fed up because it does not come and declare Yoga impossible except for two or three in the ages would betoken in the eyes of any experienced Yogi or sadhaka a rather rash and abnormal impatience. Most would say that a slow development is the best one can hope for in the first years and only when the nature is ready and fully concentrated towards the Divine can the definitive experience come. To some rapid preparatory experiences can come at a comparatively early stage, but even they cannot escape the labour of the consciousness which will make these experiences culminate in the realisation that is enduring and complete. It is not a question of my liking or disliking your demand or attitude. It is a matter of fact and truth and experience, not of liking or disliking, two things which do not usually sway me. It is the fact that people who are grateful and cheerful and ready to go step by step, even by slow steps, if need be, do actually march faster and more surely than those who are impatient and in haste and at each step despair or murmur. It is what I have always seen — there may be instances to the contrary and I have no objection to your being one, — none at all. I only say that if you could maintain “hope and fervour and faith”, there would be a much bigger chance — that is all.

This is just a personal explanation — a long explanation but which seemed to be called for by your enhancement of my glory — and is dictated by a hope that after all in the long run an accumulation of explanations may persuade you to prefer the sunny path to the grey one. My faith again perhaps? But, sunny path or grey one, the one thing wanted is that you should push through and arrive.

*

You say after several years you have not changed your nature. I only wish the external nature were so easy to transform that it could be done in a few years. You forget also that the real problem — to get rid of the pervading ego in this nature — is a task you have seriously tackled only a short time ago. And it is not in a few months that that can be done. Even the best sadhaks find after many experiences and large changes on the higher planes that here much remains to be done. How do you expect to get rid of it at once unlike everybody else? A Yoga like this needs patience, because it means a change both of the radical motives and of each part and detail of the nature. It will not do to say — “Yesterday I determined this time to give myself entirely to the Mother, and look it is not done, on the contrary all the old opposite things turn up once more; so there is nothing to do but to proclaim myself unfit and give up the Yoga.” Of course when you come to the point where you make a resolution of that kind, immediately all that stands in the way does rise up — it invariably happens. The thing to be done is to stand back, observe and reject, not to allow these things to get hold of you, to keep your central will separate from them and call in the Mother’s Force to meet them. If one does get involved as often happens, then to get disinvolved as soon as possible and go forward again. That is what everybody, every Yogin does — to be depressed because one cannot do everything in a rush is quite contrary to the truth of the matter. A stumble does not mean that one is unfit, nor does prolonged difficulty mean that for oneself the thing is impossible.

The fact that you have to give up your ordinary work when

you get depressed does not mean that you have not gained in steadiness — it only means that the steadiness you have gained is not a personal virtue but depends on your keeping the contact with the Mother — for it is her Force that is behind it and behind all the progress you can make. Learn to rely on that Force more, to open to it more completely and to seek spiritual progress even not for your own sake but for the sake of the Divine — then you will go on more smoothly. Get the full psychic opening in the most external physical consciousness. That and not despondency is the lesson you ought to draw from your present adverse experience.

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They [*patience and peace*] go together. By having patience under all kinds of pressure you lay the foundations of peace.

Persistence

Your attitude towards the change needed and new life is the right one. A quiet, vigilant but undistressed persistence is the best way to get it done.

For the intimacy within to be reestablished the quietude must deepen so that the psychic may come out in the physical as it had done in the higher parts.

*

Things that have long acted on the nature take some time to go altogether, but they are bound to go since you have the sincere desire and your psychic being is growing in your nature. Our help is there always with you. You have to persist in faith and quietude and let the psychic grow more and more, then all will come right and you will no longer have this trouble.

*

It is so with all things in the path of sadhana — one must persist however long it takes, so only one can achieve.

*

What I want of you besides aspiring for faith? Well, just a little thoroughness and persistence in the method! Don't aspire for two days and then sink into the dumps, evolving a gospel of earthquake and Schopenhauer plus the jackal and all the rest of it. Give the Divine a full sporting chance. When he lights something in you or is preparing a light, don't come in with a wet blanket of despondency and throw it on the poor flame. You will say it is a mere candle that is lit — nothing at all? But in these matters, when the darkness of human mind and life and body has to be dissipated, a candle is always a beginning — a lamp can follow and afterwards a sun — but the beginning must be allowed to have a sequel — not get cut off from its natural *sequelae* by chinks of sadness and doubt and despair. At the beginning and for a long time the experiences do usually come in little quanta with empty spaces between — but, if allowed their way, the spaces will diminish and the quantum theory give way to the Newtonian continuity of the spirit. But you have never yet given it a real chance. The empty spaces have become peopled with doubts and denials and so the quanta have become rare, the beginnings remain beginnings. Other difficulties you have faced and rejected, but this difficulty you dandled too much for a long time and it has become strong — it must be dealt with by a persevering effort. I do not say that all doubts must disappear before anything comes — that would be to make sadhana impossible, for doubt is the mind's persistent assailant. All I say is, don't allow the assailant to become a companion, don't give him the open door and the fireside seat. Above all don't drive away the incoming Divine with that dispiriting wet blanket of sadness and despair!

To put it more soberly, — accept once for all that this thing has to be done, that it is the only thing left for yourself or the earth. Outside are earthquakes and Hitlers and a collapsing civilisation and — generally speaking — the jackal in the flood? All the more reason to tend towards the one thing to be done, the thing you have been sent to aid in getting done. It is difficult and the way long and the encouragement given meagre? What then? Why should you expect so great a thing to be easy or that

there must be either a swift success or none? The difficulties have to be faced and the more cheerfully they are faced, the sooner they will be overcome. The one thing to do is to keep the mantra of success, the determination of victory, the fixed resolve, "Have it I must and have it I will." Impossible? There is no such thing as an impossibility — there are difficulties and things of *longue haleine*, but no impossibles. What one is determined fixedly to do, will get done now or later — it becomes possible.

There — that is my counterblast to your variations on Schopenhauer. I conclude — drive out dark despair and go bravely on with your poetry, your novels — and your Yoga. As the darkness disappears, the inner doors too will open.

Perseverance

Whatever method is used, persistence and perseverance are essential. For whatever method is used, the complexity of the natural resistance will be there to combat it.

*

One who fears monotony and wants something new would not be able to do Yoga or at least this Yoga which needs an inexhaustible perseverance and patience. The fear of death shows a vital weakness which is also contrary to a capacity for Yoga. Equally, one who is under the domination of his passions, would find the Yoga difficult and, unless supported by a true inner call and a sincere and strong aspiration for the spiritual consciousness and union with the Divine, might very easily fall fatally and his effort come to nothing.

*

There can be no doubt about the Divine Grace. It is perfectly true also that if a man is sincere, he will reach the Divine. But it does not follow that he will reach immediately, easily and without delay. Your error is there, to fix for God a term, five years, six years, and doubt because the effect is not yet there. A man may be centrally sincere and yet there may be many things

that have to be changed in him before realisation can begin. His sincerity must enable him to persevere always — for it is a longing for the Divine that nothing can quench, neither delay nor disappointment nor difficulty nor anything else.

You have got troubled again because you have allowed your mind to become active again in its ignorance, questioning, trying to refute the simplest and most established spiritual truths, trying to decide without waiting for the inner knowledge. Throw all that away and go on in quietude, not minding if it takes short or long for things to open up. That was what you had undertaken to do. Keep to it and, however slowly, the consciousness will open and light come.

*

Keep quietude, persevere. These are the clouds that cover the growing Light; but the true consciousness is there increasing behind the clouds.

*

There is no such impossibility of your victory over the harder parts of your nature as you imagine. There is only needed the perseverance to go on till this resistance breaks down and the psychic which is not absent nor unmanifest is able to dominate the others. That has to be done whether you stay here or not and to go is likely only to increase the difficulty and imperil the final result — it cannot help you. It is here that the struggle however acute has, because of the immediate presence of the Mother, the best chance and certitude of a solution and successful ending.

Endurance

[*Endurance:*] The power to go through effort, difficulty or trouble without getting fatigued, depressed, discouraged or impatient and without breaking off the effort or giving up one's aim or resolution.

Resolution

A resolution means the will to try to get a thing done by the given time. It is not a binding “promise” that the thing will be done by that time. Even if it is not, the endeavour will have to continue, just as if no date had been fixed.

Firmness

Whether by tapasya or surrender does not matter, the one thing is to be firm in setting one’s face to the goal. Once one has set one’s feet on the way, how can one draw back from it to something inferior? If one keeps firm, falls do not matter, one rises up again and goes forward. If one is firm towards the goal, there can be on the way to the Divine no eventual failure. And if there is something within you that drives, as surely there is, falterings or falls or failures of faith make no eventual difference. One has to go on till the struggle is over and there is the straight and open and thornless way before us.

*

One cannot say whether the conquest is near or not — one has to go on steadily with the process of the sadhana without thinking of near and far, fixed on the aim, not elated if it seems to come close, not depressed if it still seems to be far.

*

You have only to remain quiet and firm in your following of the path and your will to go to the end. If you do that, circumstances will in the end be obliged to shape themselves to your will, because it will be the Divine Will in you.

Chapter Twelve

Vigilance

Vigilance, Discrimination, Control

Yes, the vigilance is very necessary — to remain *jāgrat* and *apramatta* was always considered as a main requisite by the Yogins.

*

Openness and, whenever needed, passivity, but to the highest consciousness, not to anything that comes.

Therefore, there must be a certain quiet vigilance even in the passivity. Otherwise there may be either wrong movements or inertia.

*

Yes; vigilance should not be relaxed. In fact, it is only as the automatic knowledge and action are established in the being that the constant vigilance ceases to be needed — even then it cannot be given up absolutely until there is the full Light.

*

To give up restraint would be to give free play to the vital and that would mean leave for all kinds of forces to enter in. So long as there is not the supramental consciousness controlling and penetrating everything, in all the being from the overmind downwards, there is an ambiguous play of forces, and each force, however divine in origin, may be used by the Powers of light or intercepted as it passes through the mind and the vital by the Powers of darkness. Vigilance, discrimination, control cannot be abandoned till the complete victory has been won and the consciousness transmuted.

*

Grace is all right, but there should also be care and vigilance.

In putting the cycle, you should first observe and be sure that it will stand steady before you withdraw your hand from it or loosen too much your hold.

*

If you want the divine life, you must remain absolutely *unexcited and quiet*. Not careless, but always on your guard, sober, vigilant. “Madcaps” cannot contain the Power of the Mother, only those who are calm, poised, balanced. So do not be “something of a madcap”.

Section Three

The Foundation of the Sadhana

Chapter One

Peace — The Basis of the Sadhana

Peace Is the First Condition

Peace and purity of the consciousness are the very foundation of the necessary change in the nature.

*

Peace is necessary for all; without peace and an increasing purity, even if one opens, one cannot receive perfectly all that comes down through the opening. Light too is necessary for all — without light one cannot take full advantage of all that comes down.

*

Peace is necessary for the higher states to develop.

*

Equanimity and peace in all conditions in all parts of the being is the first foundation of the Yogic status. Either Light (bringing with it knowledge) or Force (bringing strength and dynamism of many kinds) or Ananda (bringing love and joy of existence) can come next according to the trend of the nature. But peace is the first condition without which nothing else can be stable.

*

The first thing that you have to bring down is a positive, complete and enduring peace from above — that is the only foundation on which the rest can be done, i.e. the development of the higher consciousness, force, knowledge, love, Ananda.

*

What you are doing is entirely the right thing and nothing more is needed. The peace you feel is the basis, the foundation for

the transformation, all the rest will be built on it. To open to the Divine Forces with a quiet and strong aspiration, to become conscious of their working, to allow quietly that working and calmly to contain it, seconding it with one's aspiration, getting more and more knowledge and understanding of what is being done as one goes on — this is the sound and natural way of the Yoga.

*

A quiet aspiration can be as effective as an intense call. Peace is the basis of the sadhana.

*

The meditation experience seems to be developing in the right direction. Before it was only an opening; but to get something settled, there must be this assimilation and the growth in stability, in peace. Peace is the basis of the spiritual change — all the rest falls into the peace and is sustained on it as on a sure foundation.

*

Stability is indeed a great — the first necessity, like the foundations of a house. I am so glad to hear that you feel it growing in you.

Peace, Calm, Wideness

At last you have the true foundation of the sadhana. This calm, peace and surrender are the right atmosphere for all the rest to come, knowledge, strength, Ananda. Let it become complete.

It does not remain when engaged in work because it is still confined to the mind proper which has only just received the gift of silence. When the new consciousness is fully formed and has taken entire possession of the vital nature and the physical being (the vital as yet is only touched or dominated by the silence, not possessed by it), then this defect will disappear.

The quiet consciousness of peace you now have in the mind

must become not only calm but wide. You must feel it everywhere, yourself in it and all in it. This also will help to bring the calm as a basis into the action.

The wider your consciousness becomes, the more you will be able to receive from above. The Shakti will be able to descend and bring strength and light as well as peace into the system. What you feel as narrow and limited in you is the physical mind; it can only widen if this wider consciousness and the light come down and possess the nature.

The physical inertia from which you suffer is likely to lessen and disappear only when strength from above descends into the system.

Remain quiet, open yourself and call the divine Shakti to confirm the calm and peace, to widen the consciousness and to bring into it as much light and power as it can at present receive and assimilate.

Take care not to be over-eager, as this may disturb again such quiet and balance as has been already established in the vital nature.

Have confidence in the final result and give time for the Power to do its work.

*

Wideness and calmness are the foundation of the Yogic consciousness and the best condition for inner growth and experience. If a wide calm can be established in the physical consciousness, occupying and filling the very body and all its cells, that can become the basis for its transformation; in fact, without this wideness and calmness the transformation is hardly possible.

Difficulties, Disturbances and Peace

Aspire, concentrate in the right spirit and, whatever the difficulties, you are sure to attain the aim you have put before you.

It is in the peace behind and that “something truer” in you that you must learn to live and feel it to be yourself. You must

regard the rest as not your real self, but only a flux of changing or recurring movements on the surface which are sure to go as the true self emerges.

Peace is the true remedy; distraction by hard work is only a temporary relief — although a certain amount of work is necessary for the proper balance of the different parts of the being. To feel the peace above or about your head is a first step; you have to get connected with it and it must descend into you and fill your mind and life and body and surround you so that you live in it — for this peace is one sign of the Divine's presence with you, and once you have it all the rest will begin to come.

Truth in speech and truth in thought are very important. The more you can feel falsehood as being not part of yourself, as coming on you from outside, the easier it will be to reject and refuse it.

Persevere and what is still crooked will be made straight and you will know and feel concretely the truth of the Divine's presence and your faith will be justified by direct experience.

*

So long as the mind is restless, it is not possible to get at the inner Truth. Calm, peace, quietude — that is the first necessary condition.

*

To be calm, undisturbed and quiet is not the first condition for sadhana but for siddhi. It is only a few people (very few, one, two, three, four in a hundred sadhaks) who can get it from the first. Most have to go through a long preparation before they can get anywhere near it. Even afterwards when they begin to feel the peace and calm, it takes time to establish it — they swing between peace and disturbance for a fairly long time until all parts of the nature have accepted the truth and the peace. So there is no reason for you to suppose you cannot progress or arrive. You are finding a great difficulty with one part of your nature which has been accustomed to open itself to these feelings, separation from the Mother and attachment to relatives,

and is not willing to give them up — that is all. But everybody finds such obstinate difficulties in that part of the nature, even the most successful sadhaks here. One has to persevere until the light conquers there.

*

It is the quietness in which the Force can act and an entire reliance on that Force to do for you what is necessary — and for the rest a quiet vigilance not to consent to the confusion and restlessness — that you must achieve. It has been evident throughout since the working in you began that this is the only possible foundation for your sadhana.

*

That is the right way — to keep the peace of the higher consciousness, then even if there is vital disturbance, it will be only on the surface. The foundation will remain till the Force can release the true vital.

*

Detachment, silence, inner peace are certainly indispensable for the spiritual progress — a quiet peace-filled detachment. In that peace the Force must do its work. Attacks of confusion, pains etc. — the one thing to arrive at is to be able to stand back from them, to feel detachment from them, separate and call down the Force to act. Whenever one can do that, the attack, the difficulty after a time retires — or even if it lasts a little cannot disturb what has been gained.

*

The depression and vital struggle must have been due to some defect of over-eagerness and straining for a result in your former effort — so that when a fall in the consciousness came it was a depressed, disappointed and confused vital that came to the surface giving full entry to the suggestions of doubt, despair and inertia from the adverse side of Nature. You have to move towards a firm basis of calm and equality in the vital and

physical no less than in the mental consciousness; let there be the full downflow of Power and Ananda, but into a firm adhara capable of containing it — it is a complete equality that gives that capacity and firmness.

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When the peace of the higher consciousness descends, it brings always with it this tendency towards equality, samata, because without samata peace is always liable to be attacked by the waves of the lower nature.

Chapter Two

Equality — The Chief Support

Equality or Samata

There can be no firm foundation in sadhana without equality, *samatā*. Whatever the unpleasantness of circumstances, however disagreeable the conduct of others, you must learn to receive them with a perfect calm and without any disturbing reaction. These things are the test of equality. It is easy to be calm and equal when things go well and people and circumstances are pleasant; it is when they are the opposite that the completeness of the calm, peace, equality can be tested, reinforced, made perfect.

*

Yogic Samata is equality of soul, equanimity founded on the sense of the one Self, the one Divine everywhere — seeing the One in spite of all differences, degrees, disparities in the manifestation. The mental principle of equality tries to ignore or else to destroy the differences, degrees and disparities, to act as if all were equal there or to try and make all equal. It is like Hriday, the nephew of Ramakrishna, who when he got the touch from Ramakrishna began to shout, “Ramakrishna, you are the Brahman and I too am the Brahman; there is no difference between us”, till Ramakrishna, as he refused to be quiet, had to withdraw the power. Or like the disciple who refused to listen to the Mahout and stood before the elephant, saying, “I am Brahman”, until the elephant took him up in his trunk and put him aside. When he complained to his Guru, the Guru said, “Yes, but why didn’t you listen to the Mahout Brahman? That was why the elephant Brahman had to lift you up and put you out of harm’s way.” In the manifestation there are two sides to the Truth and you cannot ignore either.

*

Samata means a wide universal peace, calm, equanimity, an equal feeling of all in the Divine.

*

Equality is to remain unmoved within in all conditions.

*

Equality is the chief support of the true spiritual consciousness and it is this from which the sadhak deviates when he allows a vital movement to carry him away in feeling or speech or action. Equality is not the same thing as forbearance, — though undoubtedly a settled equality immensely extends, even illimitably, a man's power of endurance and forbearance.

Equality means a quiet and unmoved mind and vital; it means not to be touched or disturbed by things that happen or things said or done to you but to look at them with a straight look, free from the distortions created by personal feeling, and to try to understand what is behind them, why they happen, what is to be learnt from them, what is it in oneself which they are cast against and what inner profit or progress one can make out of them; it means self-mastery over the vital movements, anger and sensitiveness and pride as well as desire and the rest, not to let them get hold of the emotional being and disturb the inner peace, not to speak and act in the rush and impulsion of these things, always to act and speak out of a calm inner poise of the spirit. It is not easy to have this equality in any full and perfect measure, but one should always try more and more to make it the basis of one's inner state and outer movements.

Equality means another thing — to have an equal view of men and their nature and acts and the forces that move them; it helps one to see the truth about them by pushing away from the mind all personal feeling in one's seeing and judgment and even all mental bias. Personal feeling always distorts and makes one see in men's actions, not only the actions themselves, but things behind them which, more often than not, are not there. Misunderstanding and misjudgment which could have been avoided are the result; things of small consequence assume

large proportions. I have seen that more than half of the untoward happenings of this kind in life are due to this cause. But in ordinary life personal feeling and sensitiveness are a constant part of human nature and may be needed there for self-defence, although, I think, even there, a strong, large and equal attitude towards men and things would be a much better line of defence. But, for a sadhak, to surmount them and live rather in the calm strength of the spirit is an essential part of his progress.

The first condition of inner progress is to recognise whatever is or has been a wrong movement in any part of the nature, — wrong idea, wrong feeling, wrong speech, wrong action, — and by wrong is meant what departs from the Truth, from the higher consciousness and higher self, from the way of the Divine. Once recognised it is admitted, — not glossed over or defended, — and it is offered to the Divine for the Light and Grace to descend and substitute for it the right movement of the true consciousness.

*

Complete samata takes long to establish and it is dependent on three things — the soul's self-giving to the Divine by an inner surrender, the descent of the spiritual calm and peace from above and the steady, long and persistent rejection of all egoistic, rajasic and other feelings that contradict samata.

The first thing to do is to make the full consecration and offering in the heart — the increase of the spiritual calm and the surrender are the condition for making the rejection of ego, rajoguna etc. effective.

Samata and Loyalty to Truth

No doubt hatred and cursing are not the proper attitude. It is true also that to look upon all things and all people with a calm and clear vision, to be uninvolved and impartial in one's judgments is a quite proper Yogic attitude. A condition of perfect samata can be established in which one sees all as equal, friends and enemies included, and is not disturbed by what men do or by what happens. The question is whether this is all that is

demanding from us. If so, then the general attitude will be one of a neutral indifference to everything. But the Gita, which strongly insists on a perfect and absolute samata, goes on to say, "Fight, destroy the adversary, conquer." If there is no kind of general action wanted, no loyalty to Truth as against Falsehood except for one's personal sadhana, no will for the Truth to conquer, then the samata of indifference will suffice. But here there is a work to be done, a Truth to be established against which immense forces are arranged, invisible forces which use visible things and persons and actions for their instruments. If one is among the disciples, the seekers of this Truth, one has to take sides for the Truth, to stand against the Forces that attack it and seek to stifle it. Arjuna wanted not to stand for either side, to refuse any action of hostility even against assailants; Sri Krishna, who insisted so much on samata, strongly rebuked his attitude and insisted equally on his fighting the adversary. "Have samata," he said, "and seeing clearly the Truth, fight." Therefore to take sides with the Truth and to refuse to concede anything to the Falsehood that attacks, to be unflinchingly loyal and against the hostiles and the attackers, is not inconsistent with equality. It is personal and egoistic feeling that has to be thrown away; hatred and vital ill-will have to be rejected. But loyalty and refusal to compromise with the assailants and the hostiles or to dally with their ideas and demands and say, "After all we can compromise with what they ask from us", or to accept them as companions and our own people — these things have a great importance. If the attack were a physical menace to the work and the leaders and doers of the work, one would see this at once. But because the attack is of a subtler kind, can a passive attitude be right? It is a spiritual battle inward and outward; by neutrality and compromise or even passivity one may allow the enemy Forces to pass and crush down the Truth and its children. If you look at it from this point you will see that if the inner spiritual equality is right, the active loyalty and firm taking of sides is as right, and the two cannot be incompatible.

I have of course treated it as a general question apart from all particular cases or personal questions. It is a principle of

action that has to be seen in its right light and proportions.

*

It [*samata*] is to face it [*an attack*] without being disturbed and to reject it calmly. Whether one tries to remedy or not remedy should make no difference. Only when one acts against it, one must do it calmly, without anger, excitement, grief or any other disturbing movement.

Samata and Ego

Samata does not mean the absence of ego, but the absence of desire and attachment.

*

I have said “samata” shows absence of desire and attachment — the ego-sense may disappear or it may remain in a subtilised and widened form — it depends on the person.

Equality and Detachment

As for the detachment of which you speak, it comes by attaining the poise of the Spirit, the equality of which the Gita speaks always, but also by sight, by knowledge. For instance, looking at what happened in 1914 — or for that matter at all that is and has been happening in human history — the eye of the Yogin sees not only outward events and persons and causes, but the enormous forces which precipitate them into action. If the men who fought were instruments in the hands of rulers and financiers etc., these in turn were mere puppets in the clutch of these forces. When one is habituated to see the things behind, one is no longer prone to be touched by the outward aspects — or to expect any remedy from political, institutional or social changes; the only way out is through the descent of a consciousness which is not the puppet of these forces but is greater than they are and can force them either to change or disappear.

*

The Yogic attitude consists in calm, detachment, equality, universality — added to this the psychic element, bhakti, love, devotion to the Divine.

Equality in Times of Trouble and Difficulty

Equality is a very important part of this Yoga; it is necessary to keep equality under pain and suffering — and that means to endure firmly and calmly, not to be restless or troubled or depressed or despondent, to go on in a steady faith in the Divine Will. But equality does not include inert acceptance. If, for instance, there is temporary failure of some endeavour in the sadhana, one has to keep equality, not to be troubled or despondent, but one has not to accept the failure as an indication of the Divine Will and give up the endeavour. You ought rather to find out the reason and meaning of the failure and go forward in faith towards victory. So with illness — you have not to be troubled, shaken or restless, but you have not to accept illness as the Divine Will, but rather look upon it as an imperfection of the body to be got rid of as you try to get rid of vital imperfections or mental errors.

*

To be free from all preference and receive joyfully whatever comes from the Divine Will is not possible at first for any human being. What one should have at first is the constant idea that what the Divine wills is always for the best even when the mind does not see how it is so, to accept with resignation what one cannot yet accept with gladness and so to arrive at a calm equality which is not shaken even when on the surface there may be passing movements of a momentary reaction to outward happenings. If that is once firmly founded, the rest can come.

*

It is very good that you have had this experience; for this kind of consciousness full of equality (samata) is just the thing that

has to be acquired and the very basis on which a sound Yogic consciousness full of the Mother can be built up. If it can be fixed, then most of the trouble and difficulty of sadhana disappears — all necessary changes can proceed quietly without these disturbances and upsets which break and hamper the progress. Also in it there can grow a right and clear understanding of people and things and how to deal with them without friction which can make work and action much more easy. Once this consciousness has come, it is bound to return and increase.

*

Through an equality gained by strong mental control [*the worldly man is able to bear all kinds of difficulty*] — but that is not *samatā*, it is *titikṣā*, the power to bear which is only a first step or a first element of *samatā*.

*

It is not enough to have that equality and silence and freedom only when you are in communion with the sky and sea. It is at all times that you must be able to receive it from above — then there will be a true foundation of the sadhana.

*

You must establish a basis of equanimity within — the peace of the inner being which these surface movements cannot touch, — then if they come on the surface, there will be no violent reaction and they can be rejected with more ease.

*

The sadhak has to keep his quietude and faith and equanimity in all conditions — even when the higher consciousness and experience are not there.

*

One has to proceed on a basis of firm quietude and equanimity with a steady aspiration. It is only if there is a vital excitement that progress becomes a strain and relaxation is needed; for this

demand for relaxation is the vital's counterpart of excitement and its way of relief from it.

*

A perfect spiritual equanimity throughout the being is a sure defence against all the perturbations that might come through the environmental nature.

*

The difficulty of getting the perfect equanimity is a fact, but not for you alone — it has been so for all of us — it is too universal for you to make it a legitimate ground of discouragement. Nothing is more necessary, but nothing is more difficult. So there is no reason why you should discount my encouragement. My encouragement is given in spite of difficulties and not because I think there are none. Never mind these momentary mishaps — shake off the mood and once more *en avant*.

Chapter Three

Quiet and Calm

Quiet, Calm, Peace, Silence

The words “peace, calm, quiet, silence” have each their own shade of meaning, but it is not easy to define them.

Peace — *śānti*.

Calm — *sthīratā*.

Quiet — *acañcalatā*.

Silence — *niścāla-nīravatā*.

Quiet is a condition in which there is no restlessness or disturbance.

Calm is a still, unmoved condition which no disturbance can affect — it is a less negative condition than quiet.

Peace is a still more positive condition; it carries with it a sense of settled and harmonious rest and deliverance.

Silence is a state in which either there is no movement of the mind or vital or else a great stillness which no surface movement can pierce or alter.

*

Quiet is rather negative — it is the absence of disturbance.

Calm is a positive tranquillity which can exist in spite of superficial disturbances.

Peace is a calm deepened into something that is very positive amounting almost to a tranquil waveless Ananda.

Silence is the absence of all motion of thought or other vibration of activity.

*

Quietness is when the mind or vital is not troubled, restless, drawn about by or crowded with thoughts and feelings. Especially when either is detached and looks at these as a surface movement, we say that the mind or vital is quiet.

Calmness is a more positive condition, not merely an absence of restlessness, over-activity or trouble. When there is a clear sense of great or strong tranquillity which nothing troubles or can trouble, then we say that calm is established.

*

Calm is a strong and positive quietude, firm and solid—ordinary quietude is mere negation, simply the absence of disturbance.

Peace is a deep quietude where no disturbance can come—a quietude with a sense of established security and release.

In complete silence there are either no thoughts or, if they come, they are felt as something coming from outside and not disturbing the silence.

Silence of the mind, peace or calm in the mind are three things that are very close together and bring each other.

*

These [*tranquillity and stillness*] are general words, of a general and not a special Yogic significance. Quiet, calm and peace can all be described as tranquillity, silence is akin to what is meant by stillness.

Quietude

Quiet means to keep the inner quietude and keep turned to the Mother with the aspiration towards or call for the return of the right condition.

*

Remember first that an inner quietude, caused by the purification of the restless mind and vital, is the first condition of a secure sadhana. Remember, next, that to feel the Mother's presence while in external action is already a great step and one that cannot be attained without a considerable inner progress. Probably, what you feel you need so much but cannot define is a constant and vivid sense of the Mother's force working in you, descending

from above and taking possession of the different planes of your being. That is often a prior condition for the twofold movement of ascent and descent; it will surely come in time. These things can take a long time to begin visibly, especially when the mind is accustomed to be very active and has not the habit of mental silence. When that veiling activity is there, much work has to be carried on behind the mobile screen of the mind and the sadhak thinks nothing is happening when really much preparation is being done. If you want a more swift and visible progress, it can only be by bringing your psychic to the front through a constant self-offering. Aspire intensely, but without impatience.

*

Your mind is too full of demands and desires. If you want to be able to practise the Yoga here, you must throw them from you and learn quietude, desirelessness, simplicity and surrender. It is these you must get first; other things can come afterwards — for this is the only true foundation of the sadhana.

*

Always get back to quietude. It is through the quietude that the right attitude and understanding and movements come back. It is natural for the lower vital to be made up of feelings, impulses and desires and to be attached to outer things — but that is only a part of you. There is also the psychic and the higher mind and higher vital which only need quietude and the help of the Force and Peace behind them to come forward more strongly and dominate over the lower vital and help to change it.

*

You are too easily invaded by these things [*from outside*]. You must call for a calm quietness in the vital and physical and a Force in you and around you which will repel all foreign forces the moment they appear. If there is entire quietude and strength in the nerves, these outside forces will not easily be able to touch you.

*

You should realise that while quiet surroundings are desirable, the true quiet is within and no other will give you the condition you want.

*

The inner spiritual progress does not depend on outer conditions so much as on the way we react to them from within — that has always been the ultimate verdict of spiritual experience. It is why we insist on taking the right attitude and persisting in it, on an inner state not dependent on outer circumstances, a state of equality and calm, if it cannot be at once of inner happiness, on going more and more within and looking from within outwards instead of living in the surface mind which is always at the mercy of the shocks and blows of life. It is only from that inner state that one can be stronger than life and its disturbing forces and hope to conquer.

To remain quiet within, firm in the will to go through, refusing to be disturbed or discouraged by difficulties or fluctuations, that is one of the first things to be learned on the Path. To do otherwise is to encourage the instability of consciousness, the difficulty of keeping experience of which you complain. It is only if you keep quiet and steady within that the lines of experience can go on with some steadiness — though they are never without periods of interruption and fluctuation; but these, if properly treated, can then become periods of assimilation and exhaustion of difficulty rather than denials of sadhana.

A spiritual atmosphere is more important than outer conditions; if one can get that and also create one's own spiritual air to breathe in and live in it, that is the true condition of progress.

*

If you can achieve quietude followed by an upward openness, it is better than the effort which sways between strong experiences and strong adverse reactions.

*

Even to have the quietude and calm somewhere behind or in

a passive way is more important and helpful than it seems. It provides a sort of permanent ground on which ultimately a lasting peace, power and joy can be built. If one can feel one part of the being always quiet in spite of the disturbances in another part, then one has made the first firm step towards a permanent change.

*

This state of emptiness and quietude and absence of reactions is regarded by Yogins as a great step in advance, especially the equality and indifference to what is said or done. For the moment it is a neutral condition only, but that it is usually at first. Afterwards it changes into peace or even into an equal Ananda undisturbed by anything that can happen.

*

The quiet and calm have to be increased so as to be a firm basis for the love and Ananda.

Quiet Mind

A quiet mind is a mind that does not get disturbed, is not restless and always vibrating with the need of mental action.

*

It is not possible to make a foundation in Yoga if the mind is restless. The first thing needed is quiet in the mind. Also, to merge the personal consciousness is not the first aim of the Yoga; the first aim is to open it to a higher spiritual consciousness and for this also a quiet mind is the first need.

*

The first step is a quiet mind—silence is a farther step, but quietude must be there, and by a quiet mind I mean a mental consciousness within which sees thoughts arrive to it and move about, but does not itself feel that it is thinking or identify itself with the thoughts or call them its own. Thoughts, mental

movements may pass through it as wayfarers appear and pass from elsewhere through a silent country — the quiet mind observes them or does not care to observe them but in either case does not become active or lose its quietude. Silence is more than quietude; it can be gained by banishing thought altogether from the inner mind keeping it voiceless or quite outside; but more easily it is established by a descent from above — one feels it coming down, entering and occupying, or surrounding the personal consciousness which then tends to merge itself in the vast impersonal silence.

*

To get rid of the random thoughts of the surface physical mind is not easy. It is sometimes done by a sudden miracle as in my own case, but that is rare. Some get it done by a slow process of concentration, but that may take a very long time. It is easier to have a quiet mind with things that come in passing on the surface, as people pass in the street, and one is free to attend to them or not — that is to say, there develops a sort of double mind, one inner silent and concentrated when it pleases to be so, a quiet witness when it chooses to see thoughts and things, — the other meant for surface dynamism. It is probable in your case that this will come as soon as these descents of peace, intensity or Ananda get strong enough to occupy the whole system.

*

How can you throw away the mind unless you want to disappear from manifested existence? It has first to be made quiet and open to the higher consciousness and transformed by the descent of the higher consciousness.

*

First aspire and pray to the Mother for quiet in the mind, purity, calm and peace, an awakened consciousness, intensity of devotion, strength and spiritual capacity to face all inner and outer difficulties and go through to the end of the Yoga. If the consciousness awakens and there is devotion and intensity of

aspiration, it will be possible for the mind, provided it learns quietude and peace, to grow in knowledge.

*

It is in the quiet mind that the true observation and knowledge come.

*

You have to become conscious [*in writing poetry*] as in Yoga. The mind has to be silent and you have to become aware of the inspiration as it comes and its source and of the mixture that comes on the way. The more the mind becomes quiet, the more all this is possible.

*

All quietude of the mind makes good conditions for the receptivity to act.

*

As I have said already, in all matters, work and study as well as in the inner progress in the Yoga, the same thing is needed if you want perfection — quietude of mind, becoming aware of the Force, opening to it, allowing it to work in you. To aim at perfection is all right, but restlessness of mind is not the way towards it. To dwell upon your imperfections and be always thinking how to do and what to do, is not the way either. Remain quiet, open yourself, allow the consciousness to grow — call the Force to work. As it grows and as the Force works, you will become aware not only of what is imperfect, but of the movement which will take you (not at one step, but progressively) out of the imperfection and you will then only have to follow that movement.

If you overstrain yourself by too prolonged work or a restless working, that disturbs or weakens the nervous system, the vital-physical, and lays one open to the action of the wrong forces. To work but quietly so as to have a steady progress is the right way.

*

1. A quiet mind makes consciousness easier.

2. If you keep a quiet mind and a constant contact with myself and the Mother and the true Light and Force, then things will become easy and straight — it is the *only* way to get to the realisation.

3. It is a mistake to think that this method will not lead you to the supramental realisation. It is the only way to advance towards the supramental change.

4. It is because you become doubtful and begin to follow after other ways and other (lower) experiences that you get again confused and full of incertitudes.

5. Keep to *one* way, the way shown to you by me. It is by following this way that you can reach the wideness you want — if you run about on many ways, that will bring not wideness but confusion.

6. Here in the lower nature there are many things, but they are in a state of disharmony, so to follow them all together means disharmony, confusion, want of organisation, fight. In the higher (supramental) nature there is a greater wideness and much more is there than in the lower nature; but all is harmony, organisation, peace. Follow therefore the one way that leads to the higher supramental nature.

7. Do not be impatient, because full knowledge does not come to you at once. In quietude of mind keep the contact, let the true Light and Force work and with time all knowledge will come and the Truth will grow in you.

*

Do you imagine that a quiet mind cannot reject anything and it is only the unquiet mind that can do it? It is the quiet mind that can best do it. Quiet does not mean inert and tamasic.

*

That is absurd. Doing nothing with the mind is not quiet or silence. It is inactivity that keeps the mind thinking mechanically and discursively instead of concentrating on an object — that is all.

*

Keeping the mind without occupation is not the same thing as peace or silence.

Vacant Mind

Keep the quietude and do not mind if it is for a time an empty quietude; the consciousness is often like a vessel which has to be emptied of its mixed or undesirable contents; it has to be kept vacant for a while till it can be filled with things new and true, right and pure. The one thing to be avoided is the refilling of the cup with the old turbid contents. Meanwhile wait, open yourself upwards, call very quietly and steadily, not with a too restless eagerness, for the peace to come into the silence and, once the peace is there, for the joy and the presence.

*

The difference between a vacant mind and a calm mind is this, that when the mind is vacant, there is no thought, no conception, no mental action of any kind, except an essential perception of things without the formed idea; but in the calm mind, it is the substance of the mental being that is still, so still that nothing disturbs it. If thoughts or activities come, they do not rise at all out of the mind, but they come from outside and cross the mind as a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even incessantly and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness — originating nothing from itself but receiving from Above and giving it a mental form without adding anything of its own, calmly, dispassionately, though with the joy of the Truth and the happy power and light of its passage.

Calm

It is the first secret of Yoga, to maintain the inner calm always

and from that calm to meet everything.

*

It is not necessary [*in a calm mind*] that there should be no thought. When there is no thought, it is silence. But the mind is said to be calm when thoughts, feelings, etc. may pass through it, but it is not disturbed. It feels that the thoughts are not its own; it observes them perhaps; but it is not perturbed by anything.

*

What you have written about your condition seems to be correct as a whole. There is certainly a greater calm within and a freedom of the inner being which was not there once. It is this which gives you the equality you feel there and the capacity to escape from the more serious disturbances. When one has this basis of inner calm, the difficulties and imperfections of the surface can be dealt with without upsets, depressions, etc. The power to go among others without any invasion is also due to the same cause.

*

Do not attach so much importance to mistakes or insist on your non-receptiveness and unconsciousness. You have only to turn always to the Force that gives you calmness and in the calmness you will become progressively more and more conscious and receptive.

*

Calm, even if it seems at first only a negative thing, is so difficult to attain that to have it at all must be regarded as a great step in advance.

In reality, calm is not a negative thing; it is the very nature of the Sat-Purusha and the positive foundation of the divine consciousness. Whatever else is aspired for and gained, this must be kept. Even Knowledge, Power, Ananda, if they come and do not find this foundation, are unable to remain and have to withdraw until the divine purity and peace of the Sat-Purusha are permanently there.

Aspire for the rest of the divine consciousness, but with a calm and deep aspiration. It can be ardent as well as calm, but not impatient, restless or full of rajasic eagerness.

Only in the quiet mind and being can the supramental Truth build its true creation.

*

The calm from above came to you and established your connection with the Above, — and if you hold firmly to it, you will be able to remain calm. But to be rid of these vital disturbances from outside, you have to get down the Power and Will that is also there above — or at least so to be connected with it that it will act whenever you call upon it against the forces of the Ignorance.

*

It is the calm that has come down from above, only you are feeling it from there (mind and heart) and not from above the mind. But you have to find it below the heart and not only from the heart above, — the calm has to spread lower down.

*

The first [*calmness with disturbances on the surface*] is the ordinary fundamental calm of the individual Adhar — the second [*perfect stillness in the body and in the surrounding atmosphere*] is the fundamental limitless calm of the cosmic consciousness, a calm which abides whether separated from all movements or supporting them.

This [*limitless stillness*] is the calm of the Atman, the Self above, silent, immutable and infinite.

Chapter Four

Peace

Peace Is Something Positive

Peace is more positive than calm — there can be a negative calm which is merely an absence of disturbance or trouble, but peace is always something positive bringing not merely a release as calm does but a certain happiness or Ananda of itself. There is also a positive calm, something that stands firm against all things that seek to trouble, not thin and neutral like the negative calm, but strong and massive. Very often the two words are used in the same sense, but one can distinguish them in their true sense as above.

*

In peace there is besides the sense of stillness a harmony that gives a feeling of liberation and full satisfaction.

*

It is very good news. The peace settling in the system and with it a happy activity — that is the basis for your Yoga which I always wanted you to have — a sunny condition in which what has to come in will come in and expand like a bud into flower and what has to fall off will fall off in its time like a slough discarded.

*

The quietude and silence which you feel and the sense of happiness in it are indeed the very basis of successful sadhana. When one has got that, then one may be sure that the sadhana is placing itself on a sound footing. You are also right in thinking that if this quietude is fully established all that is concealed within will come out. It is true also that the happiness of this peace is far greater than anything outer objects can bring — there can be no comparison. To become indifferent to the attraction of outer

objects is one of the first rules of Yoga, for this non-attachment liberates the inner being into peace and the true consciousness. It is only when one sees the Divine in all things that objects get a value for the Yoga, but even then not for their own sake or as objects of desire, but for the sake of the Divine within and as a means of the divine work and manifestation.

Peace Comes Little by Little

To nobody does the divine calm and peace come uninterruptedly in the early stages of the Yoga — it comes little by little — it is sometimes absent for long periods together, or there are strong attacks which cloud it over. It is by long sadhana that one gets the permanent peace.

*

In the beginning the peace and calmness comes like that only for a short time. The Adhar cannot keep it, its own natural condition being different. But afterwards the power of holding increases until in some part of the being at least it is constant.

A Settled or Established Peace

It is very good indeed. The peace and silence must settle deep in, so deep that whatever comes from outside can only pass over the surface without troubling the settled calm within — it is good also that the meditation comes of itself. It means that the Yoga-Force is beginning to take up the sadhana.

*

Yes, a settled peace and strength supporting the intensity and from which everything foreign falls off, is the true basis.

*

The first thing to do in the sadhana is to get a settled peace and silence in the mind. Otherwise you may have experiences, but nothing will be permanent. It is in the silent mind that the true

consciousness can be built.

A quiet mind does not mean that there will be no thoughts or mental movements at all, but that these will be on the surface and you will feel your true being within separate from them, observing but not carried away, able to watch and judge them and reject all that has to be rejected and to accept and keep to all that is true consciousness and true experience.

Passivity of the mind is good, but take care to be passive only to the Truth and to the touch of the Divine Shakti. If you are passive to the suggestions and influences of the lower nature, you will not be able to progress or else you will expose yourself to adverse forces which may take you far away from the true path of Yoga.

Aspire to the Mother for this settled quietness and calm of the mind and this constant sense of the inner being in you standing back from the external nature and turned to the Light and Truth.

The forces that stand in the way of sadhana are the forces of the lower mental, vital and physical nature. Behind them are adverse powers of the mental, vital and subtle physical worlds. These can be dealt with only after the mind and heart have become one-pointed and concentrated in the single aspiration to the Divine.

*

If the peace or silence is once absolutely established, no amount of movements on the surface can impair or abolish it. It can bear all the movements of the universe and yet be the same.

*

When the peace is fully established everywhere in the being, these things [*reactions in the lower vital*] will not be able to shake it. They may come first as ripples on the surface, then only as suggestions which one looks at or does not care to look at, but in either case they don't get inside, affect or disturb at all.

It is difficult to explain, but it is something like a mountain at which one throws stones — if conscious all through the

mountain may feel the touch of the stones, but the thing would be so slight and superficial that it would not be in the least affected. In the end even that reaction disappears.

*

The peace liberates from all dependence on outer contacts — it brings what the Gita calls the *ātmarati*. But at first there is a difficulty in keeping it intact when there is the contact with others because the consciousness has the habit of running outwards in speech or external interchange or else of coming down to the normal level. One must therefore be very careful until it is fixed; once fixed it usually defends itself, for all outer contacts become surface things to a consciousness full of the higher peace.

*

Even when there is the peace and the wideness, these things [*imagination about old enjoyments*] can float on the surface and try to come in — only then they do not occupy the consciousness but touch it merely. It is what was regarded by the old Yogis as a mechanical remnant of Prakriti, a continuation of its blind habit which remained after the essential liberation of the self. It was treated lightly as of no importance — but that view is not tenable in our sadhana which aims not only at a liberation of the Purusha but at a *complete* transformation of the Prakriti also.

*

That is of course how it should be. It should go so far indeed that you will feel this peace and vastness as your very self, the abiding stuff of your consciousness — unchangeably there.

Peace in the Mind, Vital and Physical

Yes, certainly, there is a mental peace, a vital peace, a peace of the physical Nature. It is the peace of a higher consciousness that descends from above.

*

The silence and peace are there waiting to manifest. Let the mind and vital give all themselves and they will pour in and reveal themselves.

*

There can be peace in the mind even when the vital is not quite at rest or peace in the inner being even if the surface is disturbed. Consciousness cannot feel at rest and free, if there is no peace.

*

If you get peace, then to clean the vital becomes easy. If you simply clean and clean and do nothing else, you go very slowly — for the vital gets dirty again and has to be cleaned a hundred times. The peace is something that is clean in itself — so to get it is a positive way of securing your object. To look for dirt only and clean is the negative way.

*

When the light and peace are full in the vital and physical consciousness, it is this that remains always as a basis for the right movement of the whole nature.

*

It is the same peace [*in the physical as in the vital*] — but is felt materially in the material substance, concretely in the physical mind and nervous being, as well as psychologically in the mind and vital or subtly in the subtle body.

*

I presume that [*feeling peace concretely between the lobes of the brain*] would mean that the peace had become or was becoming very material and solid and physically tangible — “peace in the cells”. Everything is a “substance” — even peace, consciousness, ananda, — only there are different orders of substance.

*

Certainly, peace, purity and silence can be felt in all material

things — for the Divine Self is there in all.

*

Nature by itself is always full of peace — a peace which is fundamental and even the perturbations of mind and life cannot break.

Peace in the Inner Being

It is quite usual to feel an established peace in the inner being even if there is disturbance on the surface. In fact that is the usual condition of the Yogi before he has attained the absolute samata in all the being.

*

When the peace is deep or wide, it is usually in the inner being. The outer parts do not ordinarily go beyond a certain measure of quietude — they get deep peace only when they are flooded with it from the inner being.

*

The peace starts in the inner being — it is spiritual and psychic but it overflows the outer being — when it is there in the activity, it means either that the ordinary restless mind, vital, physical has been submerged by the flood of the inner peace or, at a more advanced stage, that they have been partially or wholly changed into thoughts, forces, emotions, sensations which have in their very stuff an essence of inner silence and peace.

*

If peace becomes permanent in the inner being, then the sub-nature becomes an external and superficial thing — one part of the consciousness is then free; unmoved by anything that happens, it regards the surface turmoil as something not belonging to itself. If the peace extends in the same way into the external parts also, then the whole being becomes free and the inferior nature is felt only as something moving about in the atmosphere, trying to enter but unable to do so. But this of course happens

only when the descents of Peace have turned into a massive stability of Peace.

*

Yes, the inward move is the right one. To live within in the peace and silence is the first necessity. I spoke of the wideness because in the wideness of silence and peace (which the Yogins recognise as the realisation of self at once individual and universal) is the basis for harmonising the inward and the outward. It will come.

*

Peace is never easy to get in the life of the world and never constant, unless one lives deep within and bears the external activities as only a surface front of our being.

Passive Peace

Passive peace is not supposed to do anything. It is by the complete solid presence of peace alone that all disturbance is pushed out to the surface or outside the consciousness.

*

It is not the innate character of passive peace that it can only concentrate in inaction. It can be there and concentrate in or behind action also.

Peace and Inertia

The Peace is not of the nature of inertia, but the inertia (tamas) is a degradation of peace or rest as rajas is a degradation of divine Force. So when the physical is invited to peace and cannot receive it, it brings up inertia instead.

*

Rest of the being from effort, disturbance etc.¹ The Spirit is

¹ *The correspondent wrote to Sri Aurobindo, "You have said, 'The inertia (tamas) is a degradation of peace or rest.' What sort of rest do you mean?" — Ed.*

eternally at rest even in the midst of action — peace gives this spiritual rest. Tamas is a degradation of it and leads to inaction.

Peace and Force

The peace is the condition of the right play of the Force. Force and Peace are two different powers of the Divine.

*

Peace is the first condition, but peace of itself does not bring Force — it is a receptacle of Force, not a bringer of Force.

*

A peaceful state is the basis of the Yogic consciousness. It is only when that is complete and fully established that the true intensity and energy can come.

*

The greater the quietude, the greater the energy that can be received.

Peace, Love and Joy

It is the Vaishnava feeling that the Vedantic peace is not enough, the love and joy of the Divine is more precious. But unless the two things go together, the love and joy felt is perhaps intense, but impermanent, and it is also true that it gets easily mixed, misdirected or turns to something that is not the true thing at all. Peace and purity must be got as the foundation of the consciousness, otherwise there is no firm standing ground for the divine play.

*

Active experience of the joy, peace, love, etc. when the direct contact is there; but even when it is not there, a quiet mind, heart and vital waiting and aspiring for the contact and the Presence — this should always be the condition.

No disturbance or confusion due to mere vital-physical impressions and experiences. To throw these away always, not to want them or get interested when they come — this is what is very much needed in you.

Always either the contact and the true experience *or* the quiet peace and aspiration.

Peace, Happiness, Joy, Delight, Ananda

To be full of peace, the heart quiet, not troubled by grief, not excited by joy is a very good condition. As for Ananda, it can come not only with its fullest intensity but with a more enduring persistence when the mind is at peace and the heart delivered from ordinary joy and sorrow. If the mind and heart are restless, changeful, unquiet, Ananda of a kind may come, but it is mixed with vital excitement and cannot abide. One must get peace and calm fixed in the consciousness first, then there is a solid basis on which the Ananda can spread itself and in its turn become an enduring part of the consciousness and the nature.

*

The peace need not be grave or joyless — there should be nothing grey in it — but the gladness or joy or sense of lightness that comes in the peace must be necessarily something internal, self-existent or due to a deepening of experience — it cannot, like the laughter of which you speak, be conveyed by an external cause or dependent upon it, e.g. something amusing, exhilarating etc.

*

It is when one is full of peace that one laughs most gladly. It is an inner condition, not something external like being silent or not laughing. It is a condition of serenity and stillness within in which there is no disturbance even if things go wrong or people are unpleasant or the body feels unwell — the state of serene inner gladness remains the same. It is self-existent.

*

Happiness is a condition of gladness, sense of inner ease and welfare, contentment, a sunlit life — it is more quiet in its nature than joy and delight.

Joy (*harṣa*) is more intense. It is a strong movement of great gladness with an exultation, a leaping up of the vital to take some happiness, good fortune or other thing pleasant to the being.

Delight is an intense joy or an intense pleasure in something or an intensely joyful condition. At its most intense it becomes what is called rapture or ecstasy when one is “carried away” or “lifted out of” oneself by the intensity of the delight.

*

Joy is a vital movement, exciting, restless and transient.

In Ananda there is no excitement, it is a calm and happy and intense spiritual state or spiritual movement.

*

The joy also should be deep within, then it will not conflict with the deeps of peace and inner consciousness.

*

Shanti is peace or calm — it is not Ananda. There can of course be a calm Ananda.

*

Peace is a sign of mukti — Ananda moves towards siddhi.

*

There are two conditions, one of Ananda, another of great calm and equality in which there is no joy or grief. If one attains the latter, afterwards a greater more permanent Ananda becomes possible.

*

The active Ananda can culminate in the shanta Ananda. Also when the shanta Ananda is established, it is the base from which active Ananda arises without disturbing its calmness.

Chapter Five

Silence

Freedom from Thoughts

Silence means freedom from thoughts and vital movements — when the whole consciousness is quite still.

*

It is the silence of the mind and vital — silence implying here not only cessation of thoughts but a stillness of the mental and vital substance. There are varying degrees of depth of this stillness.

*

It is not possible to establish a deep silence all at once unless you can separate yourself from the thoughts, feel them as coming from outside and reject them before they enter. But everybody cannot do that at once.

*

It is quite possible for thoughts to pass without disturbing the silence — but for that you must be perfectly detached from the thoughts and indifferent to them.

*

If there is absolute silence within it is quite natural that the thoughts on entering and touching it should fall off. It is the way in which silence of the outer mind usually comes.

*

In the entirely silent mind there is usually the static sense of the Divine without any active movement. But there can come into it all higher thought and aspiration and movements. There is then no absolute silence but one feels a fundamental silence behind which is not disturbed by any movement.

Silence and True Knowledge

A silent mind is the first step towards true knowledge and the experience of the Divine.

*

I have read again the message of the Yogi quoted in X's letter but apart from the context nothing much or very definite can be made out of it. There are two statements which are clear enough —

“In Silence is wisdom” — it is in the inner silence of the mind that true knowledge can come; for the ordinary activity of the mind only creates surface ideas and representations which are not true knowledge. Speech is usually only the expression of the superficial nature — therefore to throw oneself out too much in such speech wastes the energy and prevents the inward listening which brings the word of true knowledge.

“In listening you will win what you are thinking of” means probably that in the silence will come the true dynamic thought formations which can effectuate or realise themselves. Thought can be a force which realises itself, but the ordinary surface thinking is not of that kind, there is in it more waste of energy than anything else. It is in the thought that comes in a quiet or silent mind that there is power.

“Talk less and gain power” has essentially the same meaning. Not only a truer knowledge, but a greater power comes to one in the quietude and silence of a mind that instead of bubbling on the surface can go into its own depths and listen for what comes from a higher consciousness.

It is probably this that is meant — these are things known to all who have some experience of Yoga.

Silence and Quietness of Mind

Silence is a state of the consciousness which comes of itself from above when you open to the Divine Consciousness — you need not trouble about that now.

A quiet mind, receiving things and looking at them without effervescence or haste, not rushing about or throwing up random ideas, is what is necessary.

*

It is not an undesirable thing for the mind to fall silent, to be free from thoughts and still — for it is oftenest when the mind falls silent that there is the full descent of a wide peace from above and in that wide tranquillity the realisation of the silent Self above the mind spread out in its vastnesses everywhere. Only, when there is the peace and the mental silence, the vital mind tries to rush in and occupy the place or else the mechanical mind tries to raise up for the same purpose its round of trivial habitual thoughts. What the sadhaka has to do is to be careful to reject and hush these outsiders, so that during the meditation at least the peace and quietude of the mind and vital may be complete. This can be done best if you keep a strong and silent will. That will is the will of the Purusha behind the mind; when the mind is at peace, when it is silent one can become aware of the Purusha, silent also, separate from the action of the nature.

To be calm, steady, fixed in the spirit, *dhīra*, *sthira*, this quietude of the mind, this separation of the inner Purusha from the outer Prakriti is very helpful, almost indispensable. So long as the being is subject to the whirl of thoughts or the turmoil of the vital movements one cannot be thus calm and fixed in the spirit. To detach oneself, to stand back from them, to feel them separate from oneself is indispensable.

For the discovery of the true individuality and building up of it in the nature, two things are necessary, first, to be conscious of one's psychic being behind the heart and, next, this separation of the Purusha from the Prakriti. For the true individual is behind veiled by the activities of the outer nature.

*

Silence is always good; but I do not mean by quietness of mind entire silence. I mean a mind free from disturbance and trouble,

steady, light and glad so as to be open to the Force that will change the nature. The important thing is to get rid of the habit of the invasion of troubling thoughts, wrong feelings, confusion of ideas, unhappy movements. These disturb the nature and cloud it and make it more difficult for the Force to work; when the mind is quiet and at peace, the Force can work more easily. It should be possible to see things that have to be changed in you without being upset or depressed; the change is the more easily done.

*

Let us not exaggerate anything. It is not so much getting rid of mental activity as converting it into the right thing. Krishnaprem has mental activity, but it is a mind that has gone inside and sees things from there, an intuitive mind; I have mental activity (in the midst of silence) whenever necessary, but it is a mind that has gone up and sees things from above, an overmind action. What has to be surpassed and changed is the intellectual reason which sees things from outside only by analysis and inference — when it does not do it rather by taking a hasty look and saying “So it is” or “So it is not”. But you can’t get the inner or upper mind unless the old mental activity becomes a little quiet. A quiet mind does not involve itself in its thoughts or get run away with by them; it stands back, detaches itself, lets them pass, without identifying itself, without making them its own. It becomes the witness mind watching the thoughts when necessary, but able to turn away from them and receive from within and from above. Silence is good, but absolute silence is not indispensable, at least at this stage. I do not know that to wrestle with the mind to make it quiet is of much use; usually the mind gets the better of that game. It is this standing back, detaching oneself, getting the power to listen to something else other than the thoughts of the external mind that is the easier way. At the same time one can look up, as it were, imaging to oneself the Force as there just above and calling it down or quietly expecting its help. That is how most people do it till the mind falls gradually quiet or silent of itself or else silence begins

to descend from above. But it is important not to allow the depression or despair to come in because there is no immediate success; that can only make things difficult and stop any progress that is preparing.

Silence, Peace and Calm

The silence and peace are themselves part of the higher consciousness — the rest comes in the silence and peace.

*

When the mind is silent, there is peace and in peace all things that are divine can come. When there is not the mind, there is the Self which is greater than the mind.

*

You have attained the silent inner consciousness, but that can be covered over by disturbance — the next step is for calm and silence to be established as the basis in the more and more outer consciousness — probably these [*higher*] forces are working for that. Then the play of the ordinary forces will be only on the surface and can be more easily dealt with.

Silence and True Activity

The silence is the silence of the inner consciousness and it is in that silence unmoved by outward things that the true activity of the consciousness can come without disturbing the silence — true perceptions, will, feelings, action. There also one can feel more easily the Mother's working. As for the heat, it must be the heat of Agni, the fire of purification and tapasya; it often feels like that when the inner work is going on.

*

It is not possible for the spontaneous silent condition to last always at once, but that is what must grow in one till there is a constant inner silence — a silence which cannot be disturbed

by any outward activity or even by any attempt at attack or disturbance.

The condition you describe shows precisely the growth of this inner silence. It has to fix itself eventually as the basis of all spiritual experience and activity. It does not matter if one does not know what is going on within behind the silence. For there are two conditions in the Yoga, one in which all is silent and there is no thought, feeling or movement even though one is acting outwardly as others do — another in which a new consciousness becomes active bringing knowledge, joy, love and other spiritual feelings and inner activities, but yet at the same time there is a fundamental silence or quietude. Both are necessary in the development of the inner being. The absolutely silent state, which is one of lightness, voidness and release, prepares the other and supports it when it comes.

*

The passive silence is that in which the inner consciousness remains void and at rest, not making any reaction on outer things and forces.

The active silence is that in which there is a great force that goes out on things and forces without disturbing the silence.

*

It is on the Silence behind the cosmos that all the movement of the universe is supported.

It is from the Silence that the peace comes; when the peace deepens and deepens, it becomes more and more the Silence.

In a more outward sense the word silence is applied to the condition in which there is no movement of thought or feeling etc., only a great stillness of the mind.

But there can be an action in the Silence, undisturbed even as the universal action goes on in the cosmic Silence.

Section Four

The Divine Response

Chapter One

The Divine Grace and Guidance

The Divine Grace

The Divine Will works in all things — it may work out anything whatever. The Divine Grace comes in to help and save.

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If you would know what is the Divine Grace, it is necessary first to realise that it is something which contradicts the law of the world, for it is outside its normal rule and not of its nature. There is here something which does not seem to govern at all the cosmic action, but only to intervene, and yet it is always there; an element without which this universe would be either a tremendous machine or a fortuitously and yet inexorably ordered chance. For to our observation all here is a process, a mechanism of Ignorance and Inconscience manifesting a precarious consciousness distressed by a nostalgia of Truth that exists somewhere and yet seems to be unseizable and unrealisable, — a mechanism of Law that controls a frightening whirl of Forces, a mechanism of implacable justice measuring things by a mysterious and to us unintelligible balance, a mechanism of evolution with matter and inconscience as its starting point, a precarious and groping life and consciousness as its highest realised term and as its final uncertain poise some possibility of the Divine. Our senses can discover no visible presence of the Divine, our intellect can do without any idea of its intervention — but it is another experience than that of the intellect and the senses which once it is there will no longer let us escape from the Presence or refuse to see the intervening Will or Grace.

This world is a world of Ignorance and by Ignorance a world of strife, seeking, error and suffering. We start by knowing nothing and have to learn everything; because our knowledge is a mixture of truth and falsehood and our will constantly

mistaken when not perverted, we stumble at every step and pay the price of experience in pain and grief and sorrow. It would seem as if nothing could save us but thought and knowledge translated into right will and action and it is that for which man by his intellect is seeking and yet by his intellect he has never found it and it looks as if by his intellect he would never find it. Then there is probably something else beyond the intellect which alone can give him the Light — something beyond his mind and greater than himself — a Grace that intervenes, the law of a supernormal Light and Will, a help, an opening from above.

*

I should like to say something about the Divine Grace — for you seem to think it should be something like a Divine Reason acting upon lines not very different from those of human intelligence. But it is not that. Also it is not a universal Divine Compassion either, acting impartially on all who approach it and acceding to all prayers. It does not select the righteous and reject the sinner. The Divine Grace came to aid the persecutor (Saul of Tarsus), it came to St. Augustine the profligate, to Jagai and Madhai of infamous fame, to Bilwamangal and many others whose conversion might well scandalise the puritanism of the human moral intelligence; but it can come to the righteous also — curing them of their self-righteousness and leading to a purer consciousness beyond these things. It is a power that is superior to any rule, even to the Cosmic Law — for all spiritual seers have distinguished between the Law and Grace. Yet it is not indiscriminate — only it has a discrimination of its own which sees things and persons and the right times and seasons with another vision than that of the Mind or any other normal Power. A state of Grace is prepared in the individual often behind thick veils by means not calculable by the mind and when the state of Grace comes then the Grace itself acts. There are these three powers: (1) the Cosmic Law, of Karma or what else; (2) the Divine Compassion acting on as many as it can reach through the nets of the Law and giving them their chance; and (3) the Divine Grace which

acts more incalculably but also more irresistibly than the others. The only question is whether there is something behind all the anomalies of life which can respond to the call and open itself with whatever difficulty till it is ready for the illumination of the Divine Grace — and that something must be not a mental and vital movement but an inner somewhat which can well be seen by the inner eye. If it is there and when it becomes active in front, then the Compassion can act, though the full action of the Grace may still wait attending the decisive decision or change; for this may be postponed to a future hour, because some portion or element of the being may still come between, something that is not yet ready to receive.

*

Each mind can have its own way of approaching the supreme Truth and there is an entrance for each as well as a thousand ways for the journey to it. It is not necessary to believe in the Grace or to recognise a Godhead different from one's highest Self — there are ways of Yoga that do not accept these things. Also for many no form of Yoga is necessary — they arrive at some realisation by a sort of pressure of the mind or the heart or the will breaking the screen between it and what is at once beyond it and its own source. What happens after the breaking of the screen depends on the play of the Truth on the consciousness and the turn of the nature. There is no reason therefore why X's realisation of his being should not come in its own way by growth from within, not by the Divine Grace if his mind objects to that description, but let us say by the spontaneous movement of the Self within him.

For, as to this "Grace", we describe it in that way because we feel in the infinite Spirit or Self of existence a Presence or a Being, a Consciousness that determines — that is what we speak of as the Divine, — not a separate Person, but the one Being of whom our individual self is a portion or a vessel. But it is not necessary for everybody to regard it in that way. Supposing it is the impersonal Self of all only, yet the Upanishad says of the Self and its realisation, "This understanding is not to be gained by

reasoning nor by tapasya nor by much learning, but whom this Self chooses, to him it reveals its own body.” Well, that is the same thing as what we call the Divine Grace, — it is an action from above or from within independent of mental causes which decides its own movement. We can call it the Divine Grace; we can call it the Self within choosing its own hour and way to manifest to the mental instrument on the surface; we can call it the flowering of the inner being or inner nature into self-realisation and self-knowledge. As something in us approaches it or as it presents itself to us, so the mind sees it. But in reality, it is the same thing and the same process of the being in Nature.

I could illustrate my meaning more concretely from my own first experience of the Self, long before I knew even what Yoga was or that there was such a thing, at a time when I had no religious feeling, no wish for spiritual knowledge, no aspiration beyond the mind, only a contented agnosticism and the impulse towards poetry and politics. But it would be too long a story, so I do not tell it here.

*

It is not indispensable that the Grace should work in a way that the human mind can understand, it generally doesn't: it works in its own “mysterious” way. At first usually it works behind the veil, preparing things, not manifesting. Afterwards it may manifest, but the sadhak does not understand very well what is happening. Finally, when he is capable of it, he both feels and understands or at least begins to do so. Some feel and understand from the first or very early; but that is not the ordinary case.

*

“The ordinary action of the Divine is a constant intervention within the actual law of things” — that may or may not be but is not usually called the Divine Grace. The Divine Grace is something not calculable, not bound by anything the intellect can fix as a condition — though ordinarily some call, aspiration, intensity of the psychic being can awaken it, yet it acts sometimes without any apparent cause even of that kind.

The Grace and Personal Effort

Without the Grace of the Divine nothing can be done, but for the full Grace to manifest the sadhak must make himself ready. If everything depends on the Divine intervention, then man is only a puppet and there is no use of sadhana, and there are no conditions, no law of things — therefore no universe, but only the Divine rolling things about at his pleasure. No doubt in the last resort all can be said to be the Divine cosmic working, but it is through persons, through forces that it works — under the conditions of Nature. Special intervention there can be and is, but all cannot be special intervention.

*

The Divine Grace and Power can do everything, but with the full assent of the sadhak. To learn to give that full assent is the whole meaning of the sadhana. It may take time either because of ideas in the mind, desires in the vital or inertia in the physical consciousness, but these things have to be and can be removed with the aid or by calling in the action of the Divine Force.

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There are three main possibilities for the sadhak — (1) To wait on the Grace and rely on the Divine. (2) To do everything himself like the full Adwaitin and the Buddhist. (3) To take the middle path, go forward by aspiration and rejection etc. helped by the Force.

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Everything should be for the sake of the Divine, this [*aspiration for the Divine's Presence*] also. As for leaving the result to the Divine, it depends on what you mean by the phrase. If it implies dependence on the Divine Grace and equanimity and patience in the persistent aspiration, then it is all right. But it must not be extended to cover slackness and indifference in the aspiration and endeavour.

Strength and Grace

There is nothing unintelligible in what I say about strength and Grace. Strength has a value for spiritual realisation, but to say that it can be done by strength only and by no other means is a violent exaggeration. Grace is not an invention, it is a fact of spiritual experience. Many who would be considered as mere nothings by the wise and strong have attained by Grace; illiterate, without mental power or training, without “strength” of character or will, they have yet aspired and suddenly or rapidly grown into spiritual realisation, because they had faith or because they were sincere. I do not see why these facts which are facts of spiritual history and of quite ordinary spiritual experience should be discussed and denied and argued as if they were mere matters of speculation. Strength, if it is spiritual, is a power for spiritual realisation; a greater power is sincerity; the greatest power of all is Grace. I have said times without number that if a man is sincere, he will go through in spite of long delay and overwhelming difficulties. I have repeatedly spoken of the Divine Grace. I have referred any number of times to the line of the Gita:

Aham tvā sarva-pāpēbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

“I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve.”

Grace and Tapasya

Your experience about the meditation is common enough — I used to have it or analogous things hundreds of times. I suppose it is to teach us first that grace is more effective than tapasya and, secondly, that either equanimity or a cheerful spontaneous happy self-opening is as effective, to say the least, as the grimmest wrestling for a result. But it would be dangerous to assume from that that no tapasya and no endeavour is needful — for that might very well mean inertia. I have seen too that very often a long tapasya with doubtful results prepares the moment of grace and the spontaneous downflow. All which seem to be contradictions, but are not in a whole view of things.

What X says about tapasya is of course true. If one is not prepared for labour and tapasya, control of the mind and vital, one cannot demand big spiritual gains — for the mind and vital will always find tricks and excuses for prolonging their own reign, imposing their likes and dislikes and staving off the day when they will have to become obedient instruments and open channels of the soul and spirit. Grace may sometimes bring undeserved or apparently undeserved fruits, but one can't demand Grace as a right and privilege — for then it would not be Grace. As you have seen one can't claim that one has only to shout and the answer must come. Besides I have always seen that there has been really a long unobserved preparation before the Grace intervenes and, also, after it has intervened one has still to put in a good deal of work to keep and develop what one has got — as it is in all other things — until there is the complete siddhi. Then of course labour finishes and one is in assured possession. So tapasya of one kind or another is not avoidable.

You are right again about the imaginary obstacles. Good Lord! what mountains of them you have piled up on the way — a regular Abyssinia. It is why we always express depreciation of mental constructions and vital formations — because they are the defence works mind and vital throw up against their capture by the Divine. However the first thing is to become conscious of all that as you have now become, — the next thing is to be firm in knocking it all down and making a *tabula rasa*, a foundation of calm, peace, happy openness for the true building.

No Insistence on the Grace

I have surely never said that you should not want the Divine Response. One does Yoga for that. What I have said is that you should not expect or insist on it at once or within an early time. It can come early or it can come late, but come it will if one is faithful in one's call — for one has not only to be sincere but to be faithful through all. If I deprecate insistence, it is because I have always found it creates difficulties and delays — owing to a strain and restlessness which is created in the nature and

despondencies and revolts of the vital when the insistence is not satisfied. The Divine knows best and one has to have trust in His wisdom and attune oneself with His will. Length of time is no proof of an ultimate incapacity to arrive — it is only a sign that there is something in oneself which has to be overcome and if there is the will to reach the Divine it can be overcome.

Suicide solves nothing — it only brings one back to life with the same difficulties to be faced in worse conditions. If one wishes to escape from life altogether, it can only be by the way of complete inner renunciation and merging oneself in the Silence of the Absolute or by a bhakti that becomes absolute or by a karmayoga that gives up one's own will and desires to the will of the Divine.

I have said also that the Grace *can* at any moment act suddenly, but over that one has no control, because it comes by an incalculable Will which sees things that the mind cannot see. It is precisely the reason why one should never despair, — that and also because no sincere aspiration to the Divine can fail in the end.

Trust in the Divine Grace

Face all these things [*inner disturbances*] quietly and firmly with perseverance in the endeavour of the sadhana. Trust firmly in the Divine Grace and the Divine Grace will not fail you.

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The best possible way [*to "repay" the Divine Grace*] is to allow the Divine Grace to work in you, never to oppose it, never to be ungrateful and turn against it — but to follow it always to the goal of Light and Peace and unity and Ananda.

Withdrawal of Grace

As for withdrawal of Grace, it might be said that few are those from whom the Grace withdraws, but many are those who withdraw from the Grace.

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If the will of the individual is towards perdition, if his ego becomes hostile to the Divine, then the Divine is not bound to show him a Grace he does not want at all and kicks at.

The First Responses of the Divine

What you describe in your letter as the response of the Divine would not be called that in the language of Yogic experience — this feeling of greater peace, light, ease, trust, difficulties lessening, certitude would rather be called a response of your own nature to the Divine. There is a Peace or a Light which is the response of the Divine, but that is a wide Peace, a great Light which is felt as a presence other than one's personal self, not part of one's personal nature, but something that comes from above, though in the end it possesses the nature — or there is the Presence itself which carries with it indeed the absolute liberation, happiness, certitude. But the first responses of the Divine are not often like that — they come rather as a touch, a pressure one must be in a condition to recognise and to accept, or it is a voice of assurance, sometimes a very “still small voice”, a momentary Image or Presence; a whisper of Guidance sometimes, — there are many forms it may take. Then it withdraws and the preparation of the nature goes on till it is possible for the touch to come again and again, to last longer, to change into something more pressing and near and intimate. The Divine in the beginning does not impose himself — he asks for recognition, for acceptance. That is one reason why the mind must fall silent, not put tests, not make claims — there must be room for the true intuition which recognises at once the true touch and accepts it.

The Divine Guidance

The question you have put¹ raises one of the most difficult and complicated of all problems and to deal with it at all adequately

¹ *The correspondent said that this unhappy world seems doomed to falsehood and suffering, for it is filled with selfishness, pettiness and heartless greed. Why should one embrace such a world, he asked, “where the divine guidance seems so accidental, almost out of place”? — Ed.*

would need an answer as long as the longest chapter of *The Life Divine*. I can only state my own knowledge founded not on reasoning but on experience that there is such a guidance and that nothing is in vain in this universe.

If we look only at outward facts in their surface appearance or if we regard what we see happening around us as definitive, not as processes of a moment in a developing whole, the guidance is not apparent; at most we may see interventions occasional or sometimes frequent. The guidance can become evident only if we go behind appearances and begin to understand the forces at work and the way of their working and their secret significance. After all, real knowledge — even scientific knowledge — comes by going behind the surface phenomena to their hidden process and causes. It is quite obvious that this world is full of suffering and afflicted with transience to a degree that seems to justify the Gita's description of it as "this unhappy and transient world", *anityam asukham*. The question is whether it is a mere creation of Chance or governed by a mechanic inconscient Law or whether there is a meaning in it and something beyond its present appearance towards which we move. If there is a meaning and if there is something towards which things are evolving, then inevitably there must be a guidance — and that means that a supporting Consciousness and Will is there with which we can come into inner contact. If there is such a Consciousness and Will, it is not likely that it would stultify itself by annulling the world's meaning or turning it into a perpetual or eventual failure.

This world has a double aspect. It seems to be based on a material Inconscience and an ignorant mind and life full of that Inconscience; error and sorrow, death and suffering are the necessary consequence. But there is evidently too a partially successful endeavour and an imperfect growth towards Light, Knowledge, Truth, Good, Happiness, Harmony, Beauty, — at least a partial flowering of these things. The meaning of this world must evidently lie in this opposition; it must be an evolution which is leading or struggling towards higher things out of a first darker appearance. Whatever guidance there is must be given under these conditions of opposition and struggle and

must be leading towards that higher state of things. It is leading the individual, certainly, and the world, presumably, towards the higher state, but through the double terms of knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, death and life, pain and pleasure, happiness and suffering; none of the terms can be excluded until the higher status is reached and established. It is not and cannot be, ordinarily, a guidance which at once rejects the darker terms or still less a guidance which brings us solely and always nothing but happiness, success and good fortune. Its main concern is with the growth of our being and consciousness, the growth towards a higher self, towards the Divine, eventually towards a highest Light, Truth and Bliss; the rest is secondary, sometimes a means, sometimes a result, not a primary purpose.

The true sense of the guidance becomes clearer when we can go deep within and see from there more intimately the play of the forces and receive intimations of the Will behind them. The surface mind can get only an imperfect glimpse. When we are in contact with the Divine or in contact with an inner knowledge and vision, we begin to see all the circumstances of our life in a new light and can observe how they all tended without our knowing it towards the growth of our being and consciousness, towards the work we had to do, towards some development that had to be made,—not only what seemed good, fortunate or successful but the struggles, failures, difficulties, upheavals. But with each person the guidance works differently according to his nature, the conditions of his life, his cast of consciousness, his stage of development, his need of farther experience. We are not automata but conscious beings and our mentality, our will and its decisions, our attitude to life and demand on it, our motives and movements help to determine our course; they may lead to much suffering and evil, but through it all, the guidance makes use of them for our growth in experience and consequently the development of our being and consciousness. All advance by however devious ways, even in spite of what seems a going backwards or going astray, gathering whatever experience is necessary for the soul's destiny. When we are in close contact with the Divine, a protection can come in which

helps or directly guides or moves us; it does not throw aside all difficulties, sufferings or dangers, but it carries us through them and out of them — except where for a special purpose there is need of the opposite.

It is the same thing though on a larger scale and in a more complex way with the guidance of the world-movement. That seems to move according to the conditions and laws or forces of the moment through constant vicissitudes, but still there is something in it that drives towards the evolutionary purpose, although it is more difficult to see, understand and follow than in the smaller and more intimate field of the individual consciousness and life. What happens in a particular juncture of the world-action or the life of humanity, however catastrophical, is not ultimately determinative. Here too one has to see not only the outward play of forces in a particular case or at a particular time but also the inner and secret play, the far-off outcome, the event that lies beyond and the Will at work behind it all. Falsehood and Darkness are strong everywhere on the earth and have always been so and at times they seem to dominate; but there have also been not only gleams but outbursts of the Light. In the mass of things and the long course of Time, whatever may be the appearances of this or that epoch or moment, the growth of Light is there and the struggle towards better things does not cease. At the present time Falsehood and Darkness have gathered their forces and are extremely powerful; but even if we reject the assertion of the mystics and prophets since early times that such a condition of things must precede the Manifestation and is even a sign of its approach, yet it does not necessarily indicate the victory — even temporary — of the Falsehood. It merely means that the struggle between the Forces is at its acme. The result may very well be the stronger emergence of the best that can be; for the world-movement often works in that way. I leave it at that and say nothing more.

Chapter Two

The Divine Force

The Nature of Spiritual Force

All the world, according to Science, is nothing but a play of Energy — a material Energy it used to be called, but it is now doubted whether Matter, scientifically speaking, exists except as a phenomenon of Energy. All the world, according to Vedanta, is a play of a power of a spiritual entity, the power of an original consciousness, whether it be Maya or Shakti, and the result an illusion or real. In the world so far as man is concerned we are aware only of mind energy, life energy, energy in matter; but it is supposed that there is a spiritual energy or force also behind them from which they originate. All things, in either case, are the results of a Shakti, energy or force. There is no action without a Force or Energy doing the action and bringing about its consequence. Farther, anything that has no Force in it is either something dead or something unreal or something inert and without consequence. If there is no such thing as spiritual consciousness, there can be no reality of Yoga, and if there is no Yoga force, spiritual force, Yoga Shakti, then also there can be no effectivity in Yoga. A Yoga consciousness or spiritual consciousness which has no power or force in it, may not be dead or unreal but it is evidently something inert and without effect or consequence. Equally a man who sets out to be a Yogi or Guru and has no spiritual consciousness or no power in his spiritual consciousness — a Yoga force or spiritual force — is making a false claim and is either a charlatan or a self-deluded imbecile; still more is he so if having no spiritual force he claims to have made a path others can follow. If Yoga is a reality, if spirituality is anything better than a delusion, there must be such a thing as Yoga force or spiritual force.

It is evident that if spiritual force exists, it must be able to produce spiritual results — therefore there is no irrationality in

the claim of those sadhaks who say that they feel the force of the Guru or the force of the Divine working in them and leading towards spiritual fulfilment and experience. Whether it is so or not in a particular case is a personal question, but the statement cannot be denounced as *per se* incredible and manifestly false because such things cannot be. Farther, if it be true that spiritual force is the original one and the others are derivative from it, then there is no irrationality in supposing that spiritual force can produce mental results, vital results, physical results. It may act through mental, vital or physical energies and through the means which these energies use, or it may act directly on mind, life or matter as the field of its own special and immediate action. Either way is *prima facie* possible. In a case of cure of illness, someone is lying ill for two days, weak, suffering from pains and fever; he takes no medicine but finally asks for cure from his Guru; the next morning he rises well, strong and energetic. He has at least some justification for thinking that a force has been used on him and put into him and that it was a spiritual power that acted. But in another case medicines may be used, while at the same time the invisible force may be called for to aid the material means, for it is a known fact that medicines may or may not succeed — there is no certitude. Here for the reason of an outside observer (one who is neither the user of the force nor the doctor nor the patient) it remains uncertain whether the patient was cured by the medicines only or by the spiritual force with the medicines as an instrument. Either is possible, and it cannot be said that because medicines were used, therefore the working of a spiritual force is *per se* incredible and demonstrably false. On the other hand it is possible for the doctor to have felt a force working in him and guiding him or he may see the patient improving with a rapidity which, according to medical science, is incredible. The patient may feel the force working in himself bringing health, energy, rapid cure. The user of the force may watch the results, see the symptoms he works on diminishing, those he did not work upon increasing till he does work on them and then immediately diminishing, the doctor working according to his unspoken suggestions, etc. etc. until the cure is

done. (On the other hand he may see forces working against the cure and conclude that the spiritual force has to be contented with a withdrawal or an imperfect success.) In all that the doctor, the patient or the user of force is justified in believing that the cure is at least partly or even fundamentally due to the spiritual force. Their experience is valid of course for themselves only, not for the outside rationalising observer. But the latter is not logically entitled to say that their experience is incredible and must be false.

Another point. It does not follow that a spiritual force must either succeed in all cases or, if it does not, that proves its non-existence. Of no force can that be said. The force of fire is to burn, but there are things it does not burn; under certain circumstances it does not burn even the feet of the man who walks barefoot on red-hot coals. That does not prove that fire cannot burn or that there is no such thing as force of fire, Agni-shakti.

I have no time to write more; it is not necessary either. My object was not to show that spiritual force must be believed in, but that the belief in it is not necessarily a delusion and that this belief can be rational as well as possible.

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The invisible Force producing tangible results both inward and outward is the whole meaning of the Yogic consciousness. Your question about Yoga bringing merely a feeling of Power without any result was really very strange. Who would be satisfied with such a meaningless hallucination and call it Power? If we had not had thousands of experiences showing that the Power within could alter the mind, develop its powers, add new ones, bring in new ranges of knowledge, master the vital movements, change the character, influence men and things, control the conditions and functionings of the body, work as a concrete dynamic Force on other forces, modify events, etc. etc., we would not speak of it as we do. Moreover, it is not only in its results but in its movements that the Force is tangible and concrete. When I speak of feeling Force or Power, I do not mean simply having a vague sense of it, but feeling it concretely and consequently being able

to direct it, manipulate it, watch its movement, be conscious of its mass and intensity and in the same way of that of other perhaps opposing forces; all these things are possible and usual by the development of Yoga.

It is not, unless it is supramental Force, a Power that acts without conditions and limits. The conditions and limits under which Yoga or sadhana has to be worked out are not arbitrary or capricious; they arise from the nature of things. These including the will, receptivity, assent, self-opening and surrender of the sadhak have to be respected by the Yoga-force — unless it receives a sanction from the Supreme to override everything and get something done — but that sanction is sparingly given. It is only if the supramental Power came fully down, not merely sent its influences through the Overmind, that things could be very radically altered in this respect — and that is why my main effort is directed towards that object — for then the sanction would not be rare! For the Law of the Truth would be at work not constantly balanced by the law of the Ignorance.

Still the Yoga-force is always tangible and concrete in the way I have described and has tangible results. But it is invisible — not like a blow given or the rush of a motor car knocking somebody down which the physical senses can at once perceive. How is the mere physical mind to know that it is there and working? By its results? but how can it know that the results were that of the Yoga-force and not of something else? One of two things it must do. Either it must allow the consciousness to go inside, to become aware of inner things, to believe in and experience the invisible and the supraphysical, and then by experience, by the opening of new capacities it becomes conscious of these forces and can see, follow and use their workings just as the scientist uses the unseen forces of Nature. Or one must have faith and watch and open oneself and then it will begin to see how things happen; it will notice that when the Force was called in, there began after a time to be a result, — then repetitions, more repetitions, more clear and tangible results, increasing frequency, increasing consistency of results, a feeling and awareness of the Force at work — until the experience

becomes daily, regular, normal, complete. These are the two main methods, one internal, working from in outward, the other external, working from outside and calling the inner force out till it penetrates and is sensible in the exterior consciousness. But neither can be done if one insists always on the extrovert attitude, the external concrete only and refuses to join to it the internal concrete — or if the physical Mind at every step raises a dance of doubts which refuses to allow the nascent experience to develop. Even the scientist carrying out a new experiment would never succeed if he allowed his mind to behave in that way.

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Concrete? what do you mean by “concrete”?¹ It [*spiritual force*] has its own concreteness; it can take a form (like a stream for instance) of which one is aware and can send it quite concretely in whatever “direction” or on whatever object one chooses.

This is a statement of fact about the power inherent in spiritual consciousness. What I was speaking of was a willed use of any subtle force (it may be spiritual or mental or vital) to secure a particular result at some point in the world. Just as there are waves of unseen physical forces (cosmic waves etc.) or currents of electricity, so there are mind waves, thought currents, waves of emotion, e.g. anger, sorrow, etc., which go out and affect others without their knowing whence they come or that they come at all — they only feel the result. One who has the occult or inner senses awake can feel them coming and invading him. Influences good or bad can propagate themselves in that way; that can happen without intention, automatically, but also a deliberate use can be made of them. There can also be a purposeful generation of force, spiritual or other. There can be too the use of the effective will or idea acting directly without the aid of any outward action, speech or other instrumentation which is not concrete in that sense, but is all the same effective.

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¹ The correspondent asked whether the spiritual force Sri Aurobindo put on him was “concrete”. — Ed.

Leave aside the question of Divine or undivine, no spiritual man who acts dynamically is limited to physical contact — the idea that physical contact through writing, speech, meeting is indispensable to the action of the spiritual force is self-contradictory, for then it would not be a spiritual force. The spirit is not limited by physical things or by the body. If you have the spiritual force, it can act on people thousands of miles away who do not know and never will know that you are acting on them or that they are being acted upon — they only feel that there is a force enabling them to do things and may very well suppose it is their own great energy and genius.

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The fact that you don't feel a force does not prove that it is not there. The steam-engine does not feel a force moving it, but the force is there. A man is not a steam-engine? He is very little better, for he is conscious only of some bubbling on the surface which he calls himself and is absolutely unconscious of all the sub-conscious, subliminal, superconscious forces moving him. (This is a fact which is being more and more established by modern psychology though it has got hold only of the lower forces and not the higher, so you need not turn up your rational nose at it.) He twitters intellectually (= foolishly) about the surface results and attributes them all to his "noble self", ignoring the fact that his noble self is hidden far away from his own vision behind the veil of his dimly sparkling intellect and the reeking fog of his vital feelings, emotions, impulses, sensations and impressions. So your argument is utterly absurd and futile. Our aim is to bring the secret forces out and unwallled into the open so that instead of getting some shadows or lightnings of themselves out through the veil or being wholly obstructed, they may "pour down" and "flow in a river". But to expect that all at once is a presumptuous demand which shows an impatient ignorance and inexperience. If they begin to trickle at first, that is sufficient to justify the faith in a future downpour. You admit that you once or twice felt "a force coming down and delivering a poem out of me" (your opinion about its worth or worthlessness is not

worth a cent, that is for others to pronounce). That is sufficient to blow the rest of your Jeremiad into smithereens; it proves that the force was and is there and at work and it is only your sweating Herculean labour that prevents you feeling it. Also it is the trickle that gives assurance of the possibility of the downpour. One has only to go on and by one's patience deserve the downpour or else, without deserving, stick on till one gets it. In Yoga itself the experience that is a promise and foretaste but gets shut off till the nature is ready for the fulfilment is a phenomenon familiar to every Yogin when he looks back on his past experience. Such were the brief visitations of Ananda you had some time before. It does not matter if you have not a leechlike tenacity — leeches are not the only type of Yogins. If you can stick anyhow or get stuck that is sufficient. The fact that you are not Sri Aurobindo (who said you were?) is an inept irrelevance. One needs only to be oneself in a reasonable way and shake off the hump when it is there or allow it to be shaken off without clinging to it with a "leechlike tenacity" worthy of a better cause.

The Divine Force Works under Conditions

The Divine Force, not using the supramental Power, can certainly throw back the forces of Death and that has been done many times. But the Divine Force works here under conditions imposed by the Divine Will and Law; it has to take up an immense mass of conflicting forces, conditions, habits and movements of Nature and out of it arrive at the result of a higher consciousness on earth and a higher state. If it were to act otherwise, then all would be done by a miracle or magic, no sadhana would be needed, no way beaten out for the process of spiritual evolution to follow; there would be no real transformation of consciousness, but only a temporary feat of force which having no basis in the substance of creation here would vanish as it came. Therefore conditions have to be satisfied, the work to be done has to be wrought out step by step. The powers that held the field up to now have to be given their chance to oppose, so that the problem

may be solved and not evaded or turned into a sham fight or unreal game without significance. Therefore there is a sadhana to be done, there is a resistance to be overcome, a choice made between the higher and the lower state. The Divine Power does the work, gives a protection and a guidance; but it is not here to use an absolute force — except when that is sanctioned by the Divine Wisdom and in the light of that Wisdom justifiable. Then the decisive Power acts of itself and does what it has to do.

Writing about Spiritual Force

If I write about these questions [*of spiritual force*] from the Yogic point of view, even though on a logical basis, there is bound to be much that is in conflict with your own settled and perhaps cherished opinions, e.g. about “miracles”, persons, the limits of judgment by sense data etc. I have avoided as much as possible writing about these subjects because I would have to propound things that cannot be understood except by reference to other data than those of the physical senses or of reason founded on these alone. I might have to speak of laws and forces not recognised by physical reason or science. In my public writings and my writings to sadhaks I have not dwelt on these because they go out of the range of ordinary knowledge and the understanding founded on it. These things are known to some, but they do not usually speak about it, while the public view of such of them as are known is either credulous or incredulous, but in both cases without experience or knowledge. So if the views founded on them are likely to upset, shock or bewilder, the better way is silence.

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If I was annoyed, it was with myself for speaking of things which ought to be kept under a cover. I put the whole thing in a light form, no doubt, but the substance was perfectly serious, the intention being to point out that even in ordinary non-spiritual things the action of invisible or of subjective forces was open to doubt and discussion in which there could be no material

certitude — while the spiritual force is invisible in itself and also invisible in its action. So it is idle to try to prove that such and such a result was the effect of spiritual force. Each must form his own idea about that — for if it is accepted it cannot be as a result of proof and argument, but only as a result of experience, of faith or of that insight in the heart or the deeper intelligence which looks behind appearances and sees what is behind them. Moreover it would not be seemly for me to appear to be making a claim for myself and pleading for recognition or acceptance — for the spiritual consciousness does not claim in that way, it can state the truth about itself but not fight for a personal acceptance. A general and impersonal statement about spiritual force is another matter, but I doubt whether the time has come for it or whether it could be understood by the mere reasoning intelligence.

Use and Misuse of the Divine Force

All power comes from the Divine but it is more usually misused than used spiritually or rightly.

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The Divine Forces are meant to be used — the mistake of man individualised in the Ignorance is to use it for the ego and not for the Divine. It is that that has to be set right by the union with the Divine Consciousness and also by the widening of the individual being so that it can live consciously in the universal. Difficult it is owing to the fixed ego-habit, but it is not impossible.

The Action of the Divine Force

The action of the Force does not exclude tapasya, concentration and the need of sadhana. Its action rather comes as an answer or a help to these things. It is true that it sometimes acts without them; it very often wakes a response in those who have not prepared themselves and do not seem to be ready. But it does not always or usually act like that, nor is it a sort of magic that

acts in the void or without any process. Nor is it a machine which acts in the same way on everybody or in all conditions and circumstances; it is not a physical but a spiritual Force and its action cannot be reduced to rules.

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It [*the higher Force*] acts by awakening the inner consciousness gradually or swiftly, by replacing the principle of ego-service by the principle of service of the Divine, by making him watch his actions and see his own defects and pushing him to rectify them, by establishing a connection between his consciousness and the Mother's consciousness, by preparing his nature to be taken up more and more by the Mother's consciousness and force, by giving him experiences which make him ready for the major experiences of Yoga, by stimulating the growth of his psychic being, by opening him to the Mother as the Universal Being, etc. etc. Naturally it acts differently in different persons.

Allow the Divine Force to Act

It is quite true that, left to yourself, you can do nothing; that is why you have to be in contact with the Force which is there to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. The only thing *you* have to do is to allow the Force to act and put yourself on its side, which means to have faith in it, to rely upon it, not to trouble and harass yourself, to remember it quietly, to call upon it quietly, to let it act quietly. If you do that, all else will be done for you — not all at once, because there is much to clear away, but still it will be done steadily and more and more.

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Passivity can be only to the Divine Force when it is felt at work, — there can be no passivity to other forces, for that would be dangerous in the extreme. Passivity does *not* mean a blank mind — it means allowing the Divine Force to work without interference of the mental preferences, vital desires or physical disinclinations. As for freedom from ego or desire, that is the

general law of all Yoga, but it cannot be acquired by merely giving up work. The majority of Sannyasins are not at all free from desire or ego.

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Always keep in touch with the Divine Force. The best thing for you is to do that simply and allow it to do its own work; wherever necessary, it will take hold of the inferior energies and purify them; at other times it will empty you of them and fill you with itself. But if you let your mind take the lead and discuss and decide what is to be done, you will lose touch with the Divine Force and the lower energies will begin to act for themselves and all go into confusion and a wrong movement.

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One feels the Force only when one is in conscious contact with it.

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It is a great progress, a decisive advance if, at the time the Force is acting behind the screen, you feel that it is there, that the help and support, the more enlightened consciousness is there still. This is the second stage in the sadhana. There is a third when there is no screen and the Force and all else are always felt whether actively working or pausing during a transition.

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Remind yourself always that the Divine Force is there, that you have felt it and that, even if you seem to lose consciousness of it for a time or it seems something distant, still it is there and is sure to prevail. For those whom the Force has touched and taken up, belong thenceforth to the Divine.

Chapter Three

The Guru

Acceptance of the Guru

The Guru should be accepted in all ways — transcendent, impersonal, personal.

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It has always been held in Indian yoga that the relation between Guru and disciple must be one of full confidence and full acceptance of the Guru by the Shishya. The latter was supposed to accept unquestioningly the guidance and to follow the instructions of the Guru without criticism or questioning; he was not supposed to criticise, to blame or to refuse adhesion or to follow in a questioning or grudging spirit: for that would stand in the way of his advance. The Indian disciple of those days would not have expected the Guru to suit his directions or instructions or ways of leading to the mental demands or vital ideas of the [*incomplete*]

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There are three conditions for a disciple for profiting fully from his relation to a spiritual guide.

1st: He must accept him entirely and him alone without submitting himself to any contrary or second influence.

2nd: He must accept the indications given by the Guru and follow them firmly and with full faith and perseverance to the best of his own spiritual capacity.

3rd: He must make himself open and receptive to the Guru for even more than what the Guru teaches to the mind of the disciple, it is what he spiritually is, the spiritual consciousness, the knowledge, the light, the power, the Divinity in him that helps the disciple to grow by his receiving that into himself and its being used within himself for the growth of his consciousness

and nature into its own divine possibility.

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What the Guru can do for the sadhak depends upon the latter's receptivity — not upon any method or rule of sadhana. Certain psychological conditions or attitudes of the consciousness tend to increase the receptivity — e.g., humility towards the Guru, devotion, obedience, trust, a certain receptive passivity to his influence. The opposite things — independence, a critical attitude, questionings — go the other way and make it necessary for the Guru to help only indirectly or behind the veil. But the main thing is a kind of psychological openness in the consciousness which comes or increases of itself with the help of the will to receive and the right attitude. If there is that then it is not necessary to pull anything from the Guru, only to receive quietly. Pulling from him often draws untruly or things for which the consciousness is not ready to assimilate.

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It is a deficiency of psychic perception and spiritual discrimination that makes people speak like that [*in a depreciatory way*] and ignore the importance of obedience. It is the mind wanting to follow its own way of thinking and the vital seeking freedom for its desires which argue in this manner. If you do not follow the rules laid down by the spiritual guide or obey one who is leading you to the Divine, then what or whom are you to follow? Only the ideas of the individual mind and the desires of the vital: but these things never lead to siddhi in Yoga. The rules are laid down in order to guard against certain influences and their dangers and to keep a right atmosphere in the Asram favourable to spiritual development; the obedience is necessary so as to get away from one's own mind and vital and learn to follow the Truth.

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Yes, it [*obedience*] is difficult, but once achieved it is immensely fruitful.

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You are putting the cart before the horse. It is not the right way to make the condition that if you get what you want you will be obedient and cheerful. But be always obedient and cheerful and then what you want will have a chance of coming to you.

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Up to now no liberated man has objected to the Guruvada; it is usually only people who live in the mind or vital and have the pride of the mind or the arrogance of the vital that find it below their dignity to recognise a Guru.

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One has to learn from the master and act according to his instructions because the master knows the subject and how it is to be learnt — just as in spiritual things one has to follow the Guru who has the knowledge and knows the way. If one learns all by oneself, the chances are that one will learn all wrong. What is the use of a freedom to learn wrongly? Of course if the pupil is more intelligent than the master, he will learn more than the master, just as a great spiritual capacity may arrive at realisations which the Guru has not — but even so, the control and discipline in the early stages is indispensable.

The Guru in the Supramental Yoga

The Guru is the Guide in the Yoga. When the Divine is accepted as the Guide, He is accepted as the Guru.

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It is not usual to use the word Guru in the supramental Yoga, here everything comes from the Divine himself. But if anybody wants it he can use it for the time being.

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The relation of Guru and disciple is only one of many relations which one can have with the Divine, and in this Yoga which aims at a supramental realisation, it is not usual to give it this

name; rather, the Divine is regarded as the Source, the living Sun of Light and Knowledge and Consciousness and spiritual realisation and all that one receives is felt as coming from there and the whole being remoulded by the Divine Hand. This is a greater and more intimate relation than that of the human Guru and disciple, which is more of a limited mental ideal. Nevertheless, if the mind still needs the more familiar mental conception, it can be kept so long as it is needed; only do not let the soul be bound by it and do not let it limit the inflow of other relations with the Divine and larger forms of experience.

Surrender to the Guru

Because through it [*surrender to the Guru*]¹ you surrender not only to the impersonal but to the personal, not only to the Divine in yourself but to the Divine outside you; you get a chance for the surpassing of ego not only by retreat into the Self where ego does not exist, but in the personal nature where it is the ruler. It is the sign of the will to complete surrender to the total Divine, *samagraṁ māṁ mānuṣīm tanum āśritam*. Of course it must be a genuine spiritual surrender for all this to be true.

*

When one takes sincerely to surrender, nothing must be concealed that is of any importance for the life of the sadhana. Confession helps to purge the consciousness of hampering elements and it clears the inner air and makes for a closer and more intimate and effective relation between the Guru and the disciple.

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No [*surrender to the Divine and surrender to the Guru are not two different things*]. In surrendering to the Guru, it is to the Divine in him that one surrenders — if it were only to a human

¹ The correspondent asked, “What makes the surrender to the Guru so grand and glorious as to be called the surrender beyond all surrenders?” — Ed.

entity it would be ineffective. But it is the consciousness of the Divine Presence that makes the Guru a real Guru, so that even if the disciple surrenders to him thinking of the human being to whom he surrenders, that Presence would still make it effective.

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Yes [*surrender to the formless Divine would leave parts of the being subject to the gunas and ego*]—because only the static parts would be free in formlessness, the active nature would be still in the play of the gunas. Many think they are free from ego because they get the sense of the formless Existence, they do not see that the egoistic element remains in their action just as before.

Other Gurus

All true Gurus are the same, the one Guru, because all are the one Divine. That is a fundamental and universal truth. But there is also a truth of difference; the Divine dwells in different personalities with different minds, teachings, influences so that He may lead different disciples with their special need, character, destiny by different ways to the realisation. Because all Gurus are the same Divine, it does not follow that the disciple does well if he leaves the one meant for him to follow another. Fidelity to the Guru is demanded of every disciple, according to the Indian tradition. “All are the same” is a spiritual truth, but you cannot convert it indiscriminately into action; you cannot deal with all persons in the same way because they are the one Brahman: if one did, the result pragmatically would be an awful mess. It is a rigid mental logic that makes the difficulty but in spiritual matters mental logic easily blunders; intuition, faith, a plastic spiritual reason are here the only guides.

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To respect the spiritual attainment of X [*another spiritual teacher*] is all right, but it is a rule of this Yoga not to mix influences (and what he [*a sadhak*] has described is very much

like undergoing an influence). Otherwise there may be harm done by two different methods getting mixed together — e.g. the vital being awakened to a Bhakti-Ananda influence on that plane before it is purified and ready.

The Guru's Help in Difficulty

I think this saying of Ramakrishna's² expresses a certain characteristic happening in sadhana and cannot be interpreted in a general and absolute sense; for in that sense it is hard for it to be true. All difficulties disappearing in a minute? Well, Vivekananda had the grace of Ramakrishna from the beginning, but I think his difficulty of doubt lasted for some time and to the end of his life the difficulty of the control of anger was there — making him say that all that was good in him was his Guru's gift but these things (anger etc.) were his own property. But what could be true is that the central difficulty may disappear by a certain touch between the Guru and the disciple. But what is meant by the *krpā*? If it is the general compassion and grace of the Guru, that, one would think, is always there on the disciple; his acceptance itself is an act of grace and the help is there for the disciple to receive. But the touch of grace, divine grace coming directly or through the Guru is a special phenomenon having two sides to it, — the grace of the Guru or the Divine, in fact both together, on one side and a "state of grace" in the disciple on the other. This "state of grace" is often prepared by a long tapasya or purification in which nothing decisive seems to happen, only touches or glimpses or passing experiences at the most, and it comes suddenly without warning. If this is what is spoken of in Ramakrishna's saying, then it is true that when it comes, the fundamental difficulties can in a moment and generally do disappear. Or at the very least something happens which makes the rest of the sadhana — however long it may take — sure and secure.

This decisive touch comes most easily to the "baby cat" people, those who have at some point between the psychic and

² "With the Guru's grace all difficulties can disappear in a flash, even as a long darkness does the moment you strike a match." — Ed.

the emotional vital a quick and decisive movement of surrender to the Guru or the Divine. I have seen that when that is there and there is the conscious central dependence compelling the mind also and the rest of the vital, then the fundamental difficulty disappears. If others remain they are not felt as difficulties, but simply as things that have just to be done and need cause no worry. Sometimes no tapasya is necessary — one just refers things to the Power that one feels guiding or doing the sadhana and assents to its action, rejecting all that is contrary to it, and the Power removes what has to be removed or changes what has to be changed, quickly or slowly — but the quickness or slowness does not seem to matter since one is sure that it will be done. If tapasya is necessary, it is done with so much feeling of a strong support that there is nothing hard or austere in the tapasya.

For the others, the “baby monkey” type or those who are still more independent, following their own ideas, doing their own sadhana, asking only for some instruction or help, the grace of the Guru is there, but it acts according to the nature of the sadhak and waits upon his effort to a greater or less degree; it helps, succours in difficulty, saves in the time of danger, but the disciple is not always, is perhaps hardly at all aware of what is being done as he is absorbed in himself and his endeavour. In such cases the decisive psychological movement, the touch that makes all clear, may take longer to come.

But with all the *krpā* is there working in one way or another and it can only abandon the disciple if the disciple himself abandons or rejects it — by decisive and definitive revolt, by rejection of the Guru, by cutting the painter and declaring his independence, or by an act or course of betrayal that severs him from his own psychic being. Even then, except perhaps in the last case if it goes to an extreme, a return to grace is not impossible.

That is my own knowledge and experience of the matter. But as to what lay behind Ramakrishna’s saying and whether he himself meant it to be a general and absolute statement — I do not pronounce.

All that is popular Yoga.³ The Guru's touch or grace may open something, but the difficulties have always to be worked out still. What is true is that if there is complete surrender which implies the prominence of the psychic, these difficulties are no longer felt as a burden or obstacle but only as superficial imperfections which the working of the grace will remove.

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It has always been said that to take disciples means to take upon yourself the difficulties of the disciples as well as your own. Of course, if the Guru does not identify himself with the disciple, does not take him into his own consciousness, keeps him outside and only gives him *upadeśa*, leaving him to do the rest himself, then the chance of these effects is much diminished, made practically nil.

The Knowledge Given by the Guru

I do not know what you mean by indirect knowledge. The knowledge given by the Guru, if that is what you mean, is in the nature of experience and becomes part and parcel of the experience. Mere instruction is not knowledge but only an intellectual indication of what must be realised by experience.

According to Yoga, as it is known in India, the mediation of the Guru is almost indispensable. It is not a crutch. It is a direct action of the Divine who is realised by the Guru. It is an opening of the consciousness to spiritual experience without which few can open at all or go very far. If they advance by themselves, they can fall into all sorts of perils and errors of which they have no knowledge and no idea how to guide themselves among these things.

All experience is direct—there is no such thing as an indirect spiritual experience. But after the consciousness is sufficiently opened and matured, a knowledge and guidance can

³ *The correspondent wrote, "It is said that if a disciple receives his Guru's touch or grace, his main difficulties very often disappear."*—Ed.

come from within and above and the sadhana proceeds by Divine working within. But the sadhak has to be very careful, for he may easily mistake the guiding of his own mind, ego or vital or the guiding of some inferior Power that flatters his ego for the Divine guidance. It is by the inner experience and consciousness that one knows a spiritual result — one feels and sees it happening.

There are two kinds of knowledge — mental knowledge such as you describe here which is usually necessary as a mental preparation or for guidance and the real knowledge which is spiritual. One receives the mental knowledge from the Guru in the shape of instruction and guidance, but that is only a part of what he gives — for the man who gives only mental or what you call indirect knowledge is not a Guru but only a teacher, Acharya.

As for spiritual knowledge, it consists of two elements, experience and a direct knowledge which is not mental but is of the nature of a light showing the deeper truth of things, a direct vision and perception of the Truth.

The ordinary consciousness is not capable of receiving it as knowledge except in a fragmentary way because it belongs to a deeper consciousness within or a higher consciousness above the mind. The ordinary consciousness has therefore to open to the deeper and the higher consciousness. It has to receive the knowledge from within and above. It cannot do this if it does not open. There must, therefore, first necessarily be an opening, however small, before any direct knowledge can come. As the knowledge comes the opening also can widen and so admit a greater and greater direct knowledge and experience. In some, however, the opening comes first very wide and then the knowledge comes afterwards in a great stream, some light of the Truth and many experiences.

If one has merely a mental idea about the Divine, that is not knowledge. It is with the experiences and the inner light of knowledge that the realisation of the Divine begins. As for example, one may have the mental idea of the Divine Peace but that is nothing, only a mental conception. It is only when one

has the feeling of the Divine Peace descending from above or in oneself or surrounding one that one begins to know what it is. That is what is called experience. Afterwards one begins to have a direct vision in knowledge of what the Peace is and what is its place in regard to the Divine Realisation; that is direct knowledge.

The Capacity of the Guru

One can have a guru inferior in spiritual capacity (to oneself or to other gurus) carrying in him many human imperfections, and yet, if you have the faith, the bhakti, the right spiritual stuff, contact the Divine through him, attain to spiritual experiences, to spiritual realisation, even before the guru himself. Mark the “if”, — for that proviso is necessary; it isn’t every disciple who can do that with every guru. From a humbug you can acquire nothing but humbuggery. The guru must have something in him which makes the contact with the Divine possible, something which works even if he is not himself in his outer mind quite conscious of its action. If there is nothing at all spiritual in him he is not a guru — only a pseudo. Undoubtedly, there can be considerable differences of spiritual realisation between one guru and the other; but much depends on the inner relation between guru and shishya. One can go to a very great spiritual man and get nothing or only a little from him; one can go to a man of less spiritual capacity and get all he has to give — and more. The causes of this disparity are various and subtle; I need not expand on them here. It differs with each man. I believe the guru is always ready to give what can be given, if the disciple can receive, or it may be when he is ready to receive. If he refuses to receive or behaves inwardly or outwardly in such a way as to make reception impossible or if he is not sincere or takes up the wrong attitude, then things become difficult. But if one is sincere and faithful and has the right attitude and if the guru is a true guru, then, after whatever time, it *will* come.

What X quotes about the limitation of the power of the Guru to that of a teacher who shows the way but cannot help or guide is the conception of certain paths of Yoga such as the pure Adwaitin and the Buddhist which say that you must rely upon yourself and no one can help you; but even the pure Adwaitin does in fact rely upon the Guru and the chief mantra of Buddhism insists on *śaraṇam* to Buddha. For other paths of sadhana, especially those which like the Gita accept the reality of the individual soul as an “eternal portion” of the Divine or which believe that Bhagavan and the bhakta are both real, the help of the Guru has always been relied upon as an indispensable aid.

I don't understand the objection to the validity of Vivekananda's experience; it was exactly the realisation which is described in the Upanishads as a supreme experience of the Self. It is not a fact that an experience gained in samadhi cannot be prolonged into the waking state.

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Ramakrishna had the siddhi himself before he began giving to others—so had Buddha. I don't know about the others [*Vivekananda, Ramatirtha, Ramdas, Mahavir, Shankara*]. By perfection of course is meant siddhi in one's own path—realisation. Ramakrishna always put that as a rule that one should not become a teacher to others until one has the full authority.

The Bhakta and the Disciple

It does not strike me that Krishnaprem's letters are admirable as an *aperçu* of current thoughts and general tendencies; it was rather his power to withdraw so completely from these thoughts and tendencies and look from a (for him) new and an abiding source of knowledge that impressed me as admirable. If he had remained interested and in touch with these current human movements, I don't suppose he would have done better with them than Romain Rolland or another. But he has gone to the Yoga-view of them, the summit-view, and it is the readiness with which he has been able to do it that struck me.

I would explain his progressing so far not entirely by his own superiority in the sense of a general fitness for Yoga but by the quickness and completeness with which he has taken inwardly the attitude of the Bhakta and the disciple. That is a rare achievement for a modern mind, be he European or "educated" Indian; for the modern mind is analytic, dubitative, instinctively "independent" even when it wants to be otherwise; it holds itself back and hesitates in front of the Light and Influence that comes to it; it does not plunge into it with a simple directness, crying, "Here I am, ready to throw from me all that was myself or seemed to be, if so I can enter into Thee; remake my consciousness into the Truth in thy way, the way of the Divine." There is something in us that is ready for it, but there is this element that intervenes and makes a curtain of non-receptivity; I know by my own experience with myself and others how long it can make a road that could never perhaps, for us who seek the entire truth, have been short and easy, but still we might have been spared many wanderings and stand-stills and recoils and detours. All the more I admire the ease with which Krishnaprem seems to have surmounted this formidable obstacle.

I do not know if his Guru falls far short in any respect, but with the attitude he has taken, her deficiencies, if any, do not matter. It is not the human defects of the Guru that can stand in the way when there is the psychic opening, confidence and surrender. The Guru is the channel or the representative or the manifestation of the Divine, according to the measure of his personality or his attainment; but whatever he is, it is to the Divine that one opens in opening to him, and if something is determined by the power of the channel, more is determined by the inherent and intrinsic attitude of the receiving consciousness, an element that comes out in the surface mind as simple trust or direct unconditional self-giving, and once that is there, the essential things can be gained even from one who seems to others than the disciple an inferior spiritual source and the rest will grow up in the sadhak of itself by the Grace of the Divine, even if the human being in the Guru cannot give it. It is this that Krishnaprem appears to have done perhaps from the first; but in

most nowadays this attitude seems to come with difficulty after much hesitation and delay and trouble. In my own case I owe the first decisive turn of my inner life to one who was infinitely inferior to me in intellect, education and capacity and by no means spiritually perfect or supreme; but, having seen a Power behind him and decided to turn there for help, I gave myself entirely into his hands and followed with an automatic passivity the guidance. He himself was astonished and said to others that he had never met anyone before who could surrender himself so absolutely and without reserve or question to the guidance of the helper. The result was a series of transmuting experiences of such a radical character that he was unable to follow and had to tell me to give myself up in future to the Guide within with the same completeness of surrender as I had shown to the human channel. I give this example to show how these things work; it is not in the calculated way the human reason wants to lay down, but by a more mysterious and greater law.

Part Two

The Synthetic Method of the Integral Yoga

Section One

A Yoga of Knowledge, Works,
Bhakti and Self-Perfection

Chapter One

The Central Processes of the Sadhana

Four Necessary Processes

As regards X's question — this is not a Yoga of Bhakti alone; it is or at least it claims to be an integral Yoga, that is, a turning of all the being in all its parts to the Divine. It follows that there must be knowledge and works as well as Bhakti and, in addition, it includes a total change of the nature, a seeking for perfection, so that the nature also may become one with the nature of the Divine. It is not only the heart that has to turn to the Divine and change, but the mind also — so knowledge is necessary, and the will and power of action and creation also — so works too are necessary. In this Yoga the methods of other Yogas are taken up — like this of Purusha-Prakriti, but with a difference in the final object. Purusha separates from Prakriti, not in order to abandon her, but in order to know himself and her and to be no longer her plaything, but the knower, lord and upholder of the nature; but having become so or even in becoming so, one offers all that to the Divine. One may begin with knowledge or with works or with Bhakti or with Tapasya of self-purification for perfection (change of nature) and develop the rest as a subsequent movement or one may combine all in one movement. There is no single rule for all, it depends on the personality and the nature. Surrender is the main power of the Yoga, but the surrender is bound to be progressive; a complete surrender is not possible in the beginning, but only a will in the being for that completeness, — in fact it takes time; yet it is only when the surrender is complete that the full flood of the sadhana is possible. Till then there must be the personal effort with an increasing reality of surrender. One calls in the power of the Divine Shakti and once that begins to come into the being, it at

first supports the personal endeavour, then progressively takes up the whole action, although the consent of the sadhak continues to be always necessary. As the Force works, it brings in the different processes that are necessary for the sadhak, processes of knowledge, of Bhakti, of spiritualised action, of transformation of the nature. The idea that they cannot be combined is an error.

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The object of the sadhana is opening of the consciousness to the Divine and the change of the nature. Meditation or contemplation is one means to this but only one means; bhakti is another; work is another. Chittashuddhi was practised by the Yogis as a first means towards realisation and they got by it the saintliness of the saint and the quietude of the sage. But the transformation of the nature of which we speak is something more than that, and this transformation does not come by contemplation alone; works are necessary, Yoga in action is indispensable.

The Need for Plasticity

One must not treat human nature like a machine to be handled according to rigid mental rules — a great plasticity is needed in dealing with its complex motives.

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Fundamentally the nature in all is the same and the methods of sadhana have the same principle — but the differences in detail and arrangement are very great.

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You forget that men differ in nature and therefore each will approach the sadhana in his own way — one through work, one through bhakti, one through meditation and knowledge — and those who are capable of it through all together. You are perfectly justified in following your own way, whatever may be the theories of others — but let them follow theirs. In the end all can converge together towards the same goal.

Work, Meditation and Bhakti

There is no opposition between work and sadhana. Work itself done in the right spirit is sadhana. Meditation is not the only means of sadhana. Work is one means; love and worship and surrender are another.

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It [*the value of work in sadhana*] depends more on the intensity of the spirit put into it than on the intensity of the work itself. As for the line on which most stress is laid, it depends on the nature. There are some people who are not cut out for meditation and it is only by work that they can prepare themselves; there are also those who are the opposite. As for the enormous development of egoism, that can come whatever one follows. I have seen it blossom in the *dhyānī* as well as in the worker; Krishnaprem says it does so in the bhakta. So it is evident that all soils are favourable to this Narcissus flower. As for “no need of sadhana”, obviously one who does not do any sadhana cannot change or progress. Work, meditation, bhakti, all must be done as sadhana.

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I have always said that work done as sadhana — done, that is to say, as an outflow of energy from the Divine offered to the Divine or work done for the sake of the Divine or work done in a spirit of devotion — is a powerful means of sadhana and that such work is especially necessary in this Yoga. Work, bhakti and meditation are three supports of Yoga. One can do with all three, or two or one. There are people who can't meditate in the set way that one calls meditation, but they progress through work or through bhakti or through the two together. By work and bhakti one can develop a consciousness in which eventually a natural meditation and realisation become possible.

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The growth out of the ordinary mind into the spiritual consciousness can be effected either by meditation, dedicated work

or bhakti for the Divine. In our Yoga, which seeks not only a static peace or absorption but a dynamic spiritual action, work is indispensable. As for the Supramental Truth, that is a different matter; it depends only on the descent of the Divine and the action of the Supreme Force and is not bound by any method or rule.

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There are very few among the sadhaks here who at all concern themselves with the supermind or know anything about it except as something which the Mother and I will bring down some day and establish here. Most are seeking realisation through meditation, through love and worship or through activity and work. Meditation and silence are not necessary for everyone; there are some, even among those spoken of by you and others as the most advanced sadhaks, who do their sadhana not through meditation, for which they have no turn, but through activity, work or creation supported or founded on love and bhakti. It is not the credo but the person who matters. We impose no credo; it is sufficient if there is an established and heart-felt relation between ourselves and the disciple.

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I was quite in earnest in speaking of the progress you had made by the psychic movement and the endeavour to detect and remove the ego. I had already written to you strongly approving of that way. It is in our Yoga the way to devotion and surrender — for it is the psychic movement that brings the constant and pure devotion and the removal of ego that makes it possible to surrender. The two things indeed go together.

The other way, which is the way to knowledge, is the meditation in the head by which there comes the opening above, the quietude or silence of the mind and the descent of peace etc. of the higher consciousness generally till it envelops the being and fills the body and begins to take up all the movements. But this involves a passage through silence, a certain emptiness of the ordinary activities — they being pushed out and done as a

purely superficial action — and you strongly dislike silence and emptiness.

The third way which is one of the two ways towards Yoga by works is the separation of the Purusha from the Prakriti, the inner silent being from the outer active one, so that one has two consciousnesses or a double consciousness, one behind watching and observing and finally controlling and changing the other which is active in front. But this also means living in an inner peace and silence and dealing with the activities as if they were a thing of the surface. (The other way of beginning the Yoga of works is by doing them for the Divine, for the Mother, and not for oneself, consecrating and dedicating them till one concretely feels the Divine Force taking up the activities and doing them for one.)

If there is any secret or key of my Yoga which you say you have not found, it lies in these methods — and, in reality, there is nothing so mysterious, impossible or even new about them in themselves. It is only the farther development at a later stage and the aim of the Yoga that are new. But that one need not concern oneself with in the earlier stages unless one wishes to do so as a matter of mental knowledge.

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Poetry by itself does not bring to the goal, but it can help as a means to express and deepen one's aspiration while it gives the vital an activity which can keep it from rusting and maintains its energy. Otherwise it may droop or go dry or sulk or non-cooperate. What will bring towards the goal is the growth of the psychic being, the increase in bhakti, psychic clarity of vision with regard to one's inner movements and the will to get rid of the vital ego, increase in pure self-giving. Meditation and the rest can bring only partial results or often no results until there has been a sufficient psychic preparation. Even with those who begin with a flood of experiences because of some mental or vital preparation in past lives whose results happen to be near the surface, these lead to nothing definite till the psychic preparation is made; they often have all their struggle

still to go through and some sink with their bag of experiences on their head and a magnified ego on their back. It was this psychic growth that suddenly began in you. Don't let it stop; for through that lies your way. Once that is done, you can meditate and do everything else that may be needful.

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Meditation is one means of the approach to the Divine and a great way, but it cannot be called a short cut — for most it is a long and difficult though very high ascent. It can by no means be short unless it brings a descent and even then it is only a foundation that is quickly laid — afterwards meditation has to build laboriously a big superstructure on that foundation. It is very indispensable, but there is nothing of the short cut about it.

Karma is a much simpler road — provided one's mind is not fixed on the karma to the exclusion of the Divine. The aim must be the Divine and the work can only be a means. The use of poetry etc. is to keep one in contact with one's inner being and that helps to prepare for the direct contact with the inmost, but one must not stop with that, one must go on to the real thing. If one thinks of being a "literary man", a poet, a painter as things worthwhile for their own sake, then it is no longer the Yogic spirit. That is why I have sometimes to say that our business is to be Yogis, not merely poets, painters etc.

Love, bhakti, surrender, the psychic opening are the only short cut to the Divine — or can be; for if the love and bhakti are too vital, then there is likely to be a seesaw between ecstatic expectation and *viraha*, *abhimāna*, despair, which will make it not a short cut but a long one, a zigzag, not a straight flight, a whirling round one's own ego instead of a running towards the Divine.

Surrender and Self-Giving

I may stress one point, however, that there need not be only one way to realisation of the Divine. If one does not succeed or has not yet succeeded in reaching him, feeling him or seeing him

by the established process of meditation or by other processes like japa, yet one may have made progress towards it by the frequent welling up of bhakti in the heart or a constantly greater enlargement of it in the consciousness or by work for the Divine and dedication in service. You have certainly progressed in these two directions, increased in devotion and shown your capacity for service. You have also tried to get rid of obstacles in your vital nature and so effect a purification, not without success, in several difficult directions. The path of surrender is indeed difficult, but if one perseveres in it with sincerity, there is bound to be some success and a partial overcoming or diminution of the ego which may help greatly a farther advance upon the way. I can see no sufficient reason for the discouragement which so often overtakes you and sometimes makes you think that you are not cut out for the path; to indulge such a thought is always a mistake. A too ready proneness to discouragement and a consequent despondency is one of the weaknesses of your vital nature and to get rid of it would be a great help. One must learn to go forward on the path of Yoga, as the Gita insists, with a consciousness free from despondency — *anirvinṇacetasā*. Even if one slips, one must rectify the posture; even if one falls, one has to rise and go undiscouraged on the divine way. The attitude must be, “The Divine has promised himself to me if I cleave to him always; that I will never cease to do whatever may come.”

*

It is altogether unprofitable to enquire who or what class will arrive first or last at the goal. The spiritual path is not a field of competition or a race that this should matter. What matters is one's own aspiration for the Divine, one's own faith, surrender, selfless self-giving. Others can be left to the Divine who will lead each according to his nature. Meditation, work, bhakti are each means of preparative help towards fulfilment; all are included in this path. If one can dedicate oneself through work, that is one of the most powerful means towards the self-giving which is itself the most powerful and indispensable element of the sadhana.

To cleave to the path means to follow it without leaving it

or turning aside. It is a path of self-offering of the whole being in all its parts, the offering of the thinking mind and the heart, the will and actions, the inner and the outer instruments so that one may arrive at the experience of the Divine, the Presence within, the psychic and spiritual change. The more one gives of oneself in all ways, the better for the sadhana. But all cannot do it to the same extent, with the same rapidity, in the same way. How others do it or fail to do it should not be one's concern — how to do it faithfully oneself is the one thing important.

Aspiration and Will of Consecration

I have never put any ban on bhakti. Also I am not conscious of having banned meditation either at any time. I have stressed both bhakti and knowledge in my Yoga as well as works, even if I have not given any of them an exclusive importance like Shankara or Chaitanya.

The difficulty you feel or any sadhak feels about sadhana is not really a question of meditation versus bhakti versus works. It is a difficulty of the attitude to be taken, the approach or whatever you may like to call it.

If you can't as yet remember the Divine all the time you are working, it does not greatly matter. To remember and dedicate at the beginning and give thanks at the end ought to be enough for the present. Or at the most to remember too when there is a pause. Your method seems to me rather painful and difficult, — you seem to be trying to remember and work with one and the same part of the mind. I don't know if that is possible. When people remember all the time during work (it can be done), it is usually with the back of their minds or else there is created gradually a faculty of double thought or else a double consciousness — one in front that works, and one within that witnesses and remembers. There is also another way which was mine for a long time — a condition in which the work takes place automatically and without intervention of personal thought or mental action, while the consciousness remains silent in the Divine. The thing, however, does not come so much by trying as by a very

simple constant aspiration and will of consecration — or else by a movement of the consciousness separating the inner from the instrumental being. Aspiration and will of consecration calling down a greater Force to do the work is a method which brings great results, even if in some it takes a long time about it. That is a great secret of sadhana, to know how to get things done by the Power behind or above instead of doing all by the mind's effort. I don't mean to say that the mind's effort is unnecessary or has no result — only if it tries to do everything by itself, that becomes a laborious effort for all except the spiritual athletes. Nor do I mean that the other method is the longed-for short cut; the result may, as I have said, take a long time. Patience and firm resolution are necessary in every method of sadhana.

Strength is all right for the strong — but aspiration and the Grace answering to it are not altogether myths; they are great realities of the spiritual life.

Sadhana, Tapasya, Aradhana, Dhyana

Sadhana is the practice of Yoga. Tapasya is the concentration of the will to get the results of sadhana and to conquer the lower nature. Aradhana is worship of the Divine, love, self-surrender, aspiration to the Divine, calling the name, prayer. Dhyana is inner concentration of the consciousness, meditation, going inside in Samadhi. Dhyana, tapasya and aradhana are all parts of sadhana.

Chapter Two

Combining Work, Meditation and Bhakti

The Place of Work in Sadhana

There is no stage of the sadhana in which works are impossible, no passage in the path where there is no foothold and action has to be renounced as incompatible with concentration on the Divine. The foothold is there always; the foothold is the reliance on the Divine, the opening of the being, the will, the energies to the Divine, the surrender to the Divine. All work done in that spirit can be made a means for the sadhana. It may be necessary for an individual here and there to plunge into meditation for a time and suspend work for that time or make it subordinate; but that can only be an individual case and a temporary retirement. Moreover, a complete cessation of work and entire withdrawal into oneself is seldom advisable; it may encourage a too one-sided and visionary condition in which one lives in a sort of midworld of purely subjective experiences without a firm hold on either external reality or on the highest Reality and without the right use of the subjective experience to create a firm link and then a unification between the highest Reality and the external realisation in life.

Work can be of two kinds — the work that is a field of experience used for the sadhana, for a progressive harmonisation and transformation of the being and its activities, and work that is a realised expression of the Divine. But the time for the latter can be only when the Realisation has been fully brought down into the earth-consciousness; till then all work must be a field of endeavour and a school of experience.

*

I do not mean by work action done in the ego and the ignorance,

for the satisfaction of the ego and in the drive of rajasic desire. There can be no Karmayoga without the will to get rid of ego, rajas and desire, which are the seals of ignorance.

I do not mean philanthropy or the service of humanity or all the rest of the things — moral or idealistic — which the mind of man substitutes for the deeper truth of works.

I mean by work action done for the Divine and more and more in union with the Divine — for the Divine alone and nothing else. Naturally that is not easy at the beginning, any more than deep meditation and luminous knowledge are easy or even true love and bhakti are easy. But like the others it has to be begun in the right spirit and attitude, with the right will in you, then all the rest will come.

Works done in this spirit are quite as effective as bhakti or contemplation. One gets by the rejection of desire, rajas and ego a quietude and purity into which the Peace ineffable can descend; one gets by the dedication of one's will to the Divine, by the merging of one's will in the Divine Will the death of ego and the enlarging into the cosmic consciousness or else the uplifting into what is above the cosmic; one experiences the separation of Purusha from Prakriti and is liberated from the shackles of the outer nature; one becomes aware of one's inner being and feels the outer as an instrument; one feels the universal Force doing one's works and the Self or Purusha watching or witness but free; one feels all one's works taken from one and done by the universal or the supreme Mother or by the Divine Power controlling and acting from behind the heart. By constant reference of all one's will and works to the Divine, love and adoration grow, the psychic being comes forward. By the reference to the Power above we can come to feel it above and its descent and the opening to an increasing consciousness and knowledge. Finally works, bhakti and knowledge join together and self-perfection becomes possible — what we call the transformation of the nature.

These results certainly do not come all at once; they come more or less slowly, more or less completely according to the condition and growth of the being. There is no royal road to

the divine realisation.

This is the Karmayoga as it is laid down in the Gita as I have developed it for the integral spiritual life. It is founded not on speculation and reasoning but on experience. It does not exclude meditation and it certainly does not exclude bhakti, for the self-offering to the Divine, the consecration of all oneself to the Divine which is the essence of this Karmayoga are essentially a movement of bhakti. Only it does exclude a life-fleeing exclusive meditation or an emotional bhakti shut up in its own inner dream taken as the whole movement of the Yoga. One may have hours of pure absorbed meditation or of the inner motionless adoration and ecstasy, but they are not the whole of the integral Yoga.

*

To say that one enters the stream of sadhana through work only is to say too much. One can enter it through meditation or bhakti also, but work is necessary to get into full stream and not drift away to one side and go circling there. Of course all work helps provided it is done in the right spirit.

*

Why argue from your personal experience great or little and turn it into a generalisation? A great many people (the majority perhaps) find it [*sadhana through work*] the easiest of all. Many find it easy to think of the Mother when working; but when they read or write, their mind goes off to the thing read or written and they forget everything else. I think that is the case with most. Physical work on the other hand can be done with the most external part of the mind, leaving the rest free to remember or to experience.

A Defence of Works

In spite of your disclaimer you practically come to the conclusion that all my nonsense about integral Yoga and karma being as much a way to realisation as jnana and bhakti is either

a gleaming chimaera or practicable only by Avatars or else a sheer laborious superfluity — since one can bump straight into the Divine through the open door of Bhakti or sweep majestically in on him by the easy high road of meditation; so why this scramble through the jungle of karma by which nobody ever reached anywhere? The old Yogas are true, are they not? Then why a new-fangled, more difficult Yoga with unheard talk about the supramental and God knows what else? There can be no answer to that; for I can only answer by a repetition of the statement of my own knowledge and experience — that is what I have done in today's answer to *X* — and that amounts only to a perverse obstinacy in riding my gleaming and dazzling chimaera and forcing my nuisance of a superfluity on a world weary of itself and anxious to get a short easy cut to the Divine. Unfortunately, I don't believe in short cuts — at any rate none ever led me where I wanted to go. However, let it rest there.

I have never disputed the truth of the old Yogas — I have myself had the experience of Vaishnava Bhakti and of Nirvana in the Brahman; I recognise their truth in their own field and for their own purpose — the truth of their experience so far as it goes — though I am in no way bound to accept the truth of the mental philosophies founded on the experience. I similarly find that my Yoga is true in its own field — a larger field, as I think — and for its own purpose. The purpose of the old is to get away from life to the Divine — so, obviously, let us drop karma. The purpose of the new is to reach the Divine and bring the fullness of what is gained into life — for that, Yoga by works is indispensable. It seems to me that there is no mystery about that or anything to perplex anybody — it is rational and inevitable. Only you say that the thing is impossible; but that is what is said about everything before it is done.

I may point out that Karmayoga is not a new but a very old Yoga: the Gita was not written yesterday and Karmayoga existed before the Gita. Your idea that the only justification in the Gita for works is that it is an unavoidable nuisance, so better make the best of it, is rather summary and crude. If that were all, the Gita would be the production of an imbecile and I would

hardly have been justified in writing two volumes on it or the world in admiring it as one of the greatest scriptures, especially for its treatment of the problem of the place of works in spiritual endeavour. There is surely more in it than that. Anyhow your doubt whether works can lead to realisation or rather your flat and sweeping denial of the possibility contradicts the experience of those who have achieved this supposed impossibility. You say that work lowers the consciousness, brings you out of the inner into the outer — yes, if you consent to externalise yourself in it instead of doing works from within; but that is just what one has to learn not to do. Thought and feeling can also externalise one in the same way; but it is a question of linking thought, feeling and act firmly to the inner consciousness by living there and making the rest an instrument. Difficult? Even bhakti is not easy and Nirvana is for most men more difficult than all.

You again try to floor me with Ramakrishna. But one thing puzzles me, as Shankara's stupendous activity of karma puzzles me in the apostle of inaction — you see you are not the only puzzled person in the world. Ramakrishna also gave the image of the jar which ceased gurgling when it was full. Well, but Ramakrishna spent the last years of his life in talking about the Divine and receiving disciples — that was not action, not work? Did Ramakrishna become a half-full jar after being a full one or was he never full? Did he get far away from God and so begin a work? Or had he reached a condition in which he was bound neither to rajasic work and mental prattling nor to inactivity and silence, but could do from the divine realisation the divine work and speak from the inner consciousness the divine word? If the last, perhaps in spite of his dictum, his example at least is rather in my favour.

I do not know why you drag in humanitarianism, activism, philanthropical *sevā* etc. None of these are part of my Yoga or in harmony with my definition of works, so they don't touch me. I never thought that politics or feeding the poor or writing beautiful poems would lead straight to Vaikuntha or the Absolute. If it were so, Romesh Dutt on one side and Baudelaire on the other would be the first to attain the Highest and welcome us

there. It is not the form of the work itself or mere activity but the consciousness and Godward will behind it that are the essence of Karmayoga; the work is only the necessary instrumentation for the union with the Master of works, the transit to the pure Will and power of Light from the will and power of the Ignorance.

Finally, why suppose that I am against meditation or bhakti? I have not the slightest objection to your taking either or both as the means of approach to the Divine. Only I saw no reason why anyone should fall foul of works and deny the truth of those who have reached, as the Gita says, through works perfect realisation and oneness of nature with the Divine, *samsiddhim, sādharmyam*, as did “Janaka and others”, simply because he himself cannot find or has not yet found their deeper secret—hence my defence of works.

Work and Meditation

Work by itself is only a preparation [*for spiritual life*], so is meditation by itself, but work done in the increasing Yogic consciousness is a means of realisation as much as meditation is.

I have not said, I hope, that work *only* prepares. Meditation also prepares for the direct contact. If we are to do work only as a preparation and then become motionless meditative ascetics, then all my spiritual teaching is false and there is no use for supramental realisation or anything else that has not been done in the past.

*

The including of the outer consciousness in the transformation is of supreme importance in this Yoga—meditation cannot do it. Meditation can deal only with the inner being. So work is of primary importance—only it must be done with the right attitude and in the right consciousness, then it is as fruitful as any meditation can be.

*

You need not have qualms about the time you give to action and

creative work. Those who have an expansive creative vital or a vital made for action are usually at their best when the vital is not held back from its movement and they can develop faster by it than by introspective meditation. All that is needed is that the action should be dedicated, so that they may grow by it more and more prepared to feel and follow the Divine Force when it moves them. It is a mistake to think that to live in introspective meditation all the time is invariably the best or the only way of Yoga.

*

It is not meditation (thinking with the mind) but a concentration or turning of the consciousness that is important, — and that can happen in work, in writing, in any kind of action as well as in sitting down to contemplate.

*

It does not depend on sitting [*to meditate*]. Many don't sit. They become conscious by working.

*

There are some who cannot meditate and progress through work only. Each has his own nature. But to extend one method to all is always an error.

*

Meditation is best when it comes spontaneously. But there should be full concentration in the work if it is to take the place of meditation.

No Competition between Work and Meditation

There are several sadhaks who have advanced very far by work alone, work consecrated to the Mother or else by work mainly with very little time for meditation. Others have advanced far by meditation mainly, but work also. Those who tried to do meditation alone and became impatient of work (because they could not consecrate it to the Mother) have generally been failures like

X and Y. But one or two may succeed by meditation alone — if it is in their nature or if they have an intense and unshakable faith and bhakti. All depends on the nature of the sadhak.

As for the *purātana mānuṣa* I do not see that the workers have their external being less changed than others. There are some who are where they were or only a little progressive, there are others who have changed a good deal — none is transformed altogether, though some have found a sure and sound spiritual and psychic basis. But that applies equally to workers who do not spend time in meditation and to those who spend a long time in meditation.

Each sadhak must be left to himself and the Mother to find his right way which need not be that of his neighbour. There is in the Asram too much observation of each other by the sadhaks, criticism, discussion of persons, even baseless gossip about each other's character, ideas, sadhana, actions along sometimes with theories and (usually mistaken) advice. All that is not very consistent with the atmosphere of Yoga. People should keep all their energy for their own sadhana — unless of course they are commissioned by the Mother to speak or state anything about the Yoga.

*

The ignorance underlying this attitude [*that meditation is greater than work*] is in the assumption that one must necessarily do only work or only meditation. Either work is the means or meditation is the means, but both cannot be! I have never said, so far as I know, that meditation should not be done. To set up an open competition or a closed one between works and meditation is a trick of the dividing mind and belongs to the old Yoga. Please remember that I have been declaring all along an integral Yoga in which Knowledge, Bhakti, works — light of consciousness, Ananda and love, will and power in works — meditation, adoration, service of the Divine have all their place. Have I written seven volumes of the *Arya* all in vain? Meditation is not greater than Yoga of works nor works greater than Yoga by knowledge — both are equal.

Another thing — it is a mistake to argue from one's own very limited experience, ignoring that of others, and build on it large generalisations about Yoga. This is what many do, but the method has obvious demerits. You have no experience of major realisations through work, and you conclude that such realisations are impossible. But what of the many who have had them — elsewhere and here too in the Asram? That has no value? You kindly hint to me that I have failed to get anything by works? How do you know? I have not written the history of my sadhana — if I had, you would have seen that if I had not made action and work one of my chief means of realisation — well, there would have been no sadhana and no realisation except that, perhaps, of Nirvana.

I shall perhaps add something hereafter as to what works can do, but no time tonight.

Do not conclude however that I am exalting works as the sole means of realisation. I am only giving it its due place.

The Time Given to Work and Meditation

The work should not be diminished for that purpose [*meditation and japa*]. On the other hand it is not necessary for you to work all the time. If the work assigned to you is finished earlier, it does not matter about your not keeping the full office hours.

*

If this arrangement [*in work*] gives no time for meditation — no time for going inside and establishing there the peace, wideness and joy in which you can meet the Divine inside and in work — it seems defective. What I meant is that it is not necessary either to work all the time or to intoxicate the brain by unrelieved meditation as some do. The result of meditation can be obtained by work, but then you must be able or learn to live inwardly even in the work and to do all from within.

*

Half an hour's meditation in the day ought to be possible — if

only to bring a concentrated habit into the consciousness which will help it, first to be less outward in work and, secondly, to develop a receptive tendency which can bear its fruits even in the work.

*

I have not suggested that you are to progress by *dhyāna* alone; but you have a great capacity for that and you cannot progress fully without it. In this Yoga some kind of action is necessary for all — though it need not take the form of some set labour. But for the moment progress through concentration and inner experience is the first necessity for you.

This [*stream of thoughts*] is what we call the activity of the mind, which always comes in the way of the concentration and tries to create doubt and dispersion of the energies. It can be got rid of in two ways, by rejecting it and pushing it out, till it remains as an outside force only — by bringing down the higher peace and light into the physical mind.

Concentration, Meditation and Prayer

What you felt before was in your mental being and consciousness; after coming here you have evidently come out into your external and physical consciousness, that is why you feel as if all you had before was gone. It is only covered over by the obscurity of the physical consciousness and not gone.

As for sadhana, I presume you mean by that some kind of exercise of concentration etc. For work also is sadhana, if done in the right attitude and spirit. The sadhana of inner concentration consists in:

(1) Fixing the consciousness in the heart and concentrating there on the idea, image or name of the Divine Mother, whichever comes easiest to you.

(2) A gradual and progressive quieting of the mind by this concentration in the heart.

(3) An aspiration for the Mother's presence in the heart and the control by her of mind, life and action.

But to quiet the mind and get the spiritual experience it is necessary first to purify and prepare the nature. This sometimes takes many years. Work done with the right attitude is the easiest means for that — i.e. work done without desire or ego, rejecting all movements of desire, demand or ego when they come, done as an offering to the Divine Mother, with the remembrance of her and prayer to her to manifest her force and take up the action so that there too and not only in inner silence you can feel her presence and working.

*

I don't think you understood very well what Mother was trying to tell you. First of all she did not say that prayers or meditation either were no good — how could she when both count for so much in Yoga? What she said was that the prayer must well up from the heart on a crest of emotion or aspiration, the Japa or meditation come in a live push carrying the joy or the light of the thing in it. If done mechanically and merely as a thing that ought to be done (stern grim duty!), it must tend towards want of interest and dryness and so be ineffective. It was what I meant when I said I thought you were doing Japa too much as a means for bringing about a result — I meant too much as a device, a process laid down for getting the thing done. That again was why I wanted the psychological conditions in you to develop, the psychic, the mental — for when the psychic is forward, there is no lack of life and joy in the prayer, the aspiration, the seeking, no difficulty in having the constant stream of bhakti and when the mind is quiet and intuned and upturned there is no difficulty or want of interest in meditation. Meditation by the way is a process leading towards knowledge and through knowledge, it is a thing of the head and not of the heart; so if you want dhyana, you can't have an aversion to knowledge. Concentration in the heart is not meditation, it is a call on the Divine, on the Beloved. This Yoga too is not a Yoga of knowledge alone — knowledge is one of its means, but its base being self-offering, surrender, bhakti, it is based on the heart and nothing can be eventually done without this base. There are plenty of people here who

do or have done Japa and base themselves on bhakti, very few comparatively who have done the “head” meditation; love and bhakti and works are usually the base — how many can proceed by knowledge? Only the few.

Bhakti and Knowledge

To know about the sadhana with the mind is not indispensable. If one has bhakti and aspires in the heart’s silence, if there is the true love for the Divine, then the nature will open of itself, there will be the true experience and the Mother’s power working within you, and the necessary knowledge will come.

Section Two

Sadhana through Work

Chapter One

Work and Yoga

Work as Part of Sadhana

Work alone is not the object; work is a means of sadhana.

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Certainly; work done in the right way and with the consciousness open to the Force is sadhana.

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Without sadhana the object of Yoga cannot be attained. Work itself must be taken as part of sadhana. But naturally when you are working, you must think of the work, which you will learn to do from the Yogic consciousness as an instrument and with the memory of the Divine.

*

Sadhana and work done disinterestedly as part of the sadhana cannot be incompatible with each other — provided the work is attended to, sadhana can go on very well at the same time.

*

By disinterested work is usually meant work done for the sake of the work or for the sake of others without asking for return, reward or personal fruit or recompense; but in Yoga it means desireless work done for the Divine as an offering without condition or claim — only because it is the Divine's Will or out of love for the Divine.

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Your object is not only to practise Yoga for your own internal progress and perfection, but also to do a work for the Divine.

*

This is not an Asram like others — the members are not Sannyasis; it is not *mokṣa* that is the sole aim of the Yoga here. What is being done here is a preparation for a work — a work which will be founded on Yogic consciousness and Yoga-Shakti, and can have no other foundation. Meanwhile every member here is expected to do some work in the Asram as part of his spiritual preparation.

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Recommendation to *X* not to take you away but to let you realise the Divine first has no meaning. Must one realise the Divine before one can serve him or is not service of the Divine a step on the way to realisation and a help towards it? In any case, the service and the realisation are both necessary for a complete Yoga and one cannot fix an unalterable rule of precedence between the two.

*

X has to learn to consecrate his work and feel the Mother's power working through it. A purely sedentary subjective realisation is only a half realisation.

Work without Personal Motives

The only work that spiritually purifies is that which is done without personal motives, without desire for fame or public recognition or worldly greatness, without insistence on one's own mental motives or vital lusts and demands or physical preferences, without vanity or crude self-assertion or claim for position or prestige, done for the sake of the Divine alone and at the command of the Divine. All work done in an egoistic spirit, however good for people in the world of the Ignorance, is of no avail to the seeker of the Yoga.

*

It is the spirit and the consciousness in which it is done that makes an action Yogic — it is not the action itself.

*

To do anything for a reward is contrary to the rule of Yoga. One must do a thing because it is right or else do it for the Divine, not for a reward.

*

The difficulties will disappear when you have succeeded in consecrating yourself and your work and business entirely and without any internal division to the Divine.

Men usually work and carry on their affairs from the ordinary motives of the vital being, need, desire of wealth or success or position or power or fame or the push to activity and the pleasure of manifesting their capacities, and they succeed or fail according to their capability, power of work and the good or bad fortune which is the result of their nature and their Karma. When one takes up the Yoga and wishes to consecrate one's life to the Divine, these ordinary motives of the vital being have no longer their full and free play; they have to be replaced by another, a mainly psychic and spiritual motive, which will enable the sadhak to work with the same force as before, no longer for himself, but for the Divine. If the ordinary vital motives or vital force can no longer act freely and yet are not replaced by something else, then the push or force put into the work may decline or the power to command success may no longer be there. For the sincere sadhak the difficulty can only be temporary; but he has to see the defect in his consecration or his attitude and to remove it. Then the divine Power itself will act through him and use his capacity and vital force for its ends. In your case it is the psychic being and a part of the mind that have drawn you to the Yoga and were predisposed to it, but the vital nature or at least a large part of it has not yet put itself into line with the psychic movement. There is not as yet the full and undivided consecration of the active vital nature.

The signs of the consecration of the vital in action are these among others:

The feeling (not merely the idea or the aspiration) that all the life and the work are the Mother's and a strong joy of the vital nature in this consecration and surrender. A consequent

calm content and disappearance of egoistic attachment to the work and its personal results, but at the same time a great joy in the work and in the use of the capacities for the divine purpose.

The feeling that the Divine Force is working behind one's actions and leading at every moment.

A persistent faith which no circumstance or event can break. If difficulties occur, they raise not mental doubts or an inert acquiescence, but the firm belief that, with sincere consecration, the Divine Shakti will remove the difficulties, and with this belief a greater turning to her and dependence on her for that purpose. When there is full faith and consecration, there comes also a receptivity to the Force which makes one do the right thing and take the right means and then circumstances adapt themselves and the result is visible.

To arrive at this condition the important thing is a persistent aspiration, call and self-offering, and a will to reject all in oneself or around that stands in the way. Difficulties there will always be at the beginning and for as long a time as is necessary for the change; but they are bound to disappear if they are met by a settled faith, will and patience.

The Karmayoga of the Gita

I do not usually undertake the guidance of any except those who accept my own way of Yoga and show some signs of having a special call to it.

All I can suggest to him is to practise some kind of Karma-yoga — remembering the Supreme in all his actions from the smallest to the greatest, doing them with a quiet mind and without ego-sense or attachment and offering them to Him as a sacrifice. He may also try or aspire to feel the presence of the Divine Shakti behind the world and its forces, distinguish between the lower nature of the Ignorance and the higher divine nature whose character is absolute calm, peace, power, Light and Bliss and aspire to be raised and led gradually from the lower to the higher.

If he can do this, he will become fit in time to dedicate

himself to the Divine and lead a wholly spiritual life.

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The line that seems to be natural to him is the Karmayoga and he is therefore right in trying to live according to the teaching of the Gita; for the Gita is the great guide on this path. Purification from egoistic movements and from personal desire and the faithful following of the best light one has are a preliminary training for this path, and so far as he has followed these things he has been on the right way, but to ask for strength and light in one's action must not be regarded as an egoistic movement, for they are necessary in one's inner development.

Obviously, a more systematic and intensive sadhana is desirable or, in any case, a steady aspiration and a more constant preoccupation with the central aim could bring an established detachment even in the midst of outer things and outer activity and a continuous guidance. The completeness, the Siddhi of this way of Yoga — I speak of the separate path of Karma or spiritual action — begins when one is luminously aware of the Guide and the guidance and when one feels the Power working with oneself as the instrument and the participator in the divine work.

*

I gather from X's letter to you that he has been following a very sound method in his practice and has attained some good results. The first step in Karmayoga of this kind is to diminish and finally get rid of the ego-centric position in works, the lower vital reactions and the principle of desire. He must certainly go on on this road until he reaches something like its end. I would not wish to deflect him from that in any way.

What I had in view when I spoke [*in the preceding letter*] of a systematic sadhana was the adoption of a method which would generalise the whole attitude of the consciousness so as to embrace all its movements at a time instead of working only upon details — although that working is always necessary. I may cite as an example the practice of the separation of the Prakriti and the Purusha, the conscious being standing back detached

from all the movements of Nature and observing them as witness and knower and finally as the giver (or refuser) of the sanction and at the highest stage of development, the Ishwara, the pure will, master of the whole nature.

By intensive sadhana I meant the endeavour to arrive at one of the great positive realisations which would be a firm base for the whole movement. I observe that he speaks of sometimes getting a glimpse of some wide calm when he feels the leading of Vyasa. A descent of this wide calm permanently into the consciousness is one of the realisations of which I was thinking. That he feels it at such times seems to indicate that he may have the capacity of receiving and retaining it. If that happened or if the Prakriti-Purusha realisation came, the whole sadhana would proceed on a strong permanent base with a new and entirely Yogic consciousness instead of the purely mental endeavour which is always difficult and slow. I do not however want to press these things upon him; they come in their own time and to press towards them prematurely does not always hasten their coming. Let him continue with his primary task of self-purification and self-preparation; I shall always be ready to give him what silent help I can.

*

I do not know that it is possible for me to give any guidance on the path you have chosen — it is at any rate difficult for me to say anything definite without more precise data than those contained in your letter.

There is no need for you to change the line of life and work you have chosen so long as you feel that to be the way of your nature (*svabhāva*) or dictated to you by your inner being or, for some reason, it is seen to be your proper dharma. These are the three tests and apart from that I do not know if there is any fixed line of conduct or way of work or life that can be laid down for the yoga of the Gita. It is the spirit or consciousness in which the work is done that matters most; the outer form can vary greatly for different natures. This, so long as one does not get the settled experience of the Divine Power taking up one's works and doing

them; afterwards it is the Power which determines what is to be done or not done.

The overcoming of all attachments must necessarily be difficult and cannot come except as the fruit of a long *sādhanā* — unless there is a rapid general growth in the inner spiritual experience which is the substance of the Gita's teaching. The cessation of desire of the fruit, of the attachment to the work itself, the growth of equality to all beings, to all happenings, to good repute or ill repute, praise or blame, to good fortune or ill fortune, the dropping of the ego which are necessary for the loss of all attachments can come completely only when all work becomes a spontaneous sacrifice to the Divine, the heart is offered up to Him and one has the settled experience of the Divine in all things and all beings. This consciousness or experience must come in all parts and movements of the being, *sarvabhāvena*, not only in the mind and idea; then the falling away of all attachments becomes easy. I speak of the Gita's way of yoga, for in the ascetic life one obtains the same object differently, by cutting away from the objects of attachment and the consequent atrophy of the attachment itself through rejection and disuse.

*

If I have not written to you, it is because I could not add anything to what I had already written before to you. I cannot promise that within a given time you will have a result which will enable you either to go out into the world with a stronger spirit or succeed in the Yoga. For the Yoga you yourself say that you have not yet the whole mind for it and without the whole mind success is hardly possible in sadhana. For the other it is hardly the function of sadhana to prepare a man for ordinary life in the world. There is one thing only that could work in a direction which would help you to something which is not that, but still not the whole Yoga for which you intimate that you are not wholly ready. It is if you get the spirit of the Yoga of works as it is indicated in the Gita — forget yourself and your miseries in the aspiration to a larger consciousness, feel the greater Force working in the world and make yourself an instrument for a

work to be done, however small it may be. But, whatever the way may be, you must accept it wholly and put your whole will into it — with a divided and wavering will you cannot hope for success in anything, neither in life nor in Yoga.

*

That is the ordinary Karmayoga in which the sadhak chooses his own work but offers it to the Divine — it is given to him in the sense that he is moved to it through some impulsion of his mind or heart or vital and feels that there is some cosmic power or *the* cosmic Power behind the impulsion and he tries to train himself to see the One Force behind all actions working out in him and others the cosmic Purpose.

Once he has the ideal of the direct surrender he has to find the direct moving or Guidance — that is why he rejects all that he sees to be merely mental, vital or physical impulsions coming from his own or universal Nature. Of course the full significance of the surrender comes out only when he is ready.

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Any work can be done as a field for the practice of the spirit of the Gita.

*

The ordinary life consists in work for personal aim and satisfaction of desire under some mental or moral control, touched sometimes by a mental ideal. The Gita's Yoga consists in the offering of one's work as a sacrifice to the Divine, the conquest of desire, egoless and desireless action, bhakti for the Divine, an entering into the cosmic consciousness, the sense of unity with all creatures, oneness with the Divine. This Yoga adds the bringing down of the supramental Light and Force (its ultimate aim) and the transformation of the nature.

No Vital Demand in Work

The Mother had spoken to X, after receiving your letter, for

arranging for the increase of your work. But now as you say you do not want the work and have given it up, there is nothing to be done. It is indeed unprofitable to do any work in this spirit of vital demand and unrest and impatience. I may add that the frown in Mother's eyes and her serious face existed only in the imagination of your restless and excited vital mind; the Mother's eyes and face could not have expressed something quite absent from her feelings or intention.

It is because you showed an intention of doing the sadhana in full earnest that we considered it necessary to point out to you that it could not be done without work or by mere solitary meditation, for that is the nature of this sadhana. We did not impose any work on you, but left it to you to choose. You yourself suggested the kitchen work and afterwards asked for an increase of it.

It is not possible to get peace of mind if you indulge in vital ego and the turbulent play of the vital mind, revolt, demand and impatience. Abhiman, revolt, violent insistence on the satisfaction of claims and wishes are foreign to the spirit of the Yoga, they can only bring disturbance and trouble. If you want peace of mind and true sadhana, the first thing you have to do is to cease regarding all these things as justified or justifiable or insisting on them. You must recognise that in allowing all this to rise in you, it is you yourself who have created your own trouble and you must resolutely separate yourself from these things and clear them out of you. Till you are firm in doing that, nothing can be done, — till then no spiritual progress or achievement is possible.

*

That is the most important thing to get over — ego, anger, personal dislikes, self-regarding sensitiveness etc. Work is not only for work's sake, but as a field of sadhana, for getting rid of the lower personality and its reactions and acquiring a full surrender to the Divine. As for the work itself it must be done according to the organisation arranged or sanctioned by the Mother. You must always remember that it is her work and not personally yours.

The Utility of Work

To keep up work helps to keep up the balance between the internal experience and the external development; otherwise one-sidedness and want of measure and balance may develop. Moreover, it is necessary to keep the sadhana of work for the Divine, because in the end that enables the sadhak to bring out the inner progress into the external nature and life and helps the integrality of the sadhana.

*

It is not at all a question of usefulness — although your work is very useful when you put yourself into it. Work is part of the sadhana, and in sadhana the question of usefulness does not arise, that is an outward practical measure of things, though even in the outward ordinary life utility is not the only measure. The question is of aspiration to the Divine, whether that is your central aim in life, your inner need or not. Sadhana for oneself is another matter — one can take it up or leave it. The real sadhana is for the Divine — it is the soul's need and one cannot give it up even if in moments of despondency one thinks one can.

*

Work here and work done in the world are of course not the same thing. The work there is not in any way a divine work in special — it is ordinary work in the world. But still one must take it as a training and do it in the spirit of karmayoga — what matters there is not the nature of the work in itself but the spirit in which it is done. It must be in the spirit of the Gita, without desire, with detachment, without repulsion, but doing it as perfectly as possible, not for the sake of the family or promotion or to please the superiors, but simply because it is the thing that has been given in the hand to do. It is a field of inner training, nothing more. One has to learn in it three things, equality, desirelessness, dedication. It is not the work as a thing for its own sake, but one's doing of it and one's way of doing it that one has to dedicate to the Divine. Done in that spirit it does not matter what the work is. If one trains oneself spiritually

like that, then one will be ready to do in the true way whatever special work directly for the Divine (such as the Asram work) one may any day be given to do.

*

Yes, obviously, that is one great utility of work that it tests the nature and puts the sadhak in front of the defects of his outer being which might otherwise escape him.

*

It will be better to do the work as a sadhana for getting rid of the defects rather than accept the defects as a reason for not doing the work. Instead of accepting these reactions as if they were an unchangeable law of your nature, you should make up your mind that they must come no longer — calling down the aid of the Mother's force to purify the vital and eliminate them altogether. If you believe that the trouble in the body must come, naturally it will come; rather fix in your mind the idea and will that it must not come and will not come. If it tries to come reject it and throw it away from you.

*

The actions are of importance only as expressing what is in the nature. You have to be conscious of whatever in your actions is not in harmony with the Yoga and to get rid of it. But for that what is needed is your own consciousness, the psychic, observing from within and throwing off what is seen to be undesirable.

*

For the sadhak outward struggles, troubles, calamities are only a means of surmounting ego and rajasic desire and attaining to complete surrender. So long as one insists on success, one is doing the work partly at least for the ego; difficulties and outward failures come to warn one that it is so and to bring complete equality. This does not mean that the power of victory is not to be acquired; but it is not success in the immediate work that is all-important; it is the power to receive and transmit

a greater and greater correct vision and inner Force that has to be developed and this must be done quite coolly and patiently without being elated or disturbed by immediate victory or failure.

Right Attitude in Work

The spiritual effectivity of work of course depends on the inner attitude. What is important is the spirit of offering put into the work. If one can in addition remember the Mother in the work or through a certain concentration feel the Mother's presence or force sustaining or doing the work, that carries the spiritual effectivity still farther. But even if one cannot in moments of clouding, depression or struggle do these things, yet there can be behind a love or bhakti which was the original motive power of the work and that can remain behind the cloud and reemerge like the sun after dark periods. All sadhana is like that and it is why one should not be discouraged by the dark moments, but realise that the original urge is there and that therefore the dark moments are only an episode in the journey which will lead to greater progress when they are once over.

*

As for the work, it is a means of preparation, it can also be a means of growing into the inner consciousness. But then it must be done not as work only but as an offering to the Mother, without insisting on the ego, with an aspiration to feel her Force working in one, her Presence presiding over the work, seeking to give all to her, not claiming anything for oneself. That is the spirit of work offered as a sacrifice; done like that, work becomes a sadhana and a Yoga.

*

What you have to realise is that your success or failure depends, first and always, on your keeping in the right attitude and in the true psychic and spiritual atmosphere and allowing the Mother's force to act through you.

If I can judge from your letters, you take its support too much for granted and lay the first stress on your own ideas and plans and words about the work; but these whether good or bad, right or mistaken, are bound to fail if they are not instruments of the true Force. You have to be always concentrated, always referring all difficulties for solution to the force that is being sent from here, always letting it act and not substituting your own mind and separate vital will or impulse.

Proceed with your work, never forgetting the condition of success. Do not lose yourself in the work or in your ideas or plans or forget to keep yourself in constant touch with the true source. Do not allow anybody's mind or vital influence or the influence of the surrounding atmosphere or the ordinary human mentality to come between you and the power and presence of the Mother.

*

You know what is the right thing to do — to take and keep the necessary inner attitude — when there is the openness to the Force and the strength, courage and power in action coming from it, outward circumstances can be met and turned in the right direction.

Equanimity in Work

Helpless acceptance [*of difficulties*] is no part of the Yoga of works — what is necessary is a calm equanimity in the face both of helpful and adverse, fortunate or unfortunate happenings, good or evil fortune, success or failure of effort. One must learn to bear without flinching and disturbance, without rajasic joy or grief, doing all that is necessary, but not dejected if difficulties or failure come — one still goes on doing what can be done, not sinking under the burden of life.

*

To keep this equanimity and absence of reactions and from that calm ground to direct the Yoga-force on things and persons (not

for egoistic aims but for the work to be done) is the position of the Yogi.

*

This is the right inner attitude, of equality — to remain unmoved whatever may outwardly happen. But what is needed for success in the outward field (if you do not use human means, diplomacy or tactics) is the power to transmit calmly a Force that can change men's attitude and the circumstances and make any outward action taken at once the right thing to do and effective.

*

You have to make yourself an instrument of the invisible Force — to be able in a way to direct it to the required point and for the required purpose. But for that samata must be entire — for a calm and luminous use of the Force is necessary. Otherwise the use of the Force, if accompanied by ego-reactions, may raise a corresponding ego-resistance and a struggle.

*

The increase of samata is only a first condition [*for attacks by adverse forces to become impossible in one's work*]. It is when on the basis of samata an understanding Force can be used to make their attacks nugatory that the attacks will become impossible.

The Impersonal Worker

To be impersonal, generally, is not to be ego-centric, not to regard things from the point of view of how they affect oneself, — but to see what things are in themselves, to judge impartially, to do what is demanded by the purpose of things or by the will of the Master of things, not by one's own personal point of view or egoistic interest or ego-formed idea or feeling. In work it is to do what is best for the work, without regard to one's own prestige or convenience, not to regard the work as one's own but as the Mother's, to do it according to rule, discipline, impersonal arrangement, even if conditions are not favourable to do the

best according to the conditions etc. etc. The impersonal worker puts his best capacity, zeal, industry into the work, but not his personal ambitions, vanity, passions. He has always something in view that is greater than his little personality and his devotion or obedience to that dictates his conduct.

*

Your difficulty in work is that you regard it too much as your work and from your personal point of view. So questions of personal convenience, ideas, way of doing things, prestige, demands take a big place — and the result is quarrels. You have to learn to be impersonal. Even in the world work cannot be well done without that. How much more necessary is it for a sadhak of Yoga!

Service of the Divine

There should be no straining after power, no ambition, no egoism of power. The power or powers that come should be considered not as one's own, but as gifts of the Divine for the Divine's purpose. Care should be taken that there should be no ambitious or selfish misuse, no pride or vanity, no sense of superiority, no claim or egoism of the instrument, only a simple and pure psychic instrumentation of the nature in any way in which it is fit for the service of the Divine.

*

To be free from all egoistic motive, careful of truth in speech and action, void of self-will and self-assertion, watchful in all things is the condition for being a flawless servant.

*

Yes, the use to which you have turned your vital capacities in Bengal and Bombay, — to turn them into instruments of service and the Divine Work, is certainly the best possible. Through such action and such use of the vital power, one can certainly progress in Yoga. Vital power is necessary for work and you

have an exceptional amount of it. Of course, to make a full Yogic use of it and of its force for action, the ego must gradually fade out and vital attachments and impulses be replaced by the spiritual motive. Bhakti, devotion to the Divine, and the spirit of service to the Divine are among the most powerful means for this change.

*

Reading and study though they can be useful for preparing the mind, are not themselves the best means of entering the Yoga. It is self-dedication from within that is the means. It is with the consciousness of the Mother that you must unite, a sincere self-consecration in the mind and heart and the Will is the means for it. The work given by the Mother is always meant as field for that self-consecration, it has to be done as an offering to her so that through the self-offering one may come to feel her force acting and her presence.

*

If one went to the Himalayas, the likelihood is that one would make oneself fit for inactive meditation and quite unfit for life and the Mother's service—so in the next life the character would be like that. This is simply the influence of old ideas that have no application in this Yoga. It is here in the life near the Mother, in the work itself that one must become fit to be a perfect instrument of the Mother.

*

All acts are included in action, — work is action regulated towards a fixed end and methodically and constantly done, service is work done for the Mother's purpose and under her direction.

All Work Equal in the Eyes of the Spirit

Self-dedication does not depend on the particular work you do, but on the spirit in which all work, of whatever kind it may be, is done. Any work, done well and carefully as a sacrifice

to the Divine, without desire or egoism, with equality of mind and calm tranquillity in good or bad fortune, for the sake of the Divine and not for the sake of any personal gain, reward or result, with the consciousness that it is the Divine Power to which all work belongs, is a means of self-dedication through Karma.

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Like the vital disturbance the physical inertia with all its symptoms is an attack of the hostile forces intended to cut short and prevent the higher opening. The ideas that arise to justify it are of no value — it is not true that physical work is of an inferior value to mental culture, it is the arrogance of the intellect that makes the claim. All work done for the Divine is equally divine; manual labour done for the Divine is more divine than mental culture done for one's own development, fame or mental satisfaction.

This inertia, numbness, pain should be thrown off with the same resolution as the vital disturbances. The only peculiarity of it in your case is the persistent violence of the attack as in the case of the vital — otherwise it is what others get also; but each time they reject, call on the Mother and get free, after a little time if the attack is violent, at once if it is of a lesser character.

If there is temporary physical inability, one can take rest but solely for the purpose of recovering the physical energy. The idea of giving up physical work for mental self-development is a creation of the mental ego.

*

Of course the idea of bigness and smallness is quite foreign to the spiritual truth. Spiritually there is nothing big or small. Such ideas are like those of the literary people who think writing a poem is a high work and making shoes or cooking the dinner is a small and low one. But all is equal in the eyes of the Spirit — and it is only the spirit within with which it is done that matters. It is the same with a particular kind of work, there is nothing big or small.

*

In the wider consciousness one can deal with the small as well as the high things, but one comes to deal with them with a larger as well as a profounder, subtler and more accurate view coming from a more and more understanding and luminous consciousness so that the thoughts about small things also cease to be themselves small or trivial, being more and more part of a higher knowledge.

*

One must be able to do the same work always with enthusiasm and at the same time be ready to do something else or enlarge one's scope at a moment's notice.

*

The sadhak ought to be ready to do any work that is needed, not only the work he prefers.

*

It is not that you have to do what you dislike, but that you have to cease to dislike. To do only what you like is to indulge the vital and maintain its domination over the nature — for that is the very principle of the untransformed nature, to be governed by its likes and dislikes. To be able to do anything with equanimity is the principle of karmayoga and to do it with joy because it is done for the Mother is the true psychic and vital condition in this Yoga.

*

There are those who have done the lawyer's work with the Mother's force working in them and grown by it in inward consciousness. On the other hand religious work can be merely external and vital in its nature or influence.

*

I may say however that I do not regard business as something evil or tainted, any more than it was so regarded in ancient spiritual India. If I did, I would not be able to receive money

from X or from those of our disciples who in Bombay trade with East Africa; nor could we then encourage them to go on with their work but would have to tell them to throw it up and attend to their spiritual progress alone. How are we to reconcile X's seeking after spiritual light and his mill? Ought I not to tell him to leave his mill to itself and to the devil and go into some Ashram to meditate? Even if I myself had had the command to do business as I had the command to do politics I would have done it without the least spiritual or moral compunction. All depends on the spirit in which a thing is done, the principle on which it is built and use to which it is turned. I have done politics and the most violent kind of revolutionary politics, *ghoraṁ karma*, and I have supported war and sent men to it, even though politics is not always or often a very clean occupation nor can war be called a spiritual line of action. But Krishna calls upon Arjuna to carry on war of the most terrible kind and by his example encourage men to do every kind of human work, *sarvakarmāṇi*. Do you contend that Krishna was an unspiritual man and that his advice to Arjuna was mistaken or wrong in principle? Krishna goes farther and declares that a man by doing in the right way and in the right spirit the work dictated to him by his fundamental nature, temperament and capacity and according to his and its dharma can move towards the Divine. He validates the function and dharma of the Vaishya as well as of the Brahmin and Kshatriya. It is in his view quite possible for a man to do business and make money and earn profits and yet be a spiritual man, practise Yoga, have an inner life. The Gita is constantly justifying works as a means of spiritual salvation and enjoining a Yoga of works as well as of Bhakti and Knowledge. Krishna, however, superimposes a higher law also that work must be done without desire, without attachment to any fruit or reward, without any egoistic attitude or motive, as an offering or sacrifice to the Divine. This is the traditional Indian attitude towards these things, that all work can be done if it is done according to the dharma and, if it is rightly done, it does not prevent the approach to the Divine or the access to spiritual knowledge and the spiritual life.

There is of course also the ascetic ideal which is necessary for many and has its place in the spiritual order. I would myself say that no man can be spiritually complete if he cannot live ascetically or follow a life as bare as the barest anchorite's. Obviously, greed for wealth and money-making has to be absent from his nature as much as greed for food or any other greed and all attachment to these things must be renounced from his consciousness. But I do not regard the ascetic way of living as indispensable to spiritual perfection or as identical with it. There is the way of spiritual self-mastery and the way of spiritual self-giving and surrender to the Divine, abandoning ego and desire even in the midst of action or of any kind of work or all kinds of work demanded from us by the Divine. If it were not so, there would not have been great spiritual men like Janaka or Vidura in India and even there would have been no Krishna or else Krishna would have been not the Lord of Brindavan and Mathura and Dwarka or a prince and warrior or the charioteer of Kurukshetra, but only one more great anchorite. The Indian scriptures and Indian tradition, in the Mahabharata and elsewhere, make room both for the spirituality of the renunciation of life and for the spiritual life of action. One cannot say that one only is the Indian tradition and that the acceptance of life and works of all kinds, *sarvakarmāṇi*, is un-Indian, European or Western and unspiritual.

Interest in Work

It [*absorption in work*] depends on a certain extension and intensifying of the consciousness by which all activity becomes interesting not for itself but because of the consciousness put into it and, through the intensity of the energy, there is a pleasure in the exercise of the energy, and in the perfect doing of the work, whatever the work may be.

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As a rule, I mean in their unchanged condition, the lower parts get interested and enthusiastic [*about work*] when the ego mixes

with the interest. But the pure enthusiasm can come into them as they get more and more converted and purified and they then become very indispensable forces for the realisation.

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It is natural for the vital or even the mind to feel energised by something new — but for the physical plane the work always repeated is the foundation — so one has to be able at least to take a steady calm interest in it always.

*

There must be the *rasa* [*in the work*], but it comes when there is the dynamic descent of the Power.

Joy in Work

Part of the physical cannot do without work, another part (more material) finds it an infliction. What gives the force and joy of the work is however not physical but vital.

*

The vital delight in the work is a necessary element for the work itself. Work done without it is much less easy to do and much less easy to offer.

*

Most people do things because they have to, not out of the happiness they find in the things. It is only its hobbies and penchants that the nature finds some happiness in, not usually in work — unless of course the work itself is one's hobby or penchant and can be indulged in or dropped as one likes.

*

Joy and enthusiasm and buoyancy are good things, but it must be on a basis of calm and with the head clear for work.

*

The reason of the difference of result between the two moods in work is that the first mood is that of a vital joy, while the other is that of a psychic quiet. Vital joy, though it is a very helpful thing for the ordinary human life, is something excited, eager, mobile without a settled basis — that is why it soon gets tired and cannot continue. Vital joy has to be replaced by a quiet settled psychic gladness with the mind and vital very clear and very peaceful. When one works on this basis, then everything becomes glad and easy, in touch with the Mother's force and fatigue or depression do not come.

Loss of Inspiration in Work

What you find happening [*a loss of inspiration*] is a common experience in all work. Mother says it is due to the fact that in beginning the work there is an inspiration of what to do and the mind at first acts as a channel for it and all goes well. Afterwards the mind begins to be acting on its own account, without one's noticing it usually unless one is very conscious and accustomed to scrutinise oneself — and do the thing without the original inspiration by its ordinary means. This is felt very clearly in work like poetry and music — for there one feels the inspiration coming and feels it failing and getting mixed up with the ordinary mind. So long as it goes on, everything is done easily and well, but as soon as the mind begins to interfere or to work in its place, then the work is less well done. In work like cooking one does not directly and vividly feel the inspiration, only a brightness and perceptiveness and confidence perhaps — so also one does not notice when the physical mind becomes active. In a thing like poetry one can break off till the inspiration comes again, but in cooking one can't do that, the work has to be finished there and then. I suppose this can be remedied only by one's becoming more conscious within as one does in sadhana, till one can see and counteract the wrong movement of inferior mental activity by bringing down of one's will again the right inspiration and perception.

Thoughts of Sadhana during Work

Thoughts of sadhana can go on very well along with work. To combine the inner spiritual consciousness and its growth with a consecrated outer activity is part of the Yoga.

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I don't think any attempt should be made [*to turn inwards or revert to thoughts of sadhana during work*]. If the thoughts of sadhana come of themselves or the turning inwards or a silent aspiration to sadhana, that is all right.

Chapter Two

Becoming Conscious in Work

Working from Within

You must learn to act always from within — from your inner being which is in contact with the Divine. The outer should be a mere instrument and should not be allowed at all to compel or dictate your speech, thought or action.

*

All should be done quietly from within — working, speaking, reading, writing as part of the real consciousness — not with the dispersed and unquiet movement of the ordinary consciousness.

*

One can work and remain quiet within. Quietude does not mean having an empty mind or doing no action at all.

*

When one is concentrated within, the body can go on doing its work by the Force acting within it. Even the external consciousness can work separately under the motion of the Force while the rest of the consciousness is in concentration.

*

It is a little difficult at first to combine the inward condition with the attention to the outward work and mingling with others, but a time comes when it is possible for the inner being to be in full union with the Mother while the action comes out of that concentrated union and is consciously guided in all its details so that some part of the consciousness can attend to everything outside, even be concentrated upon it and yet feel the inward concentration in the Mother.

*

It is a very good sign that even in spite of full work the inner working was felt behind and succeeded in establishing the silence. A time comes for the sadhak in the end when the consciousness and the deeper experience go on happening even in full work or in sleep, while speaking or in any kind of activity.

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It is probably because at the time of the work the tendency of the consciousness to externalise itself is greater (that is always the case), so the pressure grows stronger in order to produce a contrary inward tendency. This produces some tendency to go inside in the way of a complete internalisation (going into a sort of samadhi); but what should happen during work is a going inside in a wakeful condition and becoming aware of the psychic within as you used to do under the pressure while the outer mind does the work. This is the condition that must eventually come.

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The stress of the Power is all right, but there is really nothing incompatible between the inner silence and action. It is to that combination that the sadhana must move.

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It [*concentration of the inner consciousness*] can happen in several forms. It can become concentrated in silence as the witness — it can become concentrated in the feeling of the Divine Force flowing through it, the work being a result — it can become concentrated in the feeling of the presence of the Divine or the Ananda or love of the Divine while the working goes on separately in front. All this becomes so habitual that it goes on of itself without the need of call or effort or even of the mind's attention — it simply *is* there. There are other possibilities besides those mentioned above, but these are perhaps the most common.

*

It is perfectly possible to do work in an entire emptiness

without any interference or activity of the lower parts of the consciousness.

Working with a Double Consciousness

One can both aspire and attend to the work and do many other things at the same time when the consciousness is developed by Yoga.

*

It [*peace and contact in work, but no aspiration*] is because the energy is put outward in the work. But as the peace and contact grow a double consciousness can develop — one engaged in the work, another behind silent and observing or turned towards the Divine — in this consciousness the aspiration can be maintained even while the external consciousness is turned towards the work.

*

That is how the consciousness must work when it lives in the Divine. One part of the Force in it works and offers the work to the Mother, another part lives in the experience of the Mother, the third hears what the others say and answers without losing the inner consciousness.

*

No — it is only if it [*turning inwards during work*] is an inner absorption that it would come in the way. But what I mean is a sort of stepping backward into something silent and observant within which is not involved in the action, yet sees and can shed its light upon it. There are then two parts of the being, one inner looking at and witnessing and knowing, the other executive and instrumental and doing. This gives not only freedom but power — and in this inner being one can get into touch with the Divine not through mental activity but through the substance of the being, by a certain inward touch, perception, reception, receiving also the right inspiration or intuition of the work.

*

If one feels a consciousness not limited by the work, a consciousness behind supporting that which works, then it is easier [*to keep higher thoughts during work*]. That usually comes either by the wideness and silence fixing and extending itself or by the consciousness of a Force not oneself working through the worker.

*

Before things become pucca in the consciousness, the doing of work does carry the consciousness outward unless one has made it a sadhana to feel the “Force greater than oneself” working through one. That I suppose is why the Shankarites considered work to be in its own nature an operation of the Ignorance and incompatible with a condition of realisation. But as a matter of fact there are three stages there: (I) in which the work brings you to a lower as well as outer consciousness so that you have afterwards to recover the realisation; (II) in which the work brings you out, but the realisation remains behind (or above), not felt while you work, but as soon as the work ceases you find it there just as it was; (III) in which the work makes no difference, for the realisation or spiritual condition remains through the work itself. You seem this time to have experienced No. II.

*

In action it is always more difficult [*to keep a higher state of consciousness*] because the consciousness goes out towards the work or else is at least not wholly held within — it is therefore difficult to remain in an inward state. There is no other obstacle. But if the inward state is strong and habitual, then it gains upon the action also and at first one always feels it behind and afterwards it occupies the whole consciousness, outer included, and the action takes place in it. This is for static states like peace, self-realisation etc. If one has the realisation of the dynamic Force, there is no difficulty — because that can take up the action at once.

Absorption in Work

It is the external mind that gets absorbed in the work and

covers what is behind. There must be a double consciousness, one acting, one behind observing, separate, free to continue the sadhana.

*

The absorption in work is not undesirable — but the difficulty in turning inwards can only be temporary. A certain plasticity in the physical consciousness which is sure to come makes it easy to turn from one concentration to another.

*

It [*meditative absorption during work*] depends on the plasticity of the consciousness. Some are like that, they get so absorbed they don't want to come out or do anything else. One has to keep a certain balance by which the fundamental consciousness remains able to turn from one concentration to another with ease.

*

This tendency [*to be possessed by work*] has its advantage and disadvantage. It gets things done, but it prevents plasticity in the work. One must get free from the “possession” by the urge of the energy, but keep the drive and be able to distribute it at will.

*

Absorption in work is inevitable. It is enough to offer it when beginning and ending and to encourage the attitude to grow = for You and by You.

*

It is a certain inertia in the physical consciousness which shuts it up in the groove of what it is doing so that it is fixed in that and not free to remember [*the Mother*].

Remembering the Presence in Work

It is not at first easy to remember the presence in work; but if one revives the sense of the presence immediately after the work is

over it is all right. In time the sense of the presence will become automatic even in work.

*

All the difficulties you describe are quite natural things common to most people. It is easy for one, comparatively, to remember and be conscious when one sits quiet in meditation; it is difficult when one has to be busy with work. The remembrance and consciousness in work have to come by degrees, you must not expect to have it all at once; nobody can get it all at once. It comes in two ways, — first, if one practises remembering the Mother and offering the work to her each time one does something (not all the time one is doing, but at the beginning or whenever one can remember), then that slowly becomes easy and habitual to the nature. Secondly, by the meditation an inner consciousness begins to develop which, after a time, not at once or suddenly, becomes more and more automatically permanent. One feels this as a separate consciousness from that outer one which works. At first this separate consciousness is not felt when one is working, but as soon as the work stops one feels it was there all the time watching from behind; afterwards it begins to be felt during the work itself, as if there were two parts of oneself — one watching and supporting from behind and remembering the Mother and offering to her and the other doing the work. When this happens, then to work with the true consciousness becomes more and more easy.

It is the same with all the rest. It is by the development of the inner consciousness that all the things you speak of will be set right. For instance it is a part of the being that has *utsāha* for the work, another that feels the pressure of quietude and is not so disposed to work. Your mood depends on which comes up at the time — it is so with all people. To combine the two is difficult, but a time comes when they do get reconciled — one remains poised in an inner concentration while the other is supported by it in its push towards work. The transformation of the nature, the harmonising of all these discordant things in the being are the work of sadhana. Therefore you need not be discouraged by

observing these things in you. There is hardly anybody who has not found these things in himself. All this can be arranged by the action of the inner Force with the constant consent and call of the sadhak. By himself he might not be able to do it, but with the Divine Force working within all can be done.

*

The resistance you speak of and the insufficient receptivity and the inability to continue in communion while doing work, must all be due to some part of the physical consciousness that is still not open to the Light — probably something in the vital physical and the material subconscious which stands in the way of the physical mind being in its mass free and responsive.

There is no harm in raising the aspiration from below to meet the power from above. All that you have to be careful about is not to raise up the difficulty from below before the descending Power is ready to remove it.

There is no necessity of losing consciousness when you meditate. It is the widening and change of the consciousness that is essential. If you mean going inside, you can do that without losing consciousness.

Inner Guidance about Work

It is good that you were able to observe yourself all the time and see the movements and that the intervention of the new consciousness was frequent and automatic. At a later stage you will no doubt get a guidance in the mind also as to how to do the things you want to get done. Evidently your mind was too active — as well as the minds of others also — and so you missed your objective, owing to the excessive multitude of witnesses! However —

*

If you want that [*to become conscious of whether an action is right or not*] very much and aspire for it, it may come in one of several ways —

(1) You may get the habit or faculty of watching your movements in such a way that you see the impulse to action coming and can see too its nature,

(2) a consciousness may come which feels uneasy at once if a wrong thought or impulse to action or feeling is there,

(3) something within you may warn and stop you when you are going to do the wrong action.

*

As for the feeling from within, it depends on being able to go inside. Sometimes it comes of itself with the deepening of the consciousness by bhakti or otherwise; sometimes it comes by practice — a sort of referring the matter and listening for the answer — listening is of course a metaphor but it is difficult to express it otherwise — it doesn't mean that the answer comes necessarily in the shape of words, spoken or unspoken, though it does sometimes or for some; it can take any shape. The main difficulty for many is *to be sure of the right answer*. For that it is necessary to be able to contact the consciousness of the Guru inwardly — that comes best by bhakti. Otherwise it may become a delicate and ticklish job. Obstacles, (1) normal habit of relying on outward means for everything, (2) ego, substituting its suggestions for the right answer, (3) mental activity, (4) intruder nuisances. I think you need not be eager for this, but rely on the growth of the inner consciousness. The above is only by way of general explanation.

*

A constant aspiration for that [*to be constantly governed by the Divine*] is the first thing — next a sort of stillness within and a drawing back from the outward action into the stillness and a sort of listening expectancy, not for a sound but for the spiritual feeling or direction of the consciousness that comes through the psychic.

*

Your difficulty is that you worry yourself and think you have

made mistakes when you have made none. If you want to get the right guidance, you must have more confidence and not always think that what comes to you is wrong and your work is bad and ugly. You generally get things right. If you do make a mistake here and there, it does not matter; everybody makes some mistakes; but by making them one can learn better.

Another thing is that, as I have told you, a thing can be done in several ways, all of which are good — but your mind seems to go on the feeling that one thing is good or true and all the rest is bad or false and, as it were, is seeking for the one only good way and then in everything it does it feels dissatisfied. When you have found a way of doing the work, it is better to do it and not always be worrying yourself for something better.

*

It is always the restlessness that makes you lose touch. If you are not sure about the work, remain quiet and you will get in time the idea of what to do; if you worry and are restless, you get confused and disturbed and can no longer feel connection with the Force, though it is always there above you and supporting you. As to blind selfish feelings, they are still more confusing and disturbing; but here too the only thing is to remain quiet, detach yourself, disown and throw away the feeling. To get upset, disturbed and in despair, is no use; it only prolongs the confusion and unrest and prevents you from feeling the connection.

*

Openness in work means the same thing as openness in the consciousness. The same Force that works in your consciousness in meditation and clears away the cloud and confusion whenever you open to it, can also take up your action and not only make you aware of the defects in it but keep you conscious of what is to be done and guide your mind and hands to do it. If you open to it in your work, you will begin to feel this guidance more and more until behind all your activities you will be aware of the Force of the Mother.

*

Why should you try the same things as the others? What one feels inspired to do, is the best thing for one.

Knowing the Divine Will

There is a consciousness other than mind and vital—if there were not, there would be no use in doing sadhana. The true will belongs to that consciousness.

*

When the mind is pure and the psychic prominent, then one feels what is according to the Divine Will and what is against it.

*

For the actions to be psychic, the psychic must be in front. The observing Purusha can separate himself, but cannot change the Prakriti. But to be the observing Purusha is a first step. Afterwards there must be the action of the Purusha Will as an instrument of the Mother's force. This Will must be founded on a right consciousness which sees what is wrong, ignorant, selfish, egoistic, moved by desire in the nature and puts it right.

*

It needs a quiet mind [*to know the Divine Will*]. In the quiet mind turned towards the Divine the intuition (higher mind) comes of the Divine's Will and the right way to do it.

*

Once the mental silence is attained, then in that the mental thoughts can be replaced by some vision and intuition regarding the work.

*

The transcendental Will for us is the supramental Will. For that to act in you directly, it is necessary to grow upward into the consciousness above the ordinary mind and to bring down these higher ranges into the mind, life and body. Indirectly through

the higher Mind and intuition the supramental Will is already acting on you, but naturally this indirect action does not bring the full power.

*

The true automatic action (full of consciousness and light) begins only when one gets into touch with the supermind. Till then aspiration and tapasya (concentration) are needed; otherwise there is a wrong automatism due to inert passivity in which wrong forces can act.

Freedom in Work

Do? why should he [*a certain Yogi*] want to do anything if he was in the eternal peace or Ananda or union with the Divine? If a man is spiritual and has gone beyond the vital and mind, he does not need to be always “doing” something. The self or spirit has the joy of its own existence. It is free to do nothing and free to do everything — but not because it is bound to action and unable to exist without it.

*

The passage¹ describes the state of consciousness when one is aloof from all things even when in their midst and all is felt to be unreal, an illusion. There are then no preferences or desires, because things are too unreal to desire or to prefer one to another. But at the same time one feels no necessity to flee the world or not to do any action, because being free from the illusion, action or living in the world does not weigh upon one, one is not bound or involved. Those who flee from the world or shun action (the Sannyasis) do so because they would be involved or bound; they believe the world to be unreal, but in fact it weighs on them as a reality so long as they are in it. When one is perfectly free from the illusion of the reality of things, then they cannot weigh on one or bind at all.

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¹ *This passage is not available. — Ed.*

But the Jivanmukta feels no bondage [*in work*]. In all work and action, he feels perfectly free, because the work is not done by him personally (there is no sense of limited ego) but by the cosmic Force. The limitations of the work are those put by the cosmic Force itself on its own action. He himself lives in communion of oneness with the Transcendent which is above the cosmos and feels no limitation. That is at least how it is felt in the Overmind.

Chapter Three

The Divine Force in Work

Receiving the Divine Power or Force

To be able to receive the Divine Power and let it act through you in the things of the outward life, there are three necessary conditions:

1. Quietude, equality — not to be disturbed by anything that happens, to keep the mind still and firm, seeing the play of forces, but itself tranquil.

2. Absolute faith — faith that what is for the best will happen, but also that if one can make oneself a true instrument, the fruit will be that which one's will guided by the Divine Light sees as the thing to be done — *kartavyam karma*.

3. Receptivity — the power to receive the Divine Force and to feel its presence and the presence of the Mother in it and allow it to work, guiding one's sight and will and action. If this power and presence can be felt and this plasticity made the habit of the consciousness in action, — but plasticity to the Divine Force alone without bringing in any foreign element, — the eventual result is sure.

*

What happened to you shows what are the conditions of that state in which the Divine Power takes the place of the ego and directs the action, making the mind, life and body an instrument. A receptive silence of the mind, an effacement of the mental ego and the reduction of the mental being to the position of a witness, a close contact with the Divine Power and an openness of the being to that one Influence and no other are the conditions for becoming an instrument of the Divine, moved by that and that only.

That there was no mental expectation was all to the good; if there had been an expectation, the mind might have been active

and interfered and either prevented the experience or else stood in the way of its being pure and complete.

The silence of the mind does not of itself bring in the supramental consciousness; there are many states or planes or levels of consciousness between the human mind and the Supermind. The silence opens the mind and the rest of the being to greater things, sometimes to the cosmic consciousness, sometimes to the experience of the silent Self, sometimes to the presence or power of the Divine, sometimes to a higher consciousness than that of the human mind; the mind's silence is the most favourable condition for any of these things to happen. In this Yoga it is the most favourable condition (not the only one) for the Divine Power to descend first upon and then into the individual consciousness and there do its work to transform that consciousness, giving it the necessary experiences, altering all its outlook and movements, leading it from stage to stage till it is ready for the last (supramental) change.

*

What happened is a thing that often happens and — taking your account of it — it reproduced in your case the usual stages. First you sat down in prayer — that means a call to the Above, if I may so express it. Next came the necessary condition for the answer to the prayer to be effective — “little by little a sort of restfulness came”, in other words, the quietude of the consciousness which is necessary before the Power that has to act can act. Then the rush of the Force or Power, “a flood of energy and sense of power and glow” and the natural concentration of the being in inspiration and expression, the action of the Power. This is the thing that used to happen daily to the physical workers in the Asram. Working with immense energy and enthusiasm, with a passion for the work they might after a time feel tired — then they would call the Mother and a sense of rest came into them and with or after it a flood of energy so that twice the amount of work could be done without the least fatigue or reaction. In many there was a spontaneous call of the vital for the Force, so that they felt the flood of energy as soon as they began the work

and it continued so long as the work had to be done.

The vital is the means of effectuation on the physical plane, so its action and energy are necessary for all work — without it, if the mind only drives without the cooperation and instrumentation of the vital, there is hard and disagreeable labour and effort with results which are usually not at all of the best kind. The ideal state for work is when there is a natural concentration of the consciousness in the special energy, supported by an easeful rest and quiescence of the consciousness as a whole. Distraction of the mind by other activities disturbs this balance of ease and concentrated energy, — fatigue also disturbs or destroys it. The first thing therefore that has to be done is to bring back the supporting restfulness and this is ordinarily done by cessation of work and repose. In the experience you had that was replaced by a restfulness that came from above in answer to your station of prayer and an energy that also came from above. It is the same principle as in sadhana — the reason why we want people to make the consciousness quiet so that the higher peace may come in and on the basis of that peace a new Force from above.

It is not effort that brought the inspiration. Inspiration comes from above in answer to a state of concentration which is itself a call to it. Effort on the contrary fatigues the consciousness and therefore is not favourable to the best work; the only thing is that sometimes — by no means always — effort culminates in a pull for the inspiration which brings some answer, but it is not usually so good and effective an inspiration as that which comes when there is the easy and intense concentration of the energy in its work. Effort and expenditure of energy are not necessarily the same thing; the best expenditure of energy is that which flows easily without effort at all — when the Inspiration or Force (any Force) works of itself and the mind and vital and even body are glowing instruments and the Force flows out in an intense and happy working — an almost labourless labour.

The Working of the Force

When you have opened yourself to a higher Force, when you

have made yourself a channel for the energy of its work, it is quite natural that the Force should flow and act in the way that is wanted or the way that is needed and for the effect that is needed. Once the channel is made, the Force that acts is not necessarily bound by the personal limitations or disabilities of the instrument; it can disregard them and act in its own power. In doing so it may use the instrument simply as a medium and, as soon as the work is finished, leave him just what he was before, incapable in his ordinary moments of doing such good work, capable only when he is seized and used and illumined. But also it may by its power of transforming action set the instrument right, accustom it to the necessary intuitive knowledge and movement so that this living perfected instrument can at will call for and receive the action of the Force. In technique, there are two different things, — there is the intellectual knowledge which one has acquired and applies or thinks one is applying — there is the intuitive cognition which acts in its own right, even if it is not actually possessed by the worker so that he cannot give an adequate account of the modes of working or elements of what he has done. Many poets have a very summary theoretic knowledge of metrical or linguistic technique; they have its use but they would not be able to explain how they write or what are the qualities and constituent methods of their successful art, but they achieve all the same things that are perfect in the weaving of sounds and the skill of words, consummate in rhythm and language. Intellectual knowledge of technique is a help but a minor help; it can become a mere device or a rigid fetter. It is an intuitive divination of the right process that is more frequent and a more powerful action — or even it is an inspiration that puts the right sounds or right words without need of even any intuitive choice. This is especially true of poetry, for there are arts — those that work in a more material substance — where perfect work cannot be done without full technical knowledge, — painting, sculpture, architecture.

What the higher Force writes through you is your own in the sense that you have been an instrument of manifestation — as is indeed every artist or worker. When you put your name to

it, it is the name of the instrumental creator; but for sadhana it is necessary to recognise that the real Power, the true Creator was not your surface self, you were simply the living harp on which the Musician played his tune.

The true Ananda of creation is not the pleasure of the ego in having personally done well and in being somebody, that is an extraneous element which attaches itself to the true joy of work and creation. The Ananda comes by the inrush of a larger Might and Delight, *āveśa*; there is the thrill of being possessed and used by a superpersonal Power, the exultation and exaltation of the uplifting of the consciousness, the joy of its illumination and its heightened and heightened action and the joy of the beauty, power or perfection that is being created. How far, how intensely one feels these things, depends on the condition of the consciousness at the time, the temperament, the activity of the vital, the mind's receptivity and response. The Yogi (or even certain strong and calm minds) is not carried away, as the mind and the vital often are, by the Ananda, — he holds and watches it and there is no mere excitement mixed with the divine flow of it through the conscious instrument and the body. There is a greater Ananda of *samarpaṇa*, of spiritual realisation or divine love, but in the spiritual consciousness and life the Ananda of creation has its place.

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To observe whether it [*one's work*] is really well done or not and feel the Ananda of work done for the Mother [*is the right attitude*]. Get rid of the "I". If it is well done, it is the Force that did it and your only part was to be a good or a bad instrument.

*

It is a Force that comes and pushes to work and is as legitimately a part of the spiritual life as others. It is a special Energy that takes hold of the worker in the being and fulfils itself through him. To work with a full energy like this in one is quite salutary. The only thing is not to overdo it — that is to avoid any exhaustion or recoil to a fatigued inertia.

As for the dedication make the *sankalpa* always of offering it, remember and pray when you can (I mean in connection with the work). This is to fix a certain attitude. Afterwards, the Force can take advantage of this key to open the deeper dedication within.

*

I was not [*in using the phrase "allow the Force to work through you"*] speaking of the Force coming down from above, but of the Force from behind doing action through the mind and body as instruments. Very often when the mind and body are inert, their actions still go on by this push from behind.

*

You used the Force for the work, and it supported you so long as you preferred to stick to that work. What is of first importance is not the religious or non-religious character of the work done, but the inner attitude in which it is done. If the attitude is vital and not psychic, then one throws oneself out in the work and loses the inner contact. If it is psychic, the inner contact remains, the Force is felt supporting or doing the work and the *sadhana* progresses.

*

The Force from above is the Force of the Higher Consciousness. That from behind works as a mental, vital or physical force according to need. When the being is open to it and there is a certain passivity to its working, it takes the place of the personal activity and the Person is a witness of its action.

The Force and the Peace in Action

The dynamic action when it comes acts without disturbing the silence and peace. There is the vast peace and silence and in that the Force or the Will works to do what is necessary — in that also is the action of Agni or the psychic.

*

It is this quiet and spontaneous action that is the characteristic divine action. The aggressive action is only, as you say, when there is resistance and struggle. This does not mean that the quiet force cannot be intense. It can be more intense than the aggressive, but its intensity only increases the intensity of the peace.

*

When you feel the better condition, the peace and force at work, it is better to allow the force to work, keeping yourself still and quiet, and not try to do things by the mind.

When there is the confusion or wrong condition, then you have to call down the quiet, to try to get back to the true position, not listening to the wrong thoughts but rejecting them. If you cannot do that at once, still remain as quiet as possible and aspire and offer yourself. The Divine Force can always do more than the personal effort; so the one thing is to get quiet and call it down or back to the front — for it is always there behind or above you.

Drawing upon the Force for Energy

During the course of the sadhana one can learn to draw upon the universal Life-Force and replenish the energies from it. But usually the best way is to learn to open oneself to the Mother's Force and become conscious of it supporting and moving or pouring into the system and giving the energy needed for the work whether it be mental, vital or physical.

There is naturally a higher Energy above the present universal forces and it is that which will transform the nature and take up the mental, vital, physical energies and change them into its own likeness.

*

If you mean by failure the weakness of the body, it is due probably to your having unduly strained it in obedience to rajasic vital impulses, an effect which was increased by vital relapses

into *tamas* and the struggle of the vital attacks you had. But also it often happens even in the ordinary course of Yoga that physical strength is replaced by a Yogic strength or Yogic life force which keeps up the body and makes it work, but in the absence of this force the body is denuded of power, inert and *tamasic*. This can only be remedied by the whole being opening to Yoga *shakti* in each of its planes — Yogic mind force, Yogic life force, Yogic body force.

*

When doing this work you had the Force in you and the right consciousness filling the vital and physical — afterwards with relaxation the ordinary physical consciousness came up and brought back the ordinary reactions — fatigue, sciatica etc.

*

With the right consciousness always there, there would be no fatigue.

*

It [*the cause of fatigue*] is probably some desire or vital preference — likes and dislikes in the vital. All work given you must be felt as the Mother's and done with joy, opening yourself for the Mother's force to work through you.

*

If there is the full surrender in the work and you feel it is the Mother's and that the Mother's force is working in you, then fatigue does not come.

*

The pain, burning, restlessness, weeping and inability to work which you feel, come when there is some difficulty or resistance in some part of the nature. When it comes call on the Mother and reject these things; turn to her for the peace and quietude to return to your mind and settle in the heart, so that there shall be no place for these other things.

Avoiding Overstrain

Yes, it is a mistake to overstrain as there is a reaction afterwards. If there is energy, all must not be spent, some must be stored up so as to increase the permanent strength of the system.

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Overstraining brings inertia up. Everybody has inertia in his nature: the question is of its greater or lesser operation.

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When you feel tired, don't overstrain yourself but rest — doing only your ordinary work; restlessly doing something or other all the time is not the way to cure it. To be quiet without and within is what is needed when there is this sense of fatigue. There is always a strength near you which you can call in and it will remove these things, but you must learn to be quiet in order to receive it.

*

If the physical is in this condition and the work creates such reactions in it, it is no use forcing it violently and putting an overstrain upon it. It is better to educate and train the external material being slowly by bringing calm and peace and light and strength persistently into the nervous system and cells of the body. A violent compulsion on the body may well defeat its own object. Probably your sadhana has been too exclusively internal and subjective; but if it is so, this cannot be remedied in a moment. It is better therefore for you not to do heavy physical work like the Bakery's at present.

*

Idleness must of course go — but sometimes I think you have pulled too much the other way. To be able to work with full energy is necessary — but to be able not to work is also necessary.

*

As for working, it depends on what you mean by the word. Desire often leads either to excess of effort, meaning often much labour and a limited fruit, with strain, exhaustion and in case of difficulty or failure despondence, disbelief or revolt; or else it leads to pulling down the force. That can be done, but except for the Yogically strong and experienced, it is not always safe, though it may be often very effective; not safe, first, because it may lead to violent reactions or bring down contrary or wrong or mixed forces which the sadhak is not experienced enough to distinguish from the true ones. Or else it may substitute the sadhak's own limited power of experience or mental and vital constructions for the free gift and the true leading of the Divine. Cases differ, each has his own way of sadhana. But for you what I would recommend is constant openness, a quiet steady aspiration, no over-eagerness, a cheerful trust and patience.

*

To work all the time is excessive, unless there is need — but the impulse to work in itself is good.

*

If too much work is done, the quality of the work often deteriorates in spite of the zest of the workers.

Chapter Four

Practical Concerns in Work

Order and Rhythm

There can be no physical life without an order and rhythm. When this order is changed it must be in obedience to an inner growth and not for the sake of external novelty. It is only a certain part of the surface lower vital nature which seeks always external change and novelty for its own sake.

It is by a constant inner growth that one can find a constant newness and unfailing interest in life. There is no other satisfying way.

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In the most physical things you have to fix a programme in order to deal with them, otherwise all becomes a sea of confusion and haphazard. Fixed rules have also to be made for the management of material things so long as people are not sufficiently developed to deal with them in the right way without rules. But in matters of the inner development and the sadhana it is impossible to map out a plan fixed in every detail and say, "Every time you shall stop here, there, in this way, on that line and no other." Things would become so tied up and rigid that nothing could be done; there could be no true and effective movement.

*

Order, harmony and organisation in physical things is a necessary part of efficiency and perfection and make the instrument more fit for whatever work is given to it.

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The impatience of things going wrong is the defect of a quality — an insistence on accuracy and order. The thing is to keep the quality and get rid of the defect.

Rules, Discipline, Regularity, Thoroughness

Rules are indispensable for the orderly management of work; for without order and arrangement nothing can be properly done, all becomes clash, confusion and disorder.

*

A rule that can be varied by everyone at his pleasure is no rule. In all countries in which organised work is successfully done, (India is not one of them), rules exist and nobody thinks of breaking them, for it is realised that work (or life either) without discipline would soon become a confusion and an anarchic failure. In the great days of India everything was put under rule, even art and poetry, even Yoga. Here in fact rules are much less rigid than in any European organisation. Personal discretion can even in a frame of rules have plenty of play — but discretion must be discreetly used, otherwise it becomes something arbitrary or chaotic.

*

In work there must be a rule and discipline and as much punctuality as possible in regard to time.

*

To be able to be regular is a great force, one becomes master of one's time and one's movements.

*

That is quite necessary for work; efficiency and discipline are indispensable. They can however only partly be maintained by outward means — it really depends, in ordinary life, on the personality of the superior, his influence on the subordinates, his firmness, tact, kindness in dealing with them. But the sadhak depends on a deeper force, that of his inner consciousness and the Force working through him.

*

[*Discipline:*] To act according to a standard of Truth or a rule or law of action (dharma) or in obedience to a superior authority or to the highest principles discovered by the reason and intelligent will and not according to one's own fancy, vital impulses and desires. In Yoga obedience to the Guru or to the Divine and the law of the Truth as declared by the Guru is the foundation of discipline.

*

What most want is that things should be done according to their desire without check or reference. The talk of perfection is humbug. Perfection does not consist in everybody being a law to himself. Perfection comes by renunciation of desires and surrender to a higher Will.

*

Thoroughness means to do whatever you do completely, thoroughly, so that it may be entire and perfect, not carelessly or partially done. It refers to internal things as well as to external.

Harmony

When all is in agreement with one Truth or an expression of it, that is harmony.

*

Wherever there is excessive sensitiveness or quickness of temper, occasions of clash and quarrel will arise, no matter with whom one works — and especially where there is the pressure of the sadhana, which requires that all such weaknesses should be overcome, occasions are likely to arise which will bring them to the surface. The only way is not to indulge them or act under their influence, but to face them and overcome.

*

The difficulty rises from a certain excess of sensitiveness in the vital nature which feels strongly any want of harmony or

opposition in the work or any untoward happening and, when that comes, one is apt to feel it as if a personal opposition and on the other side also a similar feeling arises and so the difficulty becomes prolonged and leads to conflict. As a matter of fact the difficulty often arises from circumstances, e.g. the B. S. [*Building Service*] with its much reduced staff and a rush of work using up all its men may find it more difficult to accommodate you than before. Or it may arise from people acting according to their view of a matter which does not accord with yours. Or again it may come from the person following his own ideas, view of what is convenient and effective and thus coming up against yours. There need be no personal feeling in all that and it is best not to look for any and not to see it from that point of view. What is needed is always to take a calm view of the thing and a clear vision — not only from one's own standpoint which may be eventually right and yet need modification in detail, but with a vision that sees also the standpoint of others. This broad seeing, quiet and impersonal, is needed in the full Yogic consciousness. Having it one can insist on what has to be insisted on with firmness but at the same time with a consideration and understanding of the other that removes the chance of any clash of personal feeling. Naturally if the other is unreasonable, he may still resent, but then it will be his own fault entirely and it will fall back on him only. It is here that we see the necessity of some change. Loyalty, fidelity, capacity, strength of will and other qualities in the work you have in plenty — a full calm and equality not only in the inner being where it can exist already, but in the outer nervous parts is a thing you have to get completely.

Avoiding Harshness, Severity, Anger

There are always defects on both sides which lead to this disharmony. On your side you have a tendency to too harsh a judgment of others, a readiness to see and stress the faults, defects, weak side of others and not to see enough their good side. This prevents the kindness of outlook which should be there and gives an impression of harshness and critical severity and creates a

tendency to contrariety and revolt which even when it is not there in the minds of the others, acts through their subconscious and creates all these discordant movements. To take advantage of what is good in others, keeping one's eye always on that, and to deal tactfully with their mistakes, faults and defects is the best way; it does not exclude firmness and maintenance of discipline, even severity when severity is due; but the latter should be rare and the others should not feel it as if it were a permanent attitude.

*

The one thing you must try to do in your relations with your fellow-workers is to master your nerves and irritability and take care not to speak roughly, angrily or peevishly to them. It is that that is creating most of the difficulty now. If you have to be firm, you can be firm, but at the same time quiet and even gentle. If you take care on this point, things are likely to improve soon.

If you put yourself in the Mother's hand and reject these vital movements in her strength, there is no reason why you should not pass through all ordeals and progress in the Yoga.

*

In all such dealings with others,¹ you should see not only your own side of the question but the other side also. There should be no anger, vehement reproach or menace, for these things only raise anger and retort on the other side. I write this because you are trying to rise above yourself and dominate your vital and when one wants to do that, one cannot be too strict with oneself in these things. It is best even to be severe to one's own mistakes and charitable to the mistakes of others.

*

The experience of the difference between your inner feelings and your surface reactions shows that you are becoming aware of different parts of your nature which each have their own

¹ *In this case the correspondent became angry when his request for help in his work was not promptly met. — Ed.*

character. In fact each human being is composed of different personalities that feel and behave in a different way and his action is determined by the one that happens to be prominent at the time. The one that has no feelings against anyone is either the psychic being or the emotional being in the heart, the one that feels anger and is severe is a part of the external vital nature on the surface. This anger and severity is a wrong form of something that in itself has a value, a certain strength of will and force of action and control in the vital being, without which work cannot be done. What is necessary is to get rid of the anger and to keep the force and firm will along with a developed judgment as to what is the right thing to do in any circumstances. For instance, people can be allowed to do things in their own way when that does not spoil the work, when it is only their way of doing what is necessary to be done; when their way is opposed to the discipline of the work, then they have to be controlled, but it should be done quietly and kindly, not with anger. Very often, if one has developed a silent power of putting the Mother's force on the work with one's own will as instrument, that by itself may be sufficient without having to say anything as the person changes his way of himself as if by his own initiative.

*

To discourage anybody is wrong, but to give false encouragement or encouragement of anything wrong is not right. Severity has sometimes to be used (though not overused), when without it an obstinate persistence in what is wrong cannot be set right. Very often, if an inner communication has been established, a silent pressure is more effective than anything else. No absolute rule can be laid down; one has to judge and act for the best in each case.

Working with Subordinates and Superiors

It [*disciplining subordinates*] has to be done in the right spirit and the subordinates generally must be able to feel that it is so, that they are being dealt with in all uprightness and justice and

by a man who has sympathy and insight and not only severity and energy. It is a question of vital tact and a strong and large vital finding always the right way to deal with the others.

*

To be able to see the viewpoint of others and make allowance for their nature — neither being too harsh, authoritative or exacting, nor too weak and accommodating or indulgent, but still, even when firm, combining firmness with tact and sympathy, — is very necessary for one who has to deal with others as his inferiors in position and subject to his authority. It is also necessary when the position is reversed so that there may not be unnecessary clash or friction with official superiors.

*

The root of the difficulty has been in the readiness of the superior officers to accept without examination the things that are said against you. A double action is needed, to destroy the ill-will of the inferiors and to change the mind of the superiors — an invisible action, for in the visible they seem to be too much under the control of the Forces of the Ignorance.

Overcoming the Instinct of Domination

We have been very glad to get your letters with the details which prove how great and rapid a progress you have made in sadhana. All that you write shows a clear consciousness and a new orientation in the lower vital. To have seen clearly the instinct of domination and the pride of the instrument there means that that part of the being is on the right way to change — these defects must now be replaced by their true counterparts — the power to act selflessly on others for the Truth and the Right and the power to be a strong and confident but egoless instrument of the Divine. It is clear also that the physical is effectively opening, but the instinctive physical and vital-physical motions in it, fear in the body, weakness, disposition to ill-health must go also. As to diet, a light quantity of food sufficient for strength and

sustenance is the best for you — meat is not advisable.

Let the wide opening that has come in you develop and your whole being down to the material fill with the true consciousness and the true power.

*

That is true.² As things are, the vital falsehood seems to take a temporary advantage over the superior sattvic nature.

Avoiding Disturbance

Whenever anything untoward happens, it is essential not to allow any vibrations of disturbance or unrest in either the physical mind or the nerves. One must remain calm and open to the Light and Force, then one will be able to act in the right way.

*

From the point of view of sadhana — you must not allow yourself to be in the least disturbed by these things [*lack of sympathy and support in one's work*]. What you have to do, what is right to be done, should be done in perfect calmness with the support of the Divine Force. All that is necessary for a successful result, can be done — including the securing of the support of those who are able to help you. But if this outer support is not forthcoming, you have not to be disturbed but to proceed calmly on your way. If there is any difficulty or unsuccess anywhere not due to your own fault, you have not to be troubled. Strength, unmoved calm, quiet, straight and right dealing with all things you have to deal with must be the rule of your action.

*

Keep unmoved, unoffended, do your work without being discouraged, call on the Force to act for you. It is a field of trial for you — the inward result is more important than the outward.

*

² *The correspondent remarked that people full of vital ego often override, deceive and even injure people with less egoistic push but greater capacity. — Ed.*

As for the work, I have already told you that it is not by your going away that there will be harmony and peace. Wherever there are human beings working together, differences and disagreements and incompatibilities of temper will always be there. It is only if the human nature changes that it will be otherwise, but that cannot be done at once. One has to go on quietly and patiently doing the work for the Mother's sake until the change can be made in yourself and others.

Avoiding Restlessness, Worry and Anxiety

As for quietude and work, quietude is the proper basis for work — not restlessness. You speak as if quietude and being alive and working were not compatible! The Mother and myself do plenty of work, I suppose, and we are quite alive, but it is out of quietude that we do it. To worry and be restless and think always "I am not doing well my work" is not the way; you have to be quiet, conscious more and more of a greater Force than your own working in you: that Force will hereafter take up your work and do it for you.

*

The difficulty you find results very much from your always worrying with your mind about things, thinking "This is wrong, that is wrong in me or my work" and, as a result, "I am incompetent, I am bad, nothing can be done with me." Your embroidery work, your lampshades etc. have always been very good, and yet you are always thinking "This is bad work, that is wrong" and by doing so, confuse yourself and get into a muddle. Naturally, you make a mistake now and then, but more when you worry like that than when you do things simply and confidently.

It is better whether with work or with sadhana to go on quietly, allowing the Force to act and doing your best to let it work rightly, but without this self-tormenting and constant restless questioning at every point. Whatever defects there are would go much sooner, if you did not harp on them too much; for by dwelling on them so much you lose confidence in yourself

and in your power of openness to the Force — which is there all the same — and put unnecessary difficulties in the way of its working.

*

There is nothing really wrong with your work; it is very well done. It is only your imagination that makes you always think it is defective here and defective there. There may be slight mistakes sometimes, but that is the case with everybody. You have only to work quietly, getting the best inspiration you can and, if there is any difficulty, to be quiet and the right thing will come. To be true to the inner feeling, remaining turned towards us for help is absolutely the right way; to trouble and doubt and fret is quite the wrong way.

*

Do not worry about mistakes in work. Often you imagine that things are badly done by you when really you have done them very well; but even if there are mistakes, it is nothing to be sad about. Let the consciousness grow — only in the divine consciousness is there an entire perfection. The more you surrender to the Divine, the more will there be the possibility of perfection in you.

*

Do not attach too much importance to such mistakes or get upset about them. It is the nature of the mind to make such mistakes. It is only a higher consciousness that can set them right — the mind can be sure only after a very long training in each particular action and even then it has only to be off-guard for something untoward to occur. Do as well as you can, and for the rest let the higher consciousness grow till it can enlighten all the movements of the physical mind.

*

Skill in works will come when there is the opening in the physical mind and the body. There is no need to be anxious about that now. Do your best and do not be anxious about it.

Compliments and Criticism

That is a great error of the human vital — to want compliments for their own sake and to be depressed by their absence and imagine that it means there is no capacity. In this world one starts with ignorance and imperfection in whatever one does — one has to find out one's mistakes and to learn, one has to commit errors and find out by correcting them the right way to do things. Nobody in the world has ever escaped from this law. So what one has to expect from others is not compliments all the time, but praise of what is right or well done and criticism of errors and mistakes. The more one can bear criticism and see one's mistakes, the more likely one is to arrive at the fullness of one's capacity. Especially when one is very young — before the age of maturity — one cannot easily do perfect work. What is called the juvenile work of poets and painters — work done in their early years — is always imperfect, it is a promise and has qualities — but the real perfection and full use of their powers comes afterwards. They themselves know that very well, but they go on writing or painting because they know also that by doing so they will develop their powers.

As for comparison with others, one ought not to do that. Each one has his own lesson to learn, his own work to do and he must concern himself with that, not with the superior or inferior progress of others in comparison with himself. If he is behind today, he can be in full capacity hereafter and it is for that future perfection of his powers that he must labour. You are young and have everything yet to learn — your capacities are yet only in bud, you must wait and work for them to be in full bloom — and you must not mind if it takes months and years even to arrive at something satisfying and perfect. It will come in its proper time, and the work you do now is always a step towards it.

But learn to welcome criticism and the pointing out of imperfections — the more you do so, the more rapidly you will advance.

Someone who is learning to paint or play music or write and does not like to have his mistakes pointed out by those who already know — how is he to learn at all or reach any perfection of technique?

Thinking about Work

Think of your work only when it is being done, not before and not after.

Do not let your mind go back on a work that is finished. It belongs to the past and all rehandling of it is a waste of power.

Do not let your mind labour in anticipation on a work that has to be done. The Power that acts in you will see to it at its own time.

These two habits of the mind belong to a past functioning that the transforming Force is pressing to remove and the physical mind's persistence in them is the cause of your strain and fatigue. If you can remember to let your mind work only when its action is needed, the strain will lessen and disappear. This is indeed the transitional movement before the supramental working takes possession of the physical mind and brings into it the spontaneous action of the Light.

Dealing with Physical Things

Material things are not to be despised — without them there can be no manifestation in the material world.

*

Physical things have a life and value of their own which does not depend upon their price. To respect physical things and make a careful and scrupulous use of them is a part of the Yoga, for without that the mastery over matter cannot come.

*

What you feel about physical things is true — there is a consciousness in them, a life which is not the life and consciousness

of man and animal which we know, but still secret and real. That is why we must have a respect for physical things and use them rightly, not misuse and waste, ill-treat or handle with a careless roughness. This feeling of all being conscious or alive comes when our own physical consciousness — and not the mind only — awakes out of its obscurity and becomes aware of the One in all things, the Divine everywhere.

*

It is very true that physical things have a consciousness within them which feels and responds to care and is sensitive to careless touch and rough handling. To know or feel that and learn to be careful of them is a great progress in consciousness.

*

There is a consciousness in each physical thing with which one can communicate. Everything has an individuality of a certain kind, houses, cars, furniture etc. The ancient peoples knew that and so they saw a spirit or “genius” in every physical thing.

*

The rough handling and careless breaking or waste and misuse of physical things is a denial of the Yogic Consciousness and a great hindrance to the bringing down of the Divine Truth to the material plane.

*

Wanton waste, careless spoiling of physical things in an incredibly short time, loose disorder, misuse of service and materials due either to vital grasping or to tamasic inertia are baneful to prosperity and tend to drive away or discourage the Wealth-Power. These things have long been rampant in the society and, if that continues, an increase in our means might well mean a proportionate increase in the wastage and disorder and neutralise the material advantage. This must be remedied if there is to be any sound progress.

Asceticism for its own sake is not the ideal of this Yoga, but

self-control in the vital and right order in the material are a very important part of it — and even an ascetic discipline is better for our purpose than a loose absence of true control. Mastery of the material does not mean having plenty and profusely throwing it out or spoiling it as fast as it comes or faster. Mastery implies in it the right and careful utilisation of things and also a self-control in their use.

Chapter Five

Creative Activity

The Arts and the Spiritual Life

There is no incompatibility between spirituality and creative activity — they can be united.

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Any activity can be taken as part of the sadhana if it is offered to the Divine or done with the consciousness or faith that it is done by the Divine Power. That is the important point.

*

Literature, poetry, science and other studies can be a preparation of the consciousness for life. When one does Yoga they can become part of the sadhana only if done for the Divine or taken up by the Divine Force, but then one should not want to be a poet for the sake of being a poet only, or for fame, applause, etc.

*

The spiritual life and one's own inner psychic and spiritual change should be the first preoccupation of a sadhak — poetry or painting is something quite subordinate and even then it should be done not to be a great poet or artist but as a help to the inner sadhana. It is time that everyone got away from the vital view of things to the psychic and spiritual on which alone can stand Yoga and the spiritual life.

*

Every artist almost (there are rare exceptions) has got something of the “public” man in him, in his vital physical parts, the need of the stimulus of an audience, social applause, satisfied vanity or fame. That must go absolutely if he wants to be a Yogi and

his art a service not of man or of his own ego but of the Divine.

*

Well, that [*acting as a great musician etc.*] is an almost universal human weakness, especially with artists, poets, musicians and the whole splendid tribe — I have known even great Yogis suffer from just a touch of it! If one can see mentally the humour of it, it will fall off in the end.

Literature

To be a literary man is not a spiritual aim; but to use literature as a means of spiritual expression is another matter. Even to make expression a vehicle of a superior power helps to open the consciousness. The harmonising rests on that principle.

*

A “literary man” is one who loves literature and literary activity for their own separate sake. A Yogi who writes is not a literary man for he writes only what the inner Will and Word wants him to express. He is a channel and an instrument of something greater than his own literary personality.

*

The use of your writing is to keep you in touch with the inner source of inspiration and intuition, so as to wear thin the crude external crust in the consciousness and encourage the growth of the inner being.

*

Mother does not disapprove of your writing the book — what she does not like is your being so lost in it that you can do nothing else. You must be master of what you do and not possessed by it. She quite agrees to your finishing and offering the book on your birthday if that can be done. But you must not be carried away — you must keep your full contact with higher things.

*

I repeat that we do not object to your writing — whether it be poetry or short stories or novels. What we felt was that this kind of total absorption and possession by it was not good for your spiritual condition and that it put a lesser thing in front, even occupying the *whole* front of the consciousness for most of the time instead of putting it in its proper place in a sound spiritual harmony.

*

You can try [*writing a novel*], if you like. The difficulty is that the subject matter of a novel belongs mostly to the outer consciousness, so that a lowering or externalising can easily come. This apart from the difficulty of keeping the inner poise when putting the mind into outer work. If you could get an established poise within, then it would be possible to do any work without disturbing or lowering the consciousness.

*

As for the French writing, you should not think so much of expressing things — it does not matter whether others have written the same things and done it better. What you should aim at is simply to learn to write French perfectly, to get full use of the French language as an instrument. If the Force wants to express anything through you hereafter or not, is a thing you should leave to the Divine Will; once you give yourself into its hands in the true consciousness, it will know what to do or not to do through you and will make full use of whatever instrumentation you can put at its disposal.

Painting

Painting also is sadhana; so it is perfectly possible to make them one. It is a matter of dedicating the painting and feeling the force that makes you paint as the Mother's force.

*

Of course everybody is here for Yoga and not for painting.

Painting or any other activity has to be made here a part of Yoga and cannot be pursued for its own sake. If it stands insuperably in the way, then it has to be given up; but there is no reason why it should if it be pursued in the proper spirit, as a field or aid for spiritual growth, or as a work done for the Mother.

*

You have painting and music in you and if you apply yourself they will develop in you. Only it is best to do it as an instrument of the Mother and as an offering to her, and not allow any personal desire for fame or appreciation by others or any personal pride to be the motives — for it is that that gives trouble. All work done as an offering is a great help and does not give trouble.

*

What do you mean by vital excitement [*while painting*]? There is an intensity and enthusiasm of the vital without which it would be difficult to do any poem, picture or music of a creative kind. That intensity is not harmful.

*

You have been progressing of course, but what Mother told you and tells everyone is true that to be a real artist needs hard work for years together. But your mistake is to put stress on these things and get discouraged by any check or difficulty in them. The one thing to be done is to open your consciousness to what is coming down, to let the change operate so that the consciousness becomes a consciousness of peace and light and power and joy full of the Divine Presence. When that is there, then what the Divine wants to get done through you or developed in you will be done or developed with a rapidity and perfection which at present is impossible. The one thing needful first, all the rest is only now a field of exercise for the development of the one thing needful.

Singing

What you write about the singing is perfectly correct. You sing your best only when you forget yourself and let it come out from within without thinking of the need of excellence or the impression it may make. The famous singer should indeed disappear into the past, — it is only so that the inner singer can take her place.

*

I meant exactly the same thing as when I wrote to you that the “famous singer” must disappear and the “inner singer” take her place. “The old psychological lines” means the mental and vital aesthetic source of the singing, the desire of fame or success, singing for an audience — the singing must come from the soul within and it must be for the Divine. . . .

As for your singing, I was not speaking of any new creation from the aesthetic point of view, but of the spiritual change — what form it takes must depend on what you find *within* you when the deeper basis is there.

I do not see any necessity for giving up singing altogether; I only meant, — it is the logical conclusion from what I have written to you not now only but before, — that the inner change must be the first consideration and the rest must arise out of that. If singing to an audience pulls you out of the inner condition, then you could postpone that and sing for yourself and the Divine until you are able, even in facing an audience, to forget the audience. If you are troubled by failure or exalted by success, that also you must overcome.

Section Three

Sadhana through Concentration, Meditation and Japa

Chapter One

Concentration and Meditation

The Meaning of Concentration and Meditation

Concentration, for our Yoga, means when the consciousness is fixed in a particular state (e.g. peace) or movement (e.g. aspiration, will, coming into contact with the Mother, taking the Mother's name); meditation is when the inner mind is looking at things to get the right knowledge.

*

Concentration means fixing the consciousness in one place or on one object and in a single condition. Meditation can be diffusive, e.g. thinking about the Divine, receiving impressions and discriminating, watching what goes on in the nature and acting upon it etc.

*

Concentration is a gathering together of the consciousness and either centralising at one point or turning on a single object, e.g. the Divine — there can also be a gathered condition throughout the whole being, not at a point. In meditation it is not indispensable to gather like this, one can simply remain with a quiet mind thinking of one subject or observing what comes in the consciousness and dealing with it.

*

Meditation means thinking on one subject in a concentrated way. In concentration proper there is not a series of thoughts, but the mind is silently fixed on one object, name, idea, place etc.

There are other kinds of concentration, e.g. concentrating the whole consciousness in one place, as between the eyebrows, in the heart, etc. One can also concentrate to get rid of thought altogether and remain in a complete silence.

The Role of Concentration and Meditation (Dhyana) in Sadhana

In the beginning for a long time concentration is necessary even by effort because the nature, the consciousness are not ready. Even then the more quiet and natural the concentration, the better. But when the consciousness and nature are ready, then concentration must become spontaneous and easily possible without effort at all times. Even at last it becomes the natural and permanent condition of the being — it is then no longer concentration, but the settled poise of the soul in the Divine.

It is true that to be concentrated and do an outward action at the same time is not at first possible. But that too becomes possible. Either the consciousness divides into two parts, one the inner poised in the Divine, the other the outer doing the outer work — or else the whole is so poised and the force does the work through the passive instrument.

*

Concentration is necessary. By dhyana you awake the inner being; by concentration in life, in work, in the outer consciousness you make the outer being also fit to receive the Divine Light and Force.

*

It is in the waking consciousness that all has to be realised. But that cannot be done without a full preparation in the inner being and it is this preparation that is being done for you in *dhyāna*.

*

You have not to remain in dhyana all the time, but to bring into the waking state the consciousness you get there and you have to live in that all the time.

*

It is very good, and by regular meditation you are sure to make much progress. But I do not think to spend all the night in

meditation would be good. The body needs sleep also. One hour meditation daily is already a very good result and it can be increased slowly to two.

*

Certainly, if all one's life one did nothing but meditate, it would be a one-sided affair. But at times to give the first place or a lion's share to meditation may be necessary. It is especially when things are coming down and have to be fixed.

*

The ease and peace are felt very deep and far within because they are in the psychic and the psychic is very deep within us, covered over by the mind and vital. When you meditate you open to the psychic, become aware of your psychic consciousness deep within and feel these things. In order that this ease and peace and happiness may become strong and stable and felt in all the being and in the body, you have to go still deeper within and bring out the full force of the psychic into the physical. This can most easily be done by regular concentration and meditation with the aspiration for this true consciousness. It can be done by work also, by dedication, by doing the work for the Divine only without thought of self and keeping the idea of consecration to the Mother always in the heart. But this is not easy to do perfectly.

*

Sir, is the Presence [*of the Divine*] of a physical nature or a spiritual fact? And is the physical sense accustomed or able to see or feel spiritual things — a spiritual Presence, a non-material Form? To see the Brahman everywhere is not possible unless you develop the inner vision — so to do that you have to concentrate. To see non-material forms is indeed possible for a few, because they have the gift by nature, but most can't do it without developing the subtle sight. It is absurd to expect the Divine to manifest his Presence without your taking any trouble to see it, — you have to concentrate.

The Object of Meditation

What do you call meditation? Shutting the eyes and concentrating? It is only one method for calling down the true consciousness. To join with the true consciousness or feel its descent is the only thing important and if it comes without the orthodox method, as it always did with me, so much the better. Meditation is only a means or device, the true movement is when even walking, working or speaking one is still in sadhana.

*

What is most important [*in meditation*] is the change of consciousness of which this feeling of oneness is a part. The going deep in meditation is only a means and it is not always necessary if the great experiences come easily without it.

*

The best help for concentration is to receive the Mother's calm and peace into your mind. It is there above you — only the mind and its centres have to open to it. It is what the Mother is pushing upon you in the evening meditation.

*

The object of meditation is to open to the Mother and grow through many progressive experiences into a higher consciousness in union with the Divine.

*

To enter into a deeper or higher consciousness or for that deeper or higher consciousness to descend into you — that is the true success of meditation.

Meditation Not Necessary for All

One can have no fixed hours of meditation and yet be doing sadhana.

*

Meditation is not indispensable. There are some who do not meditate and yet progress.

*

Then how is it [*meditation*] necessary for all, if some are asked not to do it? Much meditation is for those who can meditate much. It does not follow that because such meditation is good, therefore nobody should do anything else.

Methods of Meditation and Concentration

The attitude of spiritual meditation is to concentrate so as to receive or attain the spiritual truth — what means one takes depends upon the way, the path, the person.

*

If the difficulty in meditation is that thoughts of all kinds come in, that is not due to hostile forces but to the ordinary nature of the human mind. All sadhaks have this difficulty and with many it lasts for a very long time. There are several ways of getting rid of it. One of them is to look at the thoughts and observe what is the nature of the human mind as they show it but not to give any sanction and to let them run down till they come to a standstill — this is a way recommended by Vivekananda in his *Rajayoga*. Another is to look at the thoughts as not one's own, to stand back as the witness Purusha and refuse the sanction — the thoughts are regarded as things coming from outside, from Prakriti, and they must be felt as if they were passers-by crossing the mind-space with whom one has no connection and in whom one takes no interest. In this way it usually happens that after a time the mind divides into two, a part which is the mental witness watching and perfectly undisturbed and quiet and a part which is the object of observation, the Prakriti part in which the thoughts cross or wander. Afterwards one can proceed to silence or quiet the Prakriti part also. There is a third, an active method by which one looks to see where the thoughts come from and finds they come not from oneself, but from outside the head as

it were; if one can detect them coming, then, *before they enter*, they have to be thrown away altogether. This is perhaps the most difficult way and not all can do it, but if it can be done it is the shortest and most powerful road to silence.

*

If you try to apply everything you read, there will be no end to your new beginnings. One can stop thinking by rejecting the thoughts and in the silence discover oneself. One can do it by letting the thoughts run down while one detaches oneself from them. There are a number of other ways. This one related in Brunton's book seems to me the Adwaita-jnani method of separating oneself from body, vital, mind, by *viveka*, discrimination, "I am not the body, I am not the life, I am not the mind" till he gets to the self, separate from mind, life and body. That also is one way of doing it. There is also the separation of Purusha from Prakriti till one becomes the witness only and feels separate from all the activities as the Witness Consciousness. There are other methods also.

*

The method of gathering of the mind is not an easy one. It is better to watch and separate oneself from the thoughts till one becomes aware of a quiet space within into which they come from outside.

*

All thoughts really come from outside, but one is not conscious of their coming. You have become conscious of this movement. There are different ways of getting rid of them; one is to reject them one by one before they can come in; another is to look at them with detachment till they fade away.

*

It is of course because of the old habit of the mental consciousness that it goes on receiving the thoughts from outside in spite of its being a fatigue — not that it wants them, but that they

are accustomed to come and the mind mechanically lets them in and attends to them by force of habit. This is always one of the chief difficulties in Yoga when the experiences have begun and the mind wants to be always either concentrated or quiet. Some do what you propose [*direct rejection of thoughts*] and after a time succeed in quieting the mind altogether or the silence comes down from above and does it. But often when one tries this, the thoughts become very active and resist the silencing process and that is very troublesome. Therefore many prefer to go on slowly letting the mind quiet down little by little, the quietness spreading and remaining for longer periods until the unwanted thoughts fall away or recede and the mind is left free for knowledge from within and above.

What you might do is to try and see what results — if the thoughts attack too much and trouble, you could stop — if the mind quiets down quickly or more and more, then continue.

*

The mind is always in activity, but we do not observe fully what it is doing, but allow ourselves to be carried away in the stream of continual thinking. When we try to concentrate, this stream of self-moved mechanical thinking becomes prominent to our observation. It is the first normal obstacle (the other is sleep during meditation) to the effort towards Yoga.

The first thing to do is to realise that this thought-flow is not yourself, it is not you who are thinking, but thought that is going on in the mind. It is Prakriti with its thought-energy that is raising all this whirl of thought in you, imposing it on the Purusha. You as the Purusha must stand back as the witness observing the action, but refusing to identify yourself with it. The next thing is to exercise a control and reject the thoughts — though sometimes by the very act of detachment the thought-habit falls away or diminishes during the meditation and there is a sufficient silence or at any rate a quietude which makes it easy to reject the thoughts that come and fix oneself on the object of meditation. If one becomes aware of the thoughts as coming from outside, from the universal Nature, then one can throw

them away before they reach the mind; in that way the mind finally falls silent. If neither of these things happens, a persistent practice of rejection becomes necessary — there should be no struggle or wrestling with the thoughts, but only a quiet self-separation and refusal. Success does not come at first, but if consent is constantly withheld, the mechanical whirl eventually lessens and begins to die away and one can then have at will an inner quietude or silence.

It should be noted that the result of the Yogic processes is not, except in rare cases, immediate and one must apply them with patience till they give a result which is sometimes long in coming if there is much resistance in the outer nature.

How can you fix the mind on the higher Self so long as you have no consciousness or experience of it? You can only concentrate on the idea of the Self. Or else one can concentrate on the idea of the Divine or the Divine Mother or on an image or on the feeling of devotion, calling the presence in the heart or the Force to work in the mind and heart and body and liberate the consciousness and give the self-realisation. If you concentrate on the idea of the Self, it must be with the conception of the Self as something different from mind and its thoughts, the vital and its feelings, the body and its actions — something standing back from all these, something that you can come to feel concretely as an Existence or Consciousness, separate from all that yet freely pervading all without being involved in these things.

*

You have to separate yourself from the mind also. You have to feel yourself even in the mental, vital, physical levels (not only above) a consciousness that is neither mind, life, nor body.

*

For the buzz of the physical mind, reject it quietly, without getting disturbed, till it feels discouraged and retires shaking its head and saying, “This fellow is too calm and strong for me.” There are always two things that can rise up and assail the silence, — vital suggestions, the physical mind’s mechanical

recurrences. Calm rejection for both is the cure. There is a Purusha within who can dictate to the nature what it shall admit or exclude, but its will is a strong, quiet will; if one gets perturbed or agitated over the difficulties, then the will of the Purusha cannot act effectively as it would otherwise.

The dynamic realisation will probably take place when the higher consciousness comes fully down into the vital. When it comes into the mental it brings the peace of the Purusha and liberation and it may bring also knowledge. It is when it comes into the vital that the dynamic realisation becomes present and living.

Concentration on the Idea

If one concentrates on a thought or a word, one has to dwell on the essential idea contained in the word with the aspiration to feel the thing which it expresses.

*

I have not the original chapter before me just now; but from the sentences quoted¹ it seems to be the essential mental Idea. As for instance in the method of Vedantic knowledge one concentrates on the idea of Brahman omnipresent — one looks at a tree or other surrounding objects with the idea that Brahman is there and the tree or object is only a form. After a time if the concentration is of the right kind, one begins to become aware of a presence, an existence, the physical tree form becomes a shell and that presence or existence is felt to be the only reality. The idea then drops, it is a direct vision of the thing that takes its place — there is no longer any necessity of concentrating on the

¹ *The correspondent sent to Sri Aurobindo a passage from The Synthesis of Yoga: "This concentration proceeds by the Idea . . . ; for it is through the Idea that the mental being rises beyond all expression to that which is expressed, to that of which the Idea itself is only the instrument. By concentration upon the Idea the mental existence which at present we are breaks open the barrier of our mentality and arrives at the state of consciousness, the state of being, the state of power of conscious-being and bliss of conscious-being to which the Idea corresponds and of which it is the symbol, movement and rhythm."* THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, vol. 23, p. 321.

idea, one sees with a deeper consciousness, *sa paśyati*. It should be noted that this concentration on the idea is not mere thinking, *mananam* — it is an inner dwelling on the essence of the Idea.

Centres for Concentration

The nature of the meditation depends on the part of the being in which one is centred at the time. In the body (rather the subtle body than the physical, but connected with the corresponding parts in the gross physical body also) there are centres proper to each level of the being. There is a centre at the top of the head and above it which is that of the above-mind or higher consciousness; a centre in the forehead between the eyebrows which is that of the thinking mind, mental will, mental vision; a centre in the throat which is that of the expressive or externalising mind: these are the mental centres. Below comes the vital — the heart (emotional), the navel (the dynamic life-centre), another below the navel in the abdomen which is the lower or sensational vital centre. Finally, at the bottom of the spine is the Muladhara or physical centre. Behind the heart is the psychic centre. If one concentrates in the head as many do it is a mental-spiritual meditation one seeks for, if in the heart it is a psychic meditation; these are the usual places where one concentrates. But what rises up first or opens first may not be the mental or psychic, but the emotional or the vital; that depends on the nature — for whatever is easiest to open in it, is likely to open first. If it is in the vital, then the meditation tends to project the consciousness into the vital plane and its experiences. But from that one can get to the psychic by drawing more and more inwards, not getting absorbed into the vital experiences but separating oneself and looking at them with detachment as if one were deep inside and observing things outside oneself. Similarly one can get the mental experiences by concentrating in the thought and by it bringing a corresponding experience, e.g. the thought of all being the Brahman, or one can draw back from the thought also and observe one's own thoughts as outside

things until one enters into the silence and the pure spiritual experience.

*

One can concentrate in any of the three centres which is easiest to the sadhak or gives most result. The power of the concentration in the heart-centre is to open that centre and by the power of aspiration, love, bhakti, surrender remove the veil which covers and conceals the soul and bring forward the soul or psychic being to govern the mind, life and body and turn and open them all — fully — to the Divine, removing all that is opposed to that turning and opening.

This is what is called in this Yoga the psychic transformation. The power of concentration above the head is to bring peace, silence, liberation from the body sense, the identification with mind and life and open the way for the lower (mental-vital-physical) consciousness to rise up to meet the higher Consciousness above and for the powers of the higher (spiritual or divine) Consciousness to descend into mind, life and body. This is what is called in this Yoga the spiritual transformation. If one begins with this movement, then the Power from above has in its descent to open all the centres (including the lowest centre) and to bring out the psychic being; for until that is done there is likely to be much difficulty and struggle of the lower consciousness obstructing, mixing with or even refusing the Divine Action from above. If the psychic being is once active this struggle and these difficulties can be greatly minimised.

The power of concentration in the eyebrows is to open the centre there, liberate the inner mind and vision and the inner or Yogic consciousness and its experiences and powers. From here also one can open upwards and act also in the lower centres; but the danger of this process is that one may get shut up in one's mental spiritual formations and not come out of them into the free and integral spiritual experience and knowledge and integral change of the being and nature.

*

I was very glad to get your letter and especially to know that you are more at peace. That is what is first needed, the settling down of a natural peace and quiet in the nature — the spiritual peace is a bigger thing that can come afterwards.

Then as to concentration. Ordinarily the consciousness is spread out everywhere, dispersed, running in this or that direction, after this subject and that object in multitude. When anything has to be done of a sustained nature, the first thing one does is to draw back all this dispersed consciousness and concentrate. It is then, if one looks closely, found to be concentrated in one place and on one occupation, subject or object — as when you are composing a poem or a botanist is studying a flower. The place is usually somewhere in the brain, if it is the thought, in the heart if it is the feeling in which one is concentrated. The Yogic concentration is simply an extension and intensification of the same thing. It may be on an object as when one does *tratak* on a shining point — then one has to concentrate so that one sees only that point and has no other thought but that. It may be on an idea or a word or a name, the idea of the Divine, the word OM, the name Krishna, or a combination of idea and word or idea and name. But, farther, in Yoga one also concentrates in a particular place. There is the famous rule of concentrating between the eyebrows — the centre of the inner mind, of occult vision, of the will is there. What you do is to think firmly from there on whatever you make the object of your concentration or else try to see the image of it from there. If you succeed in this, then after a time you feel that your whole consciousness is centred there in that place — of course for the time being. After doing it for some time and often, it becomes easy and normal.

I hope this is clear. Well, in this Yoga, you do the same, not necessarily at that particular spot between the eyebrows, but anywhere in the head or at the centre of the chest where the physiologists have fixed the cardiac centre. Instead of concentrating on an object, you concentrate in the head in a will, a call for the descent of the peace from above or, as some do, an opening of the unseen lid and an ascent of the consciousness above. In the heart-centre one concentrates in an aspiration, for

an opening, for the presence or living image of the Divine there or whatever else is the object. There may be japa of a name but, if so, there must also be a concentration on it and the name must repeat itself there in the heart-centre.

It may be asked what becomes of the rest of the consciousness when there is this local concentration? Well, it either falls silent as in any concentration or, if it does not, then thoughts or other things may move about, as if outside, but the concentrated part does not attend to them or notice. That is when the concentration is reasonably successful.

One has not to fatigue oneself at first by long concentration if one is not accustomed, for then in a jaded mind it loses its power or value. One can “relax” and meditate instead of concentrating. It is only as the concentration becomes normal that one can go on for a longer and longer time.

*

There is no harm in concentrating sometimes in the heart and sometimes above the head. But concentration in either place does not mean keeping the attention fixed on a particular spot; you have to take your station of consciousness in either place and concentrate there not on the place, but on the Divine. This can be done with eyes shut or with eyes open, according as it best suits you.

You can concentrate on the sun, but to concentrate on the Divine is better than to concentrate on the sun.

*

You can concentrate the consciousness anywhere in any centre. You have only to think of yourself as centrally there and try to fix and keep that. A strain or any effort to do so is not necessary but a quiet and steady dwelling in the idea.

Most people associate consciousness with the brain or mind because that is the centre for intellectual thought and mental vision, but consciousness is not limited to that kind of thought or vision. It is everywhere in the system and there are several centres of it, e.g., the centre for inner concentration is not in the

brain but in the heart, — the originating centre of vital desire is still lower down.

The two main places where one can centre the consciousness for Yoga are in the head and in the heart — the mind-centre and the soul-centre.

*

One has to open through concentration in the heart centre or above the head, in the former case to the psychic, in the latter to the higher Truth. But without the psychic preparation or at least a thorough purification of the being, the latter course is not safe.

*

It may be better to concentrate in the heart rather than in the mind, offer yourself from there and call the Mother into the heart leaving the thoughts to fall silent of themselves. Otherwise with the present method you have simply to persevere till the present brief and imperfect stillings of the mind become longer and deeper.

*

The concentration in the heart is what brings about the opening of the psychic which is your principal need. If the concentration has brought about a feeling which makes you judge clearly all the other movements and see their nature, then the psychic is already in action. For this is the psychic feeling which brings with it a clear insight into the nature of all movements that come and makes it easy to reject what has to be rejected and keep the right attitude and perception. It does not matter about the image of the Mother. It is her presence whether in form or not that has to be felt always and this the psychic opening will surely bring.

*

It [*concentration in the heart*] is the best to “start with” — but as you have already started with success on the two higher centres, there is no reason why you should discontinue that. The

other you may try from time to time when you find a sufficient quietude. Concentration there leads — or should lead — to the psychic opening.

*

Concentration in the heart is best aided if possible by the power and light descending from above the head.

*

At the top of the head or above it is the right place for Yogic concentration in reading or thinking.

*

Brain concentration is always a tapasya and necessarily brings a strain. It is only if one is lifted out of the brain mind altogether that the strain of mental concentration disappears.

Postures for Concentration or Meditation

The sitting motionless posture is the natural posture for concentrated meditation — walking and standing are active conditions suited for the dispense of energy and the activity of the mind. It is only when one has gained the enduring rest and passivity of the consciousness that it is easy to concentrate and receive when walking or doing anything. A fundamental passive condition of the consciousness gathered into itself is the proper poise for concentration and a seated gathered immobility in the body is the best for that. It can be done also lying down, but that position is too passive, tending to be inert rather than gathered. This is the reason why Yogis always sit in an asana. One can accustom oneself to meditate walking, standing, lying, but sitting is the first natural position.

*

One can meditate very well when walking.

*

It is as each finds convenient. Some meditate better walking, some sitting.

*

The rigidity [*of the body during meditation*] comes very often when there is the descent of the higher consciousness into the body.

Regularity, Length and Other Conditions

If it is possible to keep a fixed period for meditation and stick to it, it would certainly be desirable.

*

To keep the consciousness awake you must set apart a certain time every day for concentration and remembering the Mother and keeping yourself in contact with us. What is gained is not lost by interruption, but it goes behind and may take time to come out again — so the thread should not be cut.

*

It is not the length of the meditations that makes the difference [*in making one vitally and physically strong*]. It is a concentration of the will that is needed.

*

It is better to make the deeper concentration when you are alone or quiet. Outward sounds ought not to disturb you.

*

In external things all men of action have to do that [*shift their concentration quickly from one thing to another*] — otherwise they would not be able to cope with their work. In respect to inner concentration, it is not so easy because people bring other vibrations which interfere with the poise of the consciousness — a mere mental interruption ought not to be difficult to recover from; but if the consciousness itself gets invaded or else drawn

out, it takes time to get back. In the end a condition develops in which the inner consciousness is always concentrated and in a poise, *samāhitah*, and outside things take place only on the outermost surface. Then it becomes easy.

*

It is quite natural that at first there should be the condition of calm and peace only when you sit for concentration. What is important is that there should be this condition whenever you sit and the pressure for it always there. But at other times the result is at first only a certain mental quiet and freedom from thoughts. Afterwards when the condition of peace is quite settled in the inner being—for it is the inner into which you enter whenever you concentrate—then it begins to come out and control the outer, so that the calm and peace remain even when working, mixing with others, talking or other occupations. For then whatever the outer consciousness is doing, one feels the inner being calm within—indeed one feels the inner being as one's real self while the outer is something superficial through which the inner acts on life.

*

The gaze should not be fixed for a long time as it overstrains the eyes (unless one has a long practice in Tratak). The fixing of the eyes is not necessary—a natural gaze is sufficient and it should be varied by meditation with closed eyes.

*

When the meditation is done with the photo, it is better done with open eyes.

Coming out of Concentration or Meditation

You enter into a condition of deep inwardness and quiet. But if one comes too suddenly out of it into the ordinary consciousness, then there may be a slight nervous shock or a beating of the heart such as you describe, for a short time. It is always best to remain

quiet for a few moments before opening the eyes and coming out of this inwardness.

*

It is certainly much better to remain silent and collected for a time after the meditation. It is a mistake to take the meditation lightly — by doing that one fails to receive or spills what is received or most of it.

*

Your meditation is all right, as Mother saw — but when you came out of it, you fell into the ordinary consciousness, that is the difficulty. You must try to keep the true consciousness always, even in activity — then the sadhana will begin to be there all the time and your difficulty will disappear.

The Difficulty of the Mechanical Mind

That [*the constant recurrence of trivial thoughts*] is the nature of the mechanical mind — it is not due to any sensitiveness in it. Only as the other parts of the mind are more silent and under control, this activity looks more prominent and takes more space. It usually wears itself out, if one goes on rejecting it.

*

It was rather that the active mind became more quiet so that the movements of the mechanical mind became more evident — that is what often happens. What has to be done in that case is to detach oneself from these movements and concentrate without farther attention to them. They are then likely to sink into quietude or fall away.

*

To be able to detach oneself from the action of the mechanical mind is the first necessity so that it may be like a noise in the street which passes and which one can ignore. It is easier then

for the quiet and peace of the mind to remain undisturbed by this action even if it occurs.

If the peace and silence continue to come down, they usually become so intense as to seize the physical mind also after a time.

*

You are probably paying too much attention to them [*mechanical thoughts*]. It is quite possible to concentrate and let the mechanical activity pass unnoticed.

*

The more the psychic spreads in the outer being, the more all these things [*the mechanical activities of the subconscious mind*] fall quiet. That is the best way. Direct efforts to still the mind are a difficult method.

Surface Thoughts and Imaginations

That [*a state in which the outer being responds to surface thoughts while the inner being is "engrossed in meditation"*] is not called meditation—it is a divided state of consciousness. Unless the consciousness is really engrossed and the surface thoughts are only things that come across and touch and pass, it can hardly be called meditation (dhyana). I don't see how the inner being can be "engrossed" while thoughts and imaginations of another kind are rampaging about in the consciousness. One can remain separate and see the thoughts and imaginations pass without being affected, but that is not being plunged or engrossed in meditation.

Straining and Concentration

Straining and concentration are not the same thing. Straining implies an over-eagerness and violence of effort, while concentration is in its nature quiet and steady. If there is restlessness or over-eagerness, then that is not concentration.

*

Effort means straining endeavour. There can be an action with a will in it in which there is no strain of effort.

*

It was by your personal efforts without guidance that you got into difficulties and into a heated condition in which you could not meditate etc. I asked you to drop the effort and remain quiet and you did so. My intention was that by your remaining quiet, it would be possible for the Mother's Force to work in you and establish a better starting-point and a course of initial experiences. It was what was beginning to come; but if your mind again becomes active and tries to arrange the sadhana for itself, then disturbances are likely to come. The Divine Guidance works best when the psychic is open and in front (yours was beginning to open), but it can also work even when the sadhak is either not conscious of it or else knows it only by its results. As for Nirvikalpa Samadhi, even if one wants it, it is only the result of a long sadhana in a consciousness prepared for it — it is no use thinking of it when the inner consciousness is only just beginning to open to Yogic experience.

Relaxation and Concentration

There are two different states, that which the consciousness takes in concentration and that which it takes in relaxation — the latter is the ordinary consciousness (ordinary for the sadhak, though not perhaps the ordinary consciousness of the average man), the former is what he is attaining to by tapas of concentration in sadhana. To go into the Akshara and witness experiences from there is easy for the sadhak who has got so far. He can also concentrate and maintain the unification of the main aspects of his being, although with more difficulty — but a relaxation there brings him back to the relaxed "ordinary" consciousness. It is only when what is gained by sadhana becomes normal to the ordinary consciousness that this can be avoided. In proportion as this is done, it becomes possible not only to experience the truth subjectively, but make it manifest in action.

Passive Meditation and Concentration

What happened in the beginning of his sadhana must have been that he made the mistake of entering into a passive meditation instead of into a concentration proper. This kind of passive meditation can bring a great peace and quiet and joy. The Light also may come and other spiritual experiences. But it leaves the vital and body passive and without defence against inertia, illness etc. instead of bringing it either a dynamic force or a strong self-contained peace. The consciousness instead of being concentrated gets widely diffused and loosely extended. From the passivity came the weakness and disinclination for the worldly duties; from the diffusion the play of activity in the mind which prevented sleep and could not be controlled in a tendency also for the subtle being to go out of the body in the waking condition instead of through sleep as it ordinarily does, whence the beating of the heart and the cold feet. Concentration must in the earlier stages be active and dynamic with the consciousness gathered and capable of turning the will in any direction.

The concentration in this Yoga must be in the head or in the heart-centre, not in the centre at the base of the spinal cord—that can only come afterwards when all the other centres have been opened.

It is sometimes a little difficult to correct the effects of a wrong start. At any rate he may try the effects of an active concentration in either the head (forehead centre) or heart. The latter may be safer so as to avoid the return of the heating of the head which came from that first concentration. If there are any disturbing results, the concentration should not be continued and all should be turned towards a purification of the being such as he speaks of having practised and only when this is sufficiently advanced, should the concentration be resumed.

Inertia, Laziness, Tiredness in Meditation

It is not a fact that when there is obscurity or inertia, one cannot concentrate or meditate. If one has in the inner being the steady

will to do it, it can be done.

*

It is quite natural to want to meditate while reading Yogic literature — that is not the laziness.

The laziness of the mind consists in not meditating when the consciousness wants to do so.

*

Ego, I suppose, or inertia [*hinders the feeling of satisfied peace or quiet release in meditation*]. If higher meditation or being above keeps you dull and without any kind of satisfaction or peace in sadhana, these are the only two reasons I can think of.

*

If the mind gets tired, naturally it is difficult to concentrate — unless you have become separated from the mind.

*

Naturally one does not get tired if the meditation has become natural. But if the capacity is not there yet, then many cannot go on without a strain which brings fatigue.

*

Concentration is very helpful and necessary — the more one concentrates (of course in the limits of the body's capacity without straining it), the more the force of the Yoga grows. But you must be prepared for the meditation being sometimes not successful and not get upset by it — for that variability of the meditations happens to everybody. There are different causes for it. But it is mostly something physical that interferes, either the need of the body to take time to assimilate what has come or been done or sometimes inertia or dullness due to causes such as those you mention or others. The best thing is to remain quiet and not get nervous or dejected — till the force acts again.

Meditation, Sleep and Samadhi

When one tries to meditate, there is a pressure to go inside, lose the waking consciousness and wake inside, in a deep inner consciousness. But at first the mind takes it for a pressure to go to sleep, since sleep is the only kind of inner consciousness to which it has been accustomed. In Yoga by meditation sleep is therefore often the first difficulty — but if one perseveres then gradually the sleep changes to an inner conscious state.

*

I think the sleepiness is a stage which everybody goes through — a sort of mechanical reaction of the physical to the pressure for including it in the concentration of the sadhana. It is best not to mind it; it will go of itself as the consciousness increases and takes the physical into its poise. It is better to let us know about any physical troubles.

*

The sleep does come like that when one tries to meditate. It has to be dealt with, where that is possible, by turning it into a conscious inner and indrawn state and, where not, by remaining in a quietly concentrated wakefulness open (without effort) to receive.

*

This tendency to sit and be perfectly quiet and this pressure of sleep are not at all due to laziness. You must put that idea out of your head. It is due to the tendency to quiet, peace, going inside; when the sadhana begins with some intensity, it is most often like that for a time. Afterwards there is a more even balance between the inner and the outer consciousness or rather the outer begins to change and become of one piece with the inner. So do not let this trouble you.

*

When the pressure gives a tendency to insideness (samadhi), the

physical being, not being accustomed to go inside except in the way of sleep, translates this into a sense of sleepiness.

*

It [*the tendency to fall asleep during meditation*] is a common obstacle with all who practise Yoga at the beginning. This sleep disappears gradually in two ways — (1) by the intensifying of the force of concentration — (2) by the sleep itself becoming a kind of *swapna samadhi* in which one is conscious of inner experiences that are not dreams (i.e. the waking consciousness is lost for the time, but it is replaced not by sleep but by an inward conscious state in which one moves in the supraphysical of the mental or vital being).

*

The Yogic sleep is good only when it is Yogic enough to contain something, to be an inner consciousness or an experience of other planes. The *jāgarti* is important — to be conscious in the sleep, an inner waking. But when the mind is not accustomed, it tends to respond to the impulse towards this “going inside” into an inner consciousness caused by meditation by simply falling into the usual sleep to which it is accustomed. *Nidrā* is one of the recognised difficulties of Yoga — *nidrā* refusing to turn into *samadhi*, whether *swapna-samādhi* or *suṣṭi*. So the force is necessary and I will try to send it. I only wish people would give me more time for this inner work both for myself and them! but that seems past hoping for.

*

It is probably that [*in meditation*] you go inside into a sort of *samadhi* but are not yet conscious there (hence the idea of sleep). X is not asleep, but he has when he goes inside no control of his body. Many Yogis have this difficulty and use a contrivance which is put under the chin to hold up the head and with it the body during this inward-going concentration.

*

There is no harm in the deep sleep that comes — as I have told you, it is the tendency to go deep inside that brings it and it is necessary to go deep inside in order to establish the full connection between the psychic and the rest of the nature.

Chapter Two

Mantra and Japa

The Word

The word is a sound expressive of the idea. In the supra-physical plane when an idea has to be realised, one can by repeating the word-expression of it, produce vibrations which prepare the mind for the realisation of the idea. That is the principle of the Mantra and of japa. One repeats the name of the Divine and the vibrations created in the consciousness prepare the realisation of the Divine. It is the same idea that is expressed in the Bible, “God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light.” It is creation by the Word.

*

The Word has power — even the ordinary written word has a power. If it is an inspired word it has still more power. What kind of power or power for what depends on the nature of the inspiration and the theme and the part of the being it touches. If it is the Word itself, — as in certain utterances of the great Scriptures — Veda, Upanishads, Gita, — it may well have a power to awaken a spiritual impulse, an uplifting, even certain kinds of realisation. To say that it cannot contradict spiritual experience.

The Vedic poets regarded their poetry as *mantras*, they were the vehicles of their own realisations and could become vehicles of realisation for others. Naturally, these mostly would be illuminations, not the settled and permanent realisation that is the goal of Yoga — but they could be steps on the way or at least lights on the way. Many have such illuminations, even initial realisations while meditating on verses of the Upanishads or the Gita. Anything that carries the Word, the Light in it, spoken or written, can light this fire within, open a sky, as it were, bring the effective vision of which the Word is the body. In all ages spiritual seekers have expressed their aspirations or their experiences in

poetry or inspired language and it has helped themselves and others. Therefore there is nothing absurd in my assigning to such poetry a spiritual or psychic value and effectiveness to poetry of a psychic or spiritual character.

Mantras

Mantras come to many people in meditation. The Rishis say in the Veda that they had the Truth by vision and inspiration, “truth-hearing seers”, *kavayah satyaśrutah* — Veda is *śruti* got by inner hearing.

*

When one repeats a mantra regularly, very often it begins to repeat itself within, which means that it is taken up by the inner being. In that way it is more effective.

*

It [*the effect of japa*] depends on the way in which the japa is done.

If rightly done, the mantra is a means of opening to the light and knowledge etc. from above and it ceases as soon as that is done.

*

I do not believe a mantra can change the physical consciousness. What it does, if it is effective, is to open the consciousness and to bring into it the power of that which the mantra represents.

*

There is such a thing as mantra-shakti; but it acts only on certain conditions.

The Mantra OM

OM is the mantra, the expressive sound-symbol of the Brahman Consciousness in its four domains from the Turiya to the external or material plane. The function of a mantra is to create

vibrations in the inner consciousness that will prepare it for the realisation of what the mantra symbolises and is supposed indeed to carry within itself. The mantra OM should therefore lead towards the opening of the consciousness to the sight and feeling of the One Consciousness in all material things, in the inner being and in the supraphysical worlds, in the causal plane above now superconscious to us and, finally, the supreme liberated transcendence above all cosmic existence. The last is usually the main preoccupation with those who use the mantra.

In this Yoga there is no fixed mantra, no stress is laid on mantras, although sadhaks can use one if they find it helpful or so long as they find it helpful. The stress is rather on an aspiration in the consciousness and a concentration of the mind, heart, will, all the being. If a mantra is found helpful for that, one uses it. OM if rightly used (not mechanically) might very well help the opening upwards and outwards (cosmic consciousness) as well as the descent.

*

It [*Pranava japa*] is supposed to have a force of its own although that force cannot fully work without the meditation on the meaning. But my experience is that in these things there is no invariable rule and that most depends on the consciousness or the power of response in the sadhak. With some it has no effect, with some it has a rapid and powerful effect even without meditation — for others the meditation is necessary for any effect to come.

The Mantra *So'ham*

A divine Name or a Mantra (like the *So'ham*) can enter the adhara and move in the breathing as in your experience. When it does so, that is not the opening of which I speak in the sentence you quote, but it may come to make the aspiration effective by helping in the opening — by removing something that prevents the opening and by leading to the experience it carries in it.

The experience to which the *So'ham* mantra leads is the

realisation of one Being everywhere, all as the Divine, oneself and all as essentially one with that Divine. It is an experience in which one's separate personal existence shut up in the body ceases to be the normal thing; one feels the body as a point or small thing in a vast existence, consciousness or Ananda that is the Divine and oneself as spread out in that vast consciousness — as if the world were within us and not we inside the world or as if the world were one with us and one with the Divine. It is the “cosmic consciousness” that comes by this mantra. For our Yoga this is a beginning only, not the end as it is in the ordinary Yoga, — a liberation, not the Siddhi.

The Gayatri Mantra

The power of the Gayatri is the Light of the divine Truth. It is a mantra of Knowledge.

*

The Gayatri mantra is the mantra for bringing the light of Truth into all the planes of the being. The other [*Sri Aurobindo Mira*] has a general power.

*

It is not necessary to give up Gayatri Japa or the process which you are following at present. Concentration in the heart is one method, concentration in the head (or above) is another; both are included in this Yoga and one has to do whichever one finds easiest and most natural. The object of the concentration in the heart is to open the centre there (heart-lotus), to feel the presence of the Divine Mother in the heart and to become aware of one's soul or psychic being which is a portion of the Divine. The object of the concentration in the head is to rise to the Divine Consciousness and bring down the Light of the Mother or her Force or Ananda into all the centres. This movement of ascent and descent is implied in the process of your japa and it is not therefore necessary to renounce it.

There is a level corresponding to the Satya Loka in the head

but the consciousness has at a certain stage to rise above the head freely to meet the same level in the universal Consciousness above.

Mantras in the Integral Yoga

The idea of your friend that it is necessary to receive a mantra from here and for that he must come is altogether wrong. There is no mantra given in this Yoga. It is the opening of the consciousness to the Mother from within that is the true initiation and that can only come by aspiration and rejection of restlessness in the mind and vital.

*

We do not usually give any mantra. Those who repeat something in meditation call on the Mother.

*

As a rule the only mantra used in this sadhana is that of the Mother or of my name and the Mother. The concentration in the heart and the concentration in the head can both be used — each has its own result. The first opens up the psychic being and brings bhakti, love and union with the Mother, her presence within the heart and the action of her Force in the nature. The other opens the mind to self-realisation, to the consciousness of what is above mind, to the ascent of the consciousness out of the body and the descent of the higher consciousness into the body.

*

There is not necessarily any difference of Force.¹ Usually the Mother's name has the full power in it; but in certain states of consciousness the double Name may have a special effect.

¹ *The correspondent asked whether there is any difference of Force when one repeats only the Mother's name and when one repeats both the names of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother together. — Ed.*

Namajapa or Repetition of the Name

The name of the Divine is usually called in for protection, for adoration, for increase of bhakti, for the opening up of the inner consciousness, for the realisation of the Divine in that aspect. As far as it is necessary to work in the subconscious for that, the Name must be effective there.

*

It [*the effectiveness of namajapa*] depends on the person and how he does it. The Name of the Divine is in itself a power, if it is taken with the right faith and in the right attitude.

*

Namajapa has a great power in it.

*

Namochcharana has power but only if it comes from the heart and the soul; mere repetition with the mind is not enough.

*

Whatever name is called the Power that answers is the Mother. Each name indicates a certain aspect of the Divine and is limited by that aspect; the Mother's Power is universal.

*

Naturally, whatever name one concentrates on [*while awake*] will repeat itself [*in sleep*], if any does. But the calling of Mother in sleep is not necessarily a repetition — it is the inner being that often calls to her in difficulty or in need.

*

I did not encourage the name with the breathing because that seemed like pranayam. Pranayam is a very powerful thing, but if done haphazardly it may lead to the raising of obstructions and even in extreme cases illness in the body.

Verses of the Gita Used as Japa

Verses of the Gita can be used as japa, if the object is to realise the Truth that the verses contain in them. If X's father has taken the salient verses containing the heart of the teaching for that purpose, then it is all right. Everything depends on the selection of the verses. A coherent summary of the Gita's teaching cannot easily be put together by putting together some verses, but that is not necessary for a purpose of this kind which could only be to put the key truths together — not for intellectual exposition but for grasping in realisation which is the object of japa.

Success in Japa

I am sorry the old reaction to the japa has recurred. Perhaps the mind is doing it too much as a means for a result. The japa is usually successful only on one of two conditions, — if it is repeated with a sense of its significance, a dwelling of something in the mind on the nature, power, beauty, attraction of the Godhead it signifies and is to bring into the consciousness, that is the mental way, — or if it comes up from the heart or rings in it with a certain sense or feeling of bhakti making it alive, that is the emotional way. Either the mind or the vital has to give it support or sustenance. But if it makes the mind dry and the vital restless, it must be missing that support and sustenance. There is of course a third way, the reliance on the power of the mantra or name in itself, but then one has to go on till that power has sufficiently impressed its vibrations on the inner being to make it at a given moment suddenly open to the Presence or the Touch. But if there is a struggling or insistence for the result, then this effect which needs a quiet receptivity in the mind is impeded. That is why I insisted so much on mental quietude and on not too much straining or effort — to give time to allow the psychic and the mind to develop the necessary condition of receptivity — a receptivity as natural as when one receives an inspiration for poetry and music. It is also why I do not want you to discontinue your poetry — it helps and does not

hinder the preparation because it is a means of developing the right position of receptivity and bringing out the bhakti which is there in the inner being. To spend all the energy on japa or meditation is a strain which even those who are accustomed to successful meditation find it difficult to do — unless in periods when there is an uninterrupted flow of experiences from above.

*

It is very good news that you got rid of the attack and it was the japa that helped you to do it. This and past experience also shows that if you can overcome the old association of the japa with sterility and sorrow, it can do its natural function of creating the right consciousness — for that is what the japa is intended to do. It first changes the vibrations of the consciousness, brings into it the right state and the right responses and then brings in the power or the presence of the Deity. Several times before you wrote to me that by doing japa you got rid of the old impulse and recovered calm and the right turn of the consciousness and now it has helped you to get rid of the invasion of sorrow and despondency. Let us hope that this last will also soon lose its strength like the impulse and calm and serenity begin to establish itself in the whole nature.

Section Four

Sadhana through Love and Devotion

Chapter One

Divine Love, Psychic Love and Human Love

Divine Love and Its Manifestation

To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world is, indeed, the whole crown and essence of our Yoga. But it has always seemed to me impossible unless there comes as its support and foundation and guard the Divine Truth — what I call the Supramental — and its Divine Power. Otherwise Love itself blinded by the confusions of this present consciousness may stumble in its human receptacles and, even otherwise, may find itself unrecognised, rejected or rapidly degenerating and lost in the frailty of man's inferior nature. But when it comes in the Divine Truth and Power, Divine Love descends first as something transcendent and universal and out of that transcendence and universality it applies itself to persons according to the Divine Truth and Will, creating a vaster, greater, purer personal love than any the human mind or heart can now imagine. It is when one has felt this descent that one can be really an instrument for the birth and action of the Divine Love in the world.

*

It [*the Divine Truth*] can come solely as knowledge or as knowledge + calm and peace or knowledge with power. It is not always accompanied by Ananda.

What was meant [*in the preceding letter*] was that it is possible to have some kind of Ananda on all the planes, vital, mental, physical; but if one wants to live securely in the highest divine Ananda it can only be done by bringing down the (supramental) Truth and living first in the supramental Light. But this is the eventual aim of the Yoga; it does not debar one from accepting whatever Ananda comes on the way. Only, mere pleasure or vital

excitement and gratification must not be mistaken for Ananda.

*

The human form is naturally unable to bear the Divine Love or contain it, because it is itself a creation of the ignorance, weak and impure. It must be transformed in order to be capable of that; it must become strong and pure. First of all, it must have the strength to love the Divine alone and turn away from all other ties. But besides that a new consciousness must be created in it — first a consciousness of pure and purifying Divine Peace from above which must take hold of all down to the most physical — then in that peace an increasing inner strength pure and unegoistic — then the Divine Light and Knowledge transforming all the consciousness and movements. When this has been done, then the human form can contain the Divine Love and Ananda. Till then the touches of the Divine Love and Ananda are usually momentary or brief, they cannot remain. In an impure consciousness the Divine Love if it came in would create a perturbation and possibly be attacked by a mixture which would make it impossible for it to stay. It is therefore that touches only can come.

*

I understand that it is the physical consciousness which has come up forcibly with the old vital human movements and feelings and this has clouded for the moment the sense of higher things and the aspiration for Truth and Purity that is their atmosphere. The Divine Love may not be able yet to manifest on the physical plane, humanity being what it is, as fully and freely as it would otherwise do, but that does not make it less close or intense than the human. It is there waiting to be understood and accepted and meanwhile giving all the help you can receive to raise and widen you into the consciousness in which it will be no longer possible for these difficulties and these misunderstandings to recur — the state in which there is possible the full and perfect union.

*

It [*the Divine Love*] exists in itself and does not depend on outer contact or outer expression. Whether it shall express itself outwardly or how it will express itself outwardly depends on the spiritual truth that has to be manifested.

*

There is the one divine Love secret in all things, but the manifestation [*of it in matter and in forms of life*] depends upon the state of consciousness and its organisation.

*

I do not exactly know what you mean by the Divine Love being established down to the subconscious. What love? the soul's love for the Divine? or the principle of the Divine Love and Ananda which is the highest thing that can be reached? To establish the latter down to the subconscious is a thing which would mean the entire transformation of the whole being and it cannot be done except as the result of the supramental change which is as yet far away. The other may be established even now in principle, but to make it living and complete in the whole being would mean the psychic transformation completed with the spiritual also well under way already.

*

The Intuitive or Overmind are more open to the truth of Divine Love and more capable of universalising love than the mind ordinarily is — love there is also more calm in its intensity, less ego-bound than in the mental parts. But the mind can also approach their quality of love, if the love in it grows psychic and spiritual.

*

By becoming divine in nature [*one can love divinely*]; there is no other way.

Divine Love and Psychic Love

The Divine's love is that which comes from above poured down from the Divine Oneness and its Ananda on the being — psychic love is a form taken by divine love in the human being according to the needs and possibilities of the human consciousness.

*

If love is psychic in its nature, it always brings the sense of oneness or at least of an inner intimate closeness of being. The Divine Love is based upon oneness and the psychic derives from the Divine Love.

*

The psychic love is pure and full of self-giving without egoistic demand, but it is human and can err and suffer. The Divine Love is something much vaster and deeper and full of light and ananda.

Psychic Love

When there is no demand or desire, only love and self-giving, that is the psychic love.

*

Psychic love is quite satisfying, and it can change even the vital love into something great and beautiful.

*

Why do you want something remarkable? The love of the soul is the true thing, simple and absolute — the rest is good only if it is a means of manifestation of the soul's love.

*

The soul's love and joy come from within from the psychic being. What comes from above is the Ananda of the higher consciousness.

*

The love that belongs to the spiritual planes is of a different kind — the psychic has its own more personal love, bhakti, surrender. Love in the higher or spiritual mind is more universal and impersonal. The two must join together to make the highest divine love.

*

The psychic realisation is one of diversity in unity (the portion and the whole); it is not one of dissolving like a drop of water in the sea — for then no love or devotion is possible unless it is love of oneself, devotion to oneself.

Universal Love and Psychic Love

Universal love is always universal — psychic love can individualise itself.

*

Cosmic love depends on the realisation of oneness of self with all. Psychic love or feeling for all can exist without this realisation.

*

The oneness with all in its basis is something self-existent and self-content which does not *need* expression. When it does express itself as love, it is something wide and universal, untroubled and firm even when it is intense. This is in the basic cosmic oneness. There is also the surface cosmic consciousness which is an awareness of the play of cosmic forces — here anything may rise, sex also. It is this part that needs the perfect psychisation, otherwise one cannot even hold, contain and deal with it in the proper way.

*

I do not quite understand X's question. Does he mean to ask whether one can become conscious of the Divine's Love for all creatures before one is oneself filled with the universal love for others? If that is the meaning, then one can certainly become

conscious of the Divine's Love before one has oneself the universal love — one can become conscious of it by contact with the Divine in oneself. Naturally the consciousness of it should lead to the development of a universal love for all. But if he means a love that is divine, not tainted by the lower movements, then it is true that until there comes the peace, purity, freedom from ego, wideness, light of the universal consciousness which is the basis of the universal love, it is difficult to have a love that is free from all the defects, limitations, taints of ordinary human love. The more one has of the universality the more one tends to be freed from these things.

Love for the Divine

The love which is turned towards the Divine ought not to be the usual vital feeling which men call by that name; for that is not love, but only a vital desire, an instinct of appropriation, the impulse to possess and monopolise. Not only is this not the divine Love, but it ought not to be allowed to mix in the least degree in the Yoga. The true love for the Divine is a self-giving, free of demand, full of submission and surrender; it makes no claim, imposes no condition, strikes no bargain, indulges in no violences of jealousy or pride or anger — for these things are not in its composition. In return the Divine Mother also gives herself, but freely — and this represents itself in an inner giving — her presence in your mind, your vital, your physical consciousness, her power re-creating you in the divine nature, taking up all the movements of your being and directing them towards perfection and fulfilment, her love enveloping you and carrying you in its arms Godwards. It is this that you must aspire to feel and possess in all your parts down to the very material, and here there is no limitation either of time or of completeness. If one truly aspires and gets it, there ought to be no room for any other claim or for any disappointed desire. And if one truly aspires, one does unflinchingly get it, more and more as the purification proceeds and the nature undergoes its needed change.

Keep your love pure of all selfish claim and desire; you will

find that you are getting all the love that you can bear and absorb in answer.

Realise also that the Realisation must come first, the work to be done, not the satisfaction of claim and desire. It is only when the Divine Consciousness in its supramental Light and Power has descended and transformed the physical that other things can be given a prominent place — and then too it will not be the satisfaction of desire, but the fulfilment of the Divine Truth in each and all and in the new life that is to express it. In the divine life all is for the sake of the Divine and not for the sake of the ego.

I should perhaps add one or two things to avoid misapprehensions. First, the love for the Divine of which I speak is not a psychic love only; it is the love of all the being, the vital and vital-physical included, — all are capable of the same self-giving. It is a mistake to believe that if the vital loves, it must be a love that demands and imposes the satisfaction of its desire; it is a mistake to think that it must be either that or else the vital, in order to escape from its “attachment”, must draw away altogether from the object of its love. The vital can be as absolute in its unquestioning self-giving as any other part of the nature; nothing can be more generous than its movement when it forgets self for the Beloved. The vital and physical should both give themselves in the true way — the way of true love, not of ego-desire.

*

I suppose “love” expresses something more intense than *bhālobāshā* which can include mere liking or affection. But whether love or *bhālobāshā*, the human feeling is always either based on or strongly mixed with ego, — that is why it cannot be pure. It is said in the Upanishad, “One does not love the wife for the sake of the wife” or the child or friend etc. as the case may be “but for one’s self’s sake one loves the wife”. There is usually a hope of return, of benefit or advantage of some kind, or of certain pleasures and satisfactions, mental, vital or physical, that the person loved can give. Remove these things and the love very

soon sinks, diminishes or disappears or turns into anger, reproach, indifference or even hatred. But there is also an element of habit, something that makes the presence of the person loved a sort of necessity because it has always been there — and this is sometimes so strong that even in spite of entire incompatibility of temper, fierce antagonism, something like hatred, it lasts and even these gulfs of discord are not enough to make the persons part; in other cases this feeling is more tepid and after a time one gets accustomed to separation or accepts a substitute. There is again often the element of some kind of spontaneous attraction or affinity, mental, vital or physical, which gives a stronger cohesion to the love. Lastly, there is in the highest or deepest kind of love the psychic element, which comes from the inmost heart and soul, a kind of inner union or self-giving or at least a seeking for that, a tie or an urge independent of other conditions or elements, existing for its own sake and not for any mental, vital or physical pleasure, satisfaction, interest or habit. But usually the psychic element in human love, even where it is present, is so much mixed, overloaded and hidden under the others that it has little chance of fulfilling itself or achieving its own natural purity and fullness. What is called love is therefore sometimes one thing, sometimes another, most often a confused mixture, and it is impossible to give a general answer to the questions you put as to what is meant by love in such and such a phrase. It depends on the persons and the circumstances.

When the love goes towards the Divine, there is still this ordinary human element in it. There is the call for a return and if the return does not seem to come, the love may sink; there is the self-interest, the demand for the Divine as a giver of all that the human being wants and, if the demands are not acceded to, *abhimana* against the Divine, loss of faith, loss of fervour. Etc. etc. But the true love for the Divine is in its fundamental nature not of this kind, but psychic and spiritual. The psychic element is the need of the inmost being for self-giving, love, adoration, union which can only be fully satisfied by the Divine. The spiritual element is the need of the being for contact, merging, union with its own highest and whole self and source of being and

consciousness and bliss, the Divine. These two are two sides of the same thing. The mind, vital, physical can be the supports and recipients of this love, but they can be fully that only when they become remoulded into harmony with the psychic and spiritual elements of the being and no longer bring in the lower insistences of the ego.

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Love for the Divine must be there in all the being — not only in the spirit and the psychic heart, but in the vital and the physical consciousness also.

*

The influence of the love for the Divine when it takes hold of any part is to turn it towards the Divine — as you describe it “concentration on the Mother” — and in the end all is gathered and harmonised around this central turn of the being. The difficulty is with the mechanical parts of the being in which the old thoughts go on recurring by habit. If the concentration continues to grow, this becomes a thing of little importance at the circumference of the mind and in the end drops away to be replaced by things that belong to the new consciousness.

Human Love in the Sadhana

And first about human love in the sadhana. The soul’s turning through love to the Divine must be through a love that is essentially divine, but as the instrument of expression at first is a human nature, it takes the forms of human love and bhakti. It is only as the consciousness deepens, heightens and changes that that greater eternal love can grow in it and openly transform the human into the divine. But in human love itself there are several kinds of motive-forces. There is a psychic human love which rises from deep within and is the result of the meeting of the inner being with that which calls it towards a divine joy and union; it is, once it becomes aware of itself, something lasting, self-existent, not dependent upon external satisfactions,

not capable of diminution by external causes, not self-regarding, not prone to demand or bargain but giving itself simply and spontaneously, not moved to or broken by misunderstandings, disappointments, strife and anger, but pressing always straight towards the inner union. It is this psychic love that is closest to the divine and it is therefore the right and best way of love and bhakti. But that does not mean that the other parts of the being, the vital and physical included, are not to be used as means of expression or that they are not to share in the full play and the whole meaning of love, even of divine love. On the contrary, they are a means and can be a great part of the complete expression of divine love, — provided they have the right and not the wrong movement. There are in the vital itself two kinds of love, — one full of joy and confidence and abandon, generous, unbargaining, ungrudging and very absolute in its dedication and this is akin to the psychic and well-fitted to be its complement and a means of expression of the divine love. And neither does the psychic love or the divine love despise a physical means of expression wherever that is pure and right and possible: it does not depend upon that, it does not diminish, revolt or go out like a snuffed candle when it is deprived of any such means; but when it can use it, it does so with joy and gratitude. Physical means can be and are used in the approach to divine love and worship; they have not been allowed merely as a concession to human weakness, nor is it the fact that in the psychic way there is no place for such things. On the contrary they are one means of approaching the Divine and receiving the Light and materialising the psychic contact, and so long as it is done in the right spirit and they are used for the true purpose they have their place. It is only if they are misused or the approach is not right because tainted by indifference and inertia, or revolt or hostility, or some gross desire, that they are out of place and can have a contrary effect.

But there is another way of vital love which is more usually the way of human nature and that is a way of ego and desire. It is full of vital craving, desire and demand; its continuance depends upon the satisfaction of its demands; if it does not get what it

craves, or even imagines that it is not being treated as it deserves — for it is full of imaginations, misunderstandings, jealousies, misinterpretations — it at once turns to sorrow, wounded feeling, revolt, pride, anger, all kinds of disorder, finally cessation and departure. A love of this kind is in its very nature ephemeral and unreliable and it cannot be made a foundation for divine love. There has been too much of this kind in the relations of the sadhaks with the Mother — approaching her, I suppose, as a human mother with all the reactions of the lower vital nature. For a long time it was perforce tolerated — and this was the concession made to human weakness — even accepted in the beginning as a thing too prominent in the human being not to be there to some extent but to be transformed by degrees; but too often, it has refused to transform itself and has made itself a source of confusion, disorder, *asiddhi*, sometimes complete disaster. It is for this reason that we discourage this lower vital way of human love and would like people to reject and eliminate these elements as soon as may be from their nature. Love should be a flowering of joy and union and confidence and self-giving and Ananda, — but this lower vital way is only a source of suffering, trouble, disappointment, disillusion and disunion. Even a slight element of it shakes the foundations of peace and replaces the movement towards Ananda by a fall towards sorrow, discontent and Nirananda.

In your own case you often write in your wrong moods as if human love, even with some of these lower ingredients, were the only thing possible to you. But that is not so at all, for it contradicts your own deepest experiences. Always what your inner being has asked is Love, Bhakti, Ananda and whenever it comes to the surface it is, even if only in a first elementary form, the divine love which it brings with it. A basis of deep and intense calm and stillness, a great intensity of emotion and Bhakti, an inrush of Ananda, this is in these moments your repeated experience. On the other hand when you insist too much on the love which exists by external cravings, what comes is the other movement — fits of despondency, sorrow, Nirananda. In stressing on the psychic basis, in wishing you to conquer this

other movement, I am only pointing you to the true way of your own nature — of which the psychic bhakti, the true vital love are the real moving forces, and the other is only a superficial immixture.

Human Love and Divine Love

May I put in a plea for my poor Supramental against which you seem to have something like a grudge? I should like to say that the Supramental is not something cold, distant and remote; on the contrary, when it descends into the physical, it will mean the full outflow and full completeness and expression of love on the vital and physical as well as on every other plane. And it is because I know it means this and many other desirable things that I am so insistent on bringing it down as soon as possible.

And let me say also that, as regards human love and divine love, I admitted the first as that from which we have to proceed and to arrive at the other, intensifying and transforming into it, not eliminating, human love. Divine Love, in my view of it, is again not something ethereal, cold and far, but a love absolutely intense, intimate and full of unity, closeness and rapture using all the nature for its expression. Certainly, it is without the confusions and disorders of the present lower vital nature which it will change into something entirely warm, deep and intense; but that is no reason for supposing that it will lose anything that is true and happy in the elements of love.

*

Love cannot be cold — for there is no such thing as cold love, but the love of which the Mother speaks in that passage¹ is something very pure, fixed and constant; it does not leap like fire and sink for want of fuel, but is steady and all-embracing

¹ “It [the being] knows that this active state of love should be constant and impersonal, that is, absolutely independent of circumstances and persons, since it cannot and must not be concentrated upon any one thing in particular. . . .” *The Mother, Prayers and Meditations*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), *Collected Works of the Mother (second edition)*, vol. 1, p. 335.

and self-existent like the light of the sun. There is also a divine love that is personal, but it is not like the ordinary personal human love dependent on any return from the person — it is personal but not egoistic, — it goes from the real being in the one to the real being in the other. But to find that, liberation from the ordinary human way of approach is necessary.

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The Divine Love, unlike the human, is deep and vast and silent; one must become quiet and wide to be aware of it and reply to it. X must make it his whole object to be surrendered so that he may become a vessel and instrument — leaving it to the Divine Wisdom and Love to fill him with what is needed. Let him also fix this in the mind not to insist that in a given time he must progress, develop, get realisation; whatever time it takes, he must be prepared to wait and persevere and make his whole life an aspiration and an opening for the one thing only, the Divine. To give oneself is the secret of sadhana, not to demand and acquire. The more one gives oneself, the more the power to receive will grow. But for that all impatience and revolt must go; all suggestions of not getting, not being helped, not being loved, going away, of abandoning life or the spiritual endeavour must be rejected.

*

The Mother did not tell you that love is not an emotion, but that Divine Love is not an emotion, — a very different thing to say. Human love is made up of emotion, passion and desire, — all of them vital movements, therefore bound to the disabilities of the human vital nature. Emotion is an excellent and indispensable thing in human nature, in spite of all its shortcomings and dangers, — just as mental ideas are excellent and indispensable things in their own field in the human stage. But our aim is to go beyond mental ideas into the light of the supramental Truth, which exists not by ideative thought but by direct vision and identity. In the same way our aim is to go beyond emotion to the height and depth and intensity of the Divine Love and there feel

through the inner psychic heart an inexhaustible oneness with the Divine which the spasmodic leaping of the vital emotions cannot reach or experience.

As supramental Truth is not merely a sublimation of our mental ideas, so Divine Love is not merely a sublimation of human emotions; it is a different consciousness, with a different quality, movement and substance.

*

Human love is mostly vital and physical with a mental support — it can take an unselfish, noble and pure form and expression only if it is touched by the psychic. It is true, as you say, that it is more usually a mixture of ignorance, attachment, passion and desire. But whatever it may be, one who wishes to reach the Divine must not burden himself with human loves and attachments, for they form so many fetters and hamper his steps, turning him away besides from the concentration of his emotions on the one supreme object of love.

There is such a thing as psychic love, pure, without demand, sincere in self-giving, but it is not usually left pure in the attraction of human beings to one another. One must also be on one's guard against the profession of psychic love when one is doing sadhana, — for that is most often a cloak and justification for yielding to a vital attraction or attachment.

Universal love is the spiritual founded on the sense of the One and the Divine everywhere and the change of the personal into a wide universal consciousness, free from attachment and ignorance.

Divine love is of two kinds — the Divine love for the creation and the souls that are part of itself and the love of the seeker and love for the Divine Beloved; it has both a personal and impersonal element, but the personal is free here from all lower elements or bondage to the vital and physical instincts.

*

If I am to take some expressions in one of your letters at their face value you seem to put forward — at least as a poet

— three notions about spiritual seeking which are somewhat extraordinary.

1. “It is the *same* love which is addressed towards a ‘carnal prize’ and towards the Divine.” I should imagine that one who approached the Divine with a “carnal” or an untransformed vital love would embrace something of the vital world but certainly get nowhere near the Divine.

2. The Divine in itself is something cold and empty and dark — only human love gives it some warmth and attraction. I always thought that the Divine was the supreme ineffable Ananda of which human love and delight is only a clouded and fallen ray — most often hardly even that — compared with the empyrean of ethereal fire. How can the luminous eternal Ananda be something cold and dark, I should like to know?

3. Or perhaps you only mean that the Divine Infinite which the calm sages seek is by the very fact of their calm and wisdom something cold, dark, empty, gloomy. Has it not occurred to you that if they really sought for something cold, dark and gloomy as the supreme good, they would not be sages but asses? The sages sought after the Divine as the supreme existence, consciousness and Bliss, the Light beyond lights by which all this shineth, the joy beyond all other joys. Even the seekers of the Absolute Indefinable find in it the peace that passeth all understanding and that is nothing cold, dark or gloomy. The Nihilistic Buddhists? But they did not believe in the Divine or in Eternity, only in Non-existence and what they sought was not the supreme good, but self-extinction and the end of suffering — an intelligible aim, but something quite different from the stress towards the Eternal.

The Vital and Love for the Divine

When the vital joins in the love for the Divine, it brings into it heroism, enthusiasm, intensity, absoluteness, exclusiveness, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the total and passionate self-giving of all the nature. It is the vital passion for the Divine that creates the spiritual heroes, conquerors or martyrs.

I have never said that the vital is to have no part in the love for the Divine, only that it must purify and ennoble itself in the light of the psychic being. The results of self-loving love between human beings are so poor and contrary in the end — that is what I mean by the ordinary vital love — that I want something purer and nobler and higher in the vital also for the movement towards the Divine.

*

The outer being has to learn to love in the psychic way without ego. If it loves in the egoistic vital way, then it only creates difficulties for itself and for the sadhana and for the Mother.

*

Yes, that is the nature of vital love. It is based on desire and the sense of claim or sense of possession; psychic love is based on self-giving.

*

If the love is absolute and complete and there has never been any vital demand connected with it, then suggestions of revolt cannot come.

*

Formerly whenever the opening of the heart came you began to associate it with vital enjoyment and turned it upon others instead of turning the love towards the Divine and keeping its essential purity — so also the higher consciousness when it came down was being dispersed in mental movements. This time they were both coming in a purer form, but the danger of the mental and vital forces catching hold of them is still there and then both are likely to stop or break down. So you must be careful to allow no vital deviation this time.

*

Your difficulty is that the vital has not yet arrived at the secret of the self-existent Ananda of love, the Ananda of love's own pure

truth, the inner beauty of it for its own sake, the secret of the inner abiding ecstasy; it cannot yet believe that the thing exists. But it is travelling towards it and this feeling was probably a stage — a groping after a purer vital emotion on the way to the purest of all which is one with the Divine.

*

What he describes² is a vital demand of the ego for emotional self-satisfaction; it *is* Maya. It is not true love, for true love seeks for union and self-giving and that is the love one must bring to the Divine. This vital (so-called) love brings only suffering and disappointment; it does not bring happiness; it never gets satisfied and, even if it is granted something that it asks for, it is never satisfied with it.

It is perfectly possible to get rid of this Maya of the vital demand, if one wishes to do it, — but the will to do it must be sincere. If he is sincere in his will, he will certainly get help and protection.

*

Generally when people speak of vital intimacy they mean something very external which does not need to be brought down since it is common in human life. If it is the inner vital intimacy with the Divine, then of course that makes the union more complete, provided it is based on the psychic.

² *The correspondent wrote, "I want a heart that can respond to all my moods, that can understand me, that can do me justice, that can love me intensely and exclusively." Sri Aurobindo's reply was written to his secretary, who answered the enquirer. — Ed.*

Chapter Two

Bhakti, Devotion, Worship

Turning the Emotions towards the Divine

It is no part of this Yoga to dry up the heart; but the emotions must be turned towards the Divine. There may be short periods in which the heart is quiescent, turned away from the ordinary feelings and waiting for the inflow from above; but such states are not states of dryness but of silence and peace. The heart in this Yoga should in fact be the main centre of concentration until the consciousness rises above.

*

Emotion is a good element in Yoga; but emotional *desire* becomes easily a cause of perturbation and an obstacle.

Turn your emotions towards the Divine, aspire for their purification; they will then become a help on the way and no longer a cause of suffering.

Not to kill emotion, but to turn it towards the Divine is the right way of the Yoga.

But it must become pure, founded upon spiritual peace and joy, capable of being transmuted into Ananda. Equality and calm in the mind and vital parts, an intense psychic emotion in the heart can perfectly go together.

Awake by your aspiration the psychic fire in the heart that burns steadily towards the Divine—that is the one way to liberate and fulfil the emotional nature.

*

Emotion is necessary in the Yoga and it is only the excessive emotional sensitiveness which makes one enter into despondency over small things that has to be overcome. The very basis of this Yoga is bhakti and if one kills one's emotional being there can be no bhakti. So there can be no possibility of emotion

being excluded from the Yoga.

*

It is only the ordinary vital emotions, which waste the energy and disturb the concentration and peace, that have to be discouraged. Emotion itself is not a bad thing; it is a necessary part of the nature, and psychic emotion is one of the most powerful helps to the sadhana. Psychic emotion, bringing tears of love for the Divine or tears of ananda, ought not to be suppressed: it is only a vital mixture that brings disturbance in the sadhana.

*

It is quite true that by going above one can get out of all problems, for they no longer exist, but the problems are there below and it is difficult to be always above with so much unsolved and calling for solution. But just as one can go high above, so one can go deep within and it is this going deep within that is needed. What happened was at the surface of the emotional being and if one simply stays there the difficulties of the emotional can come, but what has to be done is not to stay on the surface but go deep within. For the psychic is there behind the emotional surface, deep behind the heart centre. Once one reaches it, these things can no longer touch; what will be there is the inner peace and happiness, the untroubled aspiration, the presence or nearness of the Mother.

*

To indulge in the emotions, love, grief, sorrow, despair, emotional joy etc. for their own sake with a sort of mental-vital over-emphasis on them is what is called sentimentalism. There should be even in deep feeling a calm, a control, a purifying restraint and measure. One should not be at the mercy of one's feelings and sentiments, but master of oneself always.

*

When the consciousness indulges in these things [*joy and sorrow*] and wallows in the excitement of emotional joy or

suffering, that is called sentimentalism. There is another kind in which the mind enjoys its perceptions of emotion, love and suffering etc. and plays with them, but that is a less violent and more superficial sentimentalism.

Bhakti or Devotion

Bhakti is not an experience, it is a state of the heart and soul. It is a state which comes when the psychic being is awake and prominent.

*

The very object of Yoga is a change of consciousness — it is by getting a new consciousness or by unveiling the hidden consciousness of the true being within and progressively manifesting and perfecting it that one gets first the contact and then the union with the Divine. Ananda and bhakti are part of that deeper consciousness, and it is only when one lives in it and grows in it that ananda and bhakti can be permanent. Till then, one can only get experiences of ananda and bhakti, but not the constant and permanent state. But the state of bhakti and constantly growing surrender does not come to all at an early stage of the sadhana; many, most indeed, have a long journey of purification and tapasya to go through before it opens, and experiences of this kind, at first rare and interspaced, afterwards frequent, are the landmarks of their progress. It depends on certain conditions, which have nothing to do with superior or inferior Yoga capacity, but rather with a predisposition in the heart to open, as you say, to the Sun of the divine Influence.

*

You are no doubt right about asking for the bhakti, for I suppose it is the master-claim of your nature: for that matter, it is the strongest motive force that sadhana can have and the best means for all else that has to come. It is why I said that it is through the heart that spiritual experience must come to you. The loyalty and the rest that you have for me and the Mother

may not, as you say, be part of the bhakti itself, but they could not be there were not the bhakti deep inside. It is its coming out in full force into the surface consciousness that is to be brought about and it seems to me that it is inevitable that it should come as the outer coverings fall off. What is within must surely make its way to the surface.

*

You believe in traditional ideas of Yoga — well, according to traditional ideas also, the one easiest method is that of bhakti, reliance, self-giving, *bhakti, nirbhara, samarpana*. What still stands in your way — for it was and is growing towards that in you, is an old confusion in mind and vital. The heart says, “I want bhakti”, the mind says, “No, no, let us reason”, the vital says, “Nonsense, I can’t surrender.” What you need is to quiet down that confusion created by the mind’s past *sanskaras* and either fix on the one thing or harmonise. Bhakti as the basic force, knowledge, strength and joy in the Divine as the result — that is the harmony proposed in this Yoga. But in either way, if either is done, then peace becomes easily possible.

*

What I meant by the change was the great improvement in your mental and vital attitude and reactions to outward things and to life which was very evident in your letters and account of happenings and gave them quite a new atmosphere warm and clear and psychic. Naturally the change is not yet absolute and integral, but it does seem to be fundamental. Moreover, it is certainly due to a growing bhakti within, especially an acceptance of bhakti as your path and of the implications of that acceptance. The mind has taken a new poise less intellectual and more psychic. What prevents you from seeing the growth of bhakti (sometimes you have seen it and written about it) is a continuance of the physical mind which sets going with a constant repetitious whirl of its fixed ideas whenever there is any touch of depression. One of these ideas is that you don’t progress, will not progress and can never progress, the old thing

that used to say, “Yoga is not for the likes of me” etc. The activity of the physical mind (next to the wrong activity of the vital) is what most keeps one’s consciousness on the surface and prevents it from being conscious within and of what goes on within; it can see something of what happens on the surface of the nature, the results of the inner movement but not the cause of the happenings, which is the inner movement itself. That is one reason why I like to see the physical mind occupied in poetry and music etc. and other salubrious activities which help the inner growth and in which the inner bhakti can express itself, for that keeps the physical mind busy, unoccupied with the mechanical rotatory movement and allows and helps the inner growth. The rotatory movement is less than it was before and I expect it one of these days to get tired of itself and give up altogether.

*

What you felt about replacement is quite true. The transformation proceeds to a large extent by a taking away or throwing out of the old superficial self and its movements and replacing them by a new deeper self and its true action.

It does not matter if the higher feelings, devotion etc. seem to you sometimes like an influence or colouring. It looks like that when you feel yourself in the external physical or outer vital or outer mind. These feelings really are those of your inmost self, your soul, the psychic in you and when you are in the psychic consciousness, they become normal and natural. But when your consciousness shifts and becomes more external, then these workings of the soul or of the divine consciousness are felt as themselves external, as merely an influence. All the same, you have to open yourself to them constantly and they will then more and more either soak in steadily or come in successive waves or floods and go on till they have filled the mind, the vital, the body. You will then feel them always as not only normal but as part of your very self and the true substance of your nature.

*

The flow of devotion and love is a thing which the more it repeats

or awakens is bound to overflow to all the parts of being and have its effect on them.

*

If it is the way of *ahaitukī bhakti* that you want to follow, that can be no obstacle; for there can be none better. For in that way everything can be made a means — poetry and music for instance become not merely poetry and music and not merely even an expression of bhakti, but themselves a means of bringing the experience of love and bhakti. Meditation itself becomes not an effort of mental concentration, but a flow of love and adoration and worship. If simply and sincerely followed, the way of *ahaitukī bhakti* can lead as far as any other.

*

There can be no such thing as a mechanical and artificial devotion — there is either devotion or there is not. Devotion may be intense or not intense, complete or incomplete, sometimes manifest and sometimes veiled, but mechanical or artificial devotion is a contradiction in terms.

*

These [*arguments against external bhakti*] are the exaggerations made by the mind taking one side of Truth and ignoring the other sides.¹ The inner bhakti is the main thing and without it the external becomes a form and mere ritual, but the external has its place and use when it is straightforward and sincere.

*

Bhakti should be for the Divine only — the sadhaks are sadhaks, trying to reach the Divine, but still full of faults and struggles.

*

A “bhakti” which claims everything from the Divine and does not give itself is not real bhakti.

¹ *The correspondent had been asked by a fellow-sadhak, “Why do you want to meditate on a photograph of Sri Aurobindo? If you can meditate within, this external form of bhakti is not necessary.” — Ed.*

Bhakti and Love

The nature of bhakti is adoration, worship, self-offering to what is greater than oneself — the nature of love is a feeling or seeking for closeness and union. Self-giving is the character of both; both are necessary in the Yoga and each gets its full force when supported by the other.

*

Love is not a name of the Divine, it is a power of his consciousness and being. Bhakti and love are not quite the same thing, but love is one of the elements of bhakti. There are different kinds of bhakti and that which is of the nature of love is the strongest and is considered the highest, most intense and ecstatic of all. Also in love itself that form of it which is made of self-giving; surrender, absolute adoration, urge towards a selfless union is the true kind of bhakti that is love. “Conquering love” or “Love the victor”² means love prevailing over all that stands in the way of its reign, over ignorance, falsehood, selfishness, ego, passion and lust, outward or self-regarding desires and all else till it reigns alone and victorious, bringing down all the other gifts of the Divine Consciousness. It is by force of love and selflessness and self-giving that the sadhak can help Love to conquer.

*

I suppose it [*premabhakti*] is bhakti with love as its basis; there can be bhakti of worship, submission, reverence, obedience etc. but without love.

*

Selflessness, self-giving, entire faith and confidence, absence of demand and desire, surrender to the Divine Will, love concentrated on the Divine — are some of the main signs [*of true love and bhakti*].

² These are probably the names of two roses named by the Mother according to their significance. — Ed.

Emotional Bhakti

It is a misunderstanding to suppose that I am against Bhakti or against emotional Bhakti — which comes to the same thing, since without emotion there can be no Bhakti. It is rather the fact that in my writings on Yoga I have given Bhakti the highest place. All that I have said at any time which could account for this misunderstanding was against an *unpurified* emotionalism which, according to my experience, leads to want of balance, agitated and disharmonious expression or even contrary reactions and, at its extreme, nervous disorder. But the insistence on purification does not mean that I condemn true feeling and emotion any more than the insistence on a purified mind or will means that I condemn thought and will. On the contrary, the deeper the emotion, the more intense the Bhakti, the greater is the force for realisation and transformation. It is oftenest through intensity of emotion that the psychic being awakes and there is an opening of the inner doors to the Divine.

*

If one does not encourage the devotion of the emotional being merely because the lower vital is not yet under control and acts differently, then how is the devotion to grow and how is the lower vital to change? Until the final clarification and harmonising of the nature there are always contradictions in the being, but that is not a reason for in any way suppressing the play of the better movements — on the contrary it is these that should be cultivated and made to increase.

*

It [*emotion*] has its place, only it must not be always thrown outward but pressed inward so as to open fully the psychic doors.

*

The emotional [*devotion*] is more outward than the psychic [*devotion*] — it tends towards outward expression. The psychic is

inward and gives the direction to the whole inner and outer life. The emotional can be intense, but is neither so sure in its basis nor powerful enough to change the whole direction of the life.

Vital Bhakti

Vital bhakti is usually full of desires and demands, — it expects a return for what it gives; it loves the Divine more for its own sake than for the sake of the Divine. If it does not get what it wants, it is capable of revolting or turning elsewhere. It is often pursued by jealousy, misunderstanding, unfaithfulness, anger etc., — the usual imperfections of human love, and can turn these against its object of bhakti. On the other hand, if there is vital bhakti governed by the psychic, these defects disappear and the vital gives an ardour and enthusiasm to the love and bhakti which gives it a greater push for effectuation in action and life. The vital should always be the instrument of the soul for self-expression in life and not act on its own account (ego, desire) or on its own separate impulse.

*

The vital bhakti is egoistic, usually full of claims and demands on the Divine and revolting when they are not satisfied. The mental is simply a worship in the thought and idea without love in the heart.

*

It [*an inner state of dryness*] is because it is the analysing mind that is active — that always brings a certain dryness; the higher mind or the intuition bring a much more spontaneous and complete knowledge — the beginning of the real Jnana without this effect. The bhakti which you feel is psychic, but with a strong vital tinge; and it is the mind and the vital between them that bring in the opposition between the bhakti and the Jnana. The vital concerned only with emotion finds the mental knowledge dry and without rasa, the mind finds the bhakti to be a blind emotion fully interesting only when its character has been analysed and understood. There is no such opposition when the psychic

and the higher plane knowledge act together predominantly — the psychic welcomes knowledge that supports its emotion, the higher thought consciousness rejoices in the bhakti.

*

It is a mistake to think that a constant absence of *vyākulatā* is a sign that the aspiration or will for the Divine is not true. It is only in certain exclusive forms of Bhakti Yoga that a constant *vyākulatā* or weeping or *hāhākāra* (the latter is more often vital than psychic) is the rule. Here though the psychic yearning may come sometimes or often in intense waves, what comes as the basis is a quietude of the being and in that quietude a more and more steady perception of the truth and seeking for the Divine and need of the Divine so that all is turned towards that more and more. It is into this that the experience and growing realisation come. Because the opening is growing in you, you are getting this *ābhāsa* of the presence (beyond form) of the Mother. It is as the inner realisation grows that the presence in the physical form takes its full value.

Viraha or Pangs of Separation

Viraha is a transitional experience on the plane of the vital seeking for the Spirit — there is no reason why it should not be possible at a quite early stage. It is the realisations without any uneasiness, realisations in pure Ananda that belong to the more developed sadhana.

*

The pure feeling of *viraha* is psychic — but if rajasic or tamasic movements come in (such as depression, complaint, revolt etc.) then it becomes tamasic or rajasic.

*

Pangs of separation belong to the vital, not to the psychic; the psychic having no pangs need not express them. The psychic is always turned towards the Divine in faith, joy and confidence

— whatever aspiration it has is full of trust and hope.

Enmity to the Divine

I have not had time yet to write about the enmity theory. I will do so more fully in two or three days. But I may say at once that the idea does not seem to me at all true that by enmity to the Divine one can reach the Divine and that too more quickly than by bhakti. The idea is contrary to the spiritual truth of things, to reason, to nature and to experience.

*

As regards your defence of X, they sound like X's own ideas and very queer ideas they are. If they are right, we should have to come to the following conclusions —

1. Sattwa is not the best passage towards realisation, Rajas is the best way to become spiritual. It is the rajasic man with his fierce ego and violent passions who is the true sadhak of the Divine.

2. The Asura is the best bhakta. The Gita is quite wrong in holding up the Deva nature as the condition of realisation and the Asura nature as contrary to it. It is the other way round.

3. Ravana, Hiranyakashipu, Shishupala were the greatest devotees of the Divine because they were capable of hostility to the Divine and so were liberated in a few lives — compared with them the great Rishis and Bhaktas were very poor spiritual vessels. I am aware of the paradox about Ravana in the Purana, but let me point out that these Asuras and Rakshasas did not pretend to be disciples or worshippers of Rama or Krishna or Vishnu or use their position as disciples to get moksha by revolt — they got it by being enemies and getting killed and absorbed into the Godhead.

4. Obedience to the Guru, worship of the Divine are all tommy rot and fit only for sheep, not men. To turn round furiously on the Guru or the Divine, abuse him, express contempt, challenge his sincerity, declare his actions to be wrong, foolish or a trick — to assert oneself as right at every point and his

judgment as mistaken, prejudiced, absurd, false, a support of devils etc. etc. is the best way of devotion and the true relation between Guru and Shishya. Disobedience is the highest respect to the Guru, anger and revolt are the noblest worship one can give to the Divine.

5. One who takes the blows of Mahakali with joy as a means of discovering his faults and increasing in light and strength and purity is a sheep and unworthy of discipleship — one who responds to the quietest pressure to change by revolt and persisting in his errors is a strong man and a mighty adhar and a noble disciple on the way to perfection.

I could go on multiplying the consequences, but I have no time. Do you really believe all these things? They are the natural consequences of X's theory or of this theory of revolt as the way to perfection. If you accept the premiss, you have to accept the logical consequences. That is what X did — only he called his errors Truth and the way prescribed by me was falsehood explicable only by the fact that I was a "Master who had forgotten his higher self". And the consequences led to his departure, not willed by us, but by his own choice — and under such circumstances that he has made it a practical impossibility for me to let him come back unless he undergoes a change which the experience of the past does not warrant me in thinking possible.

Contact with the Divine

Aspiration and devotion are the natural and easy means for getting the contact. The other way by effort is laborious, slow and not sure. The mind must open, but it will open best by the power of devotion and aspiration.

*

The more the calm, peace, joy and happiness descend and take possession, the stronger the foundation. It is the sign of the contact.

The other thing needed is the descent of the consciousness which you felt in the heart and breast. That will come of itself,

if this devotion and sole dependence on the Light continues.

*

The psychic contact does not bring mental knowledge, but it brings true perception and true feeling and it can bring down also, if you aspire from the psychic centre, a knowledge higher and truer than intellectual knowledge.

*

Quietude and surrender are the first things to be established. In that must come the full contact. By that contact, if well established, will come a steady progressive sadhana, not the old confused sadhana.

*

When you fall from the contact, the first and only thing you have to do is to reestablish it — to remain quiet and open yourself. Everything else you must detach yourself from and reject. It is because you listen to ideas and suggestions of all kinds and still attach value to the old kind of “experiences”, that you cannot reestablish the contact.

*

As for not having it [*contact*] always, it is because there are parts of the being that are still unconscious or perhaps states of unconsciousness come. For instance, people write letters to each other, but they are quite unconscious that they are exchanging forces in doing so. You have become conscious of it, because of the development of your inner consciousness by Yoga — and yet there are likely to be times when you still write from the external awareness only, and then you will see the words only without being aware of what is behind. So owing to the development of the inner consciousness, you are able to understand what contacts are and get the true contact, but at times the external consciousness may be stronger than the inner one, then you are no longer (for the time being) able to get the contact.

*

The photograph is a vehicle only³ — but if you have the right consciousness, then you can bring something of the living being into it or become aware of the being for which it stands and can make it a means of contact. It is like the *prāṇapratīṣṭhā* in the image in the temple.

Contact and Union with the Divine

Seeing is of many kinds. There is a superficial seeing which only erects or receives momentarily or for some time an image of the Being seen; that brings no change, unless the inner bhakti makes it a means for change. There is also the reception of the *living* image of the Divine in one of his forms into oneself, — say, in the heart, — that can have an immediate effect or initiate a period of spiritual growth. There is also the seeing outside oneself in a more or less objective and subtle physical or physical way.

As for *milana*, the abiding union is within and that can be there at all times; the outer *milana* or contact is not usually abiding. There are some who often or almost invariably have the contact whenever they worship; the Deity may become living to them in the picture or other image they worship, may move and act through it; others may *feel* him always present, outwardly, subtle-physically, abiding with them where they live or in the very room; but sometimes this is only for a period. Or they may feel the Presence with them, see it frequently in a body (but not materially except sometimes), feel its touch or embrace, converse with it constantly, — that is also one kind of *milana*. The greatest *milana* is one in which one is constantly aware of the Deity constantly abiding in oneself, in everything in the world, holding all the world in him, identical with existence and yet supremely beyond the world — but in the world too one sees, hears, feels nothing but him, so that the very senses bear witness to him alone — and this does *not* exclude such specific personal manifestations as those vouchsafed to Krishnaprem

³ While looking at a photograph of Sri Aurobindo, the correspondent felt that he was looking at a living being with eyes “as living as real eyes”. — Ed.

and his guru. The more ways there are of the union, the better.

*

Adesh and darshan are elements of a stage of sadhana in which there is still much distance from the closer state of union. The mind and vital seek the contact through darshan and the guidance through Adesh. What we aim at in our Yoga is the constant union and presence and control of the Divine at every moment. But on the mental and vital level this usually remains imperfect and there is much chance of error. It is by the supramentalisation that the perfect Truth of this Divine Union in action can come.

Outer Worship

There is no restriction in this Yoga to inward worship and meditation only. As it is a Yoga for the whole being, not for the inner being only, no such restriction could be intended. Old forms of the different religions may fall away, but absence of all forms is not the rule of the sadhana.

*

I was thinking [*in writing* “*Old forms . . . may fall away*”] not of Pranam etc. which have a living value, but of old forms which persist although they have no longer any value — e.g. Sraddha for the dead. Also here forms which have no relation to this Yoga — for instance Christians who cling to the Christian forms or Mahomedans to the Namaz or Hindus to the Sandhyavandana in the old way may soon find them either falling off or else an obstacle to the free development of their sadhana.

*

What is meant by *bāhyapūjā*? If it is purely external, then of course it is the lowest form; but if done with the true consciousness inside, it can bring the greatest completeness of the adoration by allowing the body and the most external consciousness to share in the spirit and act of worship.

*

What you say is no doubt true, but it is better not to take away the support that may still be there for the faith of those who need such supports. These visions and images and ceremonies are meant for that. It is a spiritual principle not to take away any faith or support of faith unless the persons who have it are able to replace it by something larger and more complete.

If the *prāṇapratīṣṭhā* brings down a powerful Presence [*into an image*], that may remain there long after the one who has brought it has left his body. Usually it is maintained by the bhakti of the officiant and the sincerity of belief and worship of those who come to the temple for adoration. If these fail there is likely to be a withdrawal of the Presence.

*

The “scientific” explanation [*for the disappearance of food offered to a deity in a temple*] would be that somebody, a servant perhaps, disregarding prohibitions got secretly in and polished off the food of offering when there was nobody to see! That however assumes that occult manifestations are impossible, which is not the case; it is besides only a probable inference or theory. Occultists, or some of them, hold that the food offered to unseen beings is sometimes (but not by any means always) taken in its subtle elements, leaving the outward body of the food as it was. The actual taking of the food, physically, is rare, but instances are believed to have happened where the bhakti was very strong.

Prayer

Prayer and aspiration are a part of the spiritual life and do not conflict with surrender, provided one is not disturbed in either way by the fulfilment or unfulfilment of the prayer and keeps one’s faith and quietude all the same. In the ordinary life prayer is one of the chief elements of human relation with the Divine and is often but not always answered; when it is not answered the religious man keeps his faith in the Divine and either understands that to answer was not the Divine Will or else he prays

more fervently till his prayer is heard — that depends on the man and the circumstances. A sadhak can intercede internally for others in their affairs, provided he remains unattached and equal-minded, but he is not bound to intervene.

*

Of course all prayer is not heard — the world would be a still more disastrous affair than it is, if everybody's prayers were heard, however sincere. Even the Godward prayer is not always heard — at once, even as faith is not always justified at once. Both prayer and faith are powers towards realisation which have been given to man to aid him in his struggle — without them, without aspiration and will and faith (for aspiration is a prayer) it would be difficult for him to get anywhere. But all these things are merely means for setting the Divine Force in action — and it sometimes takes long, very long even, before the forces come into action or at least before they are seen to be in action or bear their result. The ecstasist is not altogether wrong even when he overstates his case. Even the overstatements sometimes help to convince the Cosmic Power, so that it says “Oh well, if it is like that all right —”.

*

As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. You may ask, why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery: put a prayer in the slot and get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, God would be in a rather awkward hole if he had to grant all of them; it wouldn't do.

*

If one lives in the world one can offer such prayers [*for help in resolving worldly problems*]; but one must not expect that the Divine shall fulfil all those prayers or think that he is bound to do so. When one is a sadhak the prayer should be for the inner things belonging to the sadhana and for outer things only so far

as they are necessary for that and for the divine work.

*

What you say about prayer is correct. That [*impersonal prayer*] is the highest kind of prayer, but the other kind also (i.e. the more personal) is permissible and even desirable. All prayer rightly offered brings us closer to the Divine and establishes a right relation with Him.

*

As for the prayers, the fact of praying and the attitude it brings, especially unselfish prayer for others, itself opens you to the higher Power, even if there is no corresponding result in the person prayed for. Nothing can be positively said about that, for the result must necessarily depend on the persons, whether they are open or receptive or something in them can respond to any Force the prayer brings down.

*

Prayers should be full of confidence and without sorrow or lamenting.

Part Three

The Integral Yoga and Other Spiritual Paths

Section One

A Yoga of Transformation

Chapter One

Distinctive Features of the Integral Yoga

The Meaning of Purna Yoga

Purna Yoga means (1) that instead of approaching the Divine through the mind alone (Jnana) or the heart alone (Bhakti) or through will and works alone (Karma Yoga), one seeks the Divine with all the parts and powers of the consciousness and the being, uniting these three ways and many others in a single Yoga (way of union with the Divine) and receives the Divine in His presence, consciousness, force, light and bliss in all the consciousness and the being.

(2) That one seeks not only the realisation of the Divine in the soul and self but also in the whole nature (that means the transformation of this lower human into the Divine spiritual nature).

(3) That one seeks the Divine not only beyond life (by the cessation of birth) but for life, so that life also may become a realisation of the Divine and a manifestation of the Divine Nature.

*

As for the book itself,¹ I am unfortunately ignorant of the Telugu language and cannot read the original, but from the account given in English I have formed some idea of the substance. I gather that it is in the main a statement and justification of the Purna Yoga and of my message; I believe you have rightly stated the two main elements of it, — first, the acceptance of the world as a manifestation of the Divine Power, not its rejection as a mistake or an illusion, and, secondly, the character of this manifestation as a spiritual evolution with Yoga as a means for

¹ A book by a disciple living outside the Ashram. — Ed.

the transformation of mind, life and body into the instruments of a spiritual and supramental perfection. The universe is not only a material but a spiritual fact, life not only a play of forces or a mental experience, but a field for the evolution of the concealed spirit. Human life will receive its fulfilment and transformation into something beyond itself only when this truth is seized and made the motive force of our existence and the means of its effective realisation discovered. The means of realisation is to be found in an integral Yoga, a union in all the parts of our being with the Divine and a consequent transmutation of all their now jarring elements into the harmony of a higher divine consciousness and existence.

This-Worldliness and Other-Worldliness

One thing I feel I must say in connection with your remark about the soul of India and X's observation about "this stress on this-worldliness to the exclusion of other-worldliness". I do not quite understand in what connection his remark was made or what he meant by this-worldliness, but I feel it necessary to state my own position in the matter. My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time, since I set foot on Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and intimate bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me all is the Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere. Everyone has the right to throw away this-worldliness and choose other-worldliness

only and if he finds peace by that choice he is greatly blessed. I, personally, have not found it necessary to do this in order to have peace. In my Yoga also I found myself moved to include both worlds in my purview, the spiritual and the material, and to try to establish the divine Consciousness and the divine Power in men's hearts and in earthly life, not for personal salvation only but for a life divine here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of this life taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality and nature of the world and things and the Divine: it seemed to me as nearly as possible the integral truth about them and I have therefore spoken of the pursuit of it as the integral Yoga. Everyone is, of course, free to reject and disbelieve in this kind of integrality or to believe in the spiritual necessity of an entire other-worldliness excluding any kind of this-worldliness altogether, but that would make the exercise of my Yoga impossible. My Yoga can include indeed a full experience of the other worlds, the plane of the supreme Spirit and the other planes in between and their possible effects upon our life and material world; but it will be quite possible to insist only on the realisation of the supreme Being or Ishwara even in one aspect, Shiva, Krishna as Lord of the world and Master of ourselves and our works or else the universal Sachchidananda, and attain to the essential results of this Yoga and afterwards to proceed from them to the integral results if one accepted the ideal of the divine life and this material world conquered by the Spirit. It is this view and experience of things and of the truth of existence that enabled me to write *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The realisation of the Supreme, the Ishwara, is certainly the essential thing; but to approach him with love and devotion and bhakti, to serve him with one's works and to know him, not necessarily by the intellectual cognition, but in a spiritual experience, is also essential in the path of the integral Yoga.

The Importance of Descent in the Yoga

I meant by it [*the phrase “a far greater Truth”*] the descent of the supramental Consciousness upon earth; all truths below the supramental (even that of the highest spiritual on the mental plane, which is the highest that has yet manifested) are either partial or relative or otherwise deficient and unable to transform the earthly life, they can only at most modify and influence it. The supermind is the vast Truth-consciousness of which the ancient seers spoke; there have been glimpses of it till now, sometimes an indirect influence or pressure, but it has not been brought down into the consciousness of the earth and fixed there. To so bring it down is the aim of our Yoga.

But it is better not to enter into sterile intellectual discussions. The intellectual mind cannot even realise what the supermind is; what use, then, can there be in allowing it to discuss what it does not know? It is not by reasoning, but by constant experience, growth of consciousness and widening into the Light that one can reach those higher levels of consciousness above the intellect from which one can begin to look up to the Divine Gnosis. Those levels are not yet the supermind, but they can receive something of its knowledge.

The Vedic Rishis never attained to the supermind for the earth or perhaps did not even make the attempt. They tried to rise individually to the supramental plane, but they did not bring it down and make it a permanent part of the earth-consciousness. Even there are verses of the Upanishad in which it is hinted that it is impossible to pass through the gates of the Sun (the symbol of the supermind) and yet retain an earthly body. It was because of this failure that the spiritual effort of India culminated in Mayavada. Our Yoga is a double movement of ascent and descent; one rises to higher and higher levels of consciousness, but at the same time one brings down their power not only into mind and life, but in the end even into the body. And the highest of these levels, the one at which it aims is the supermind. Only when that can be brought down is a divine transformation possible in the earth-consciousness.

I never heard of silence descending in other Yogas — the mind goes into silence. Since however I have been writing of ascent and descent, I have been told from several quarters that there is nothing new in this Yoga — so I am wondering whether people were not getting ascents and descents without knowing it! or at least without noticing the process. It is like the rising above the head and taking the station there — which I and others have experienced in this Yoga. When I spoke of it first, people stared and thought I was talking nonsense. Wideness must have been felt in the old Yogas because otherwise one could not feel the universe in oneself or be free from the body consciousness or unite with the Anantam Brahman. But generally as in Tantrik Yoga one spoke of the consciousness rising to the *Brahmarandhra*, top of the head, as the summit. Rajayoga of course lays stress on Samadhi as the means of the highest experience. But obviously if one has not the Brahmi sthiti in the waking state, there is no completeness in the realisation. The Gita distinctly speaks of being *samāhita* (which is equivalent to being in samadhi) and the Brahmi sthiti as a waking state in which one lives and does all actions.

*

It happens that people may get the descent without noticing that it is a descent because they feel the result only. The ordinary Yoga does not go beyond the spiritual mind — people feel at the top of the head the joining with the Brahman, but they are not aware of a consciousness above the head. In the same way in the ordinary Yoga one feels the ascent of the awakened inner consciousness (*Kundalini*) to the *brahmarandhra* where the Prakriti joins the Brahman-consciousness, but they do not feel the descent. Some may have had these things, but I don't know that they understood their nature, principle or place in a complete sadhana. At least I never heard of these things from others before I found them out in my own experience. The reason is that the old Yogins when they went above the spiritual mind passed into samadhi, which means that they did not attempt to be conscious in these higher planes — their aim being to pass away into the

Superconscient and not to bring the Superconscient into the waking consciousness, which is that of my Yoga.

*

I explain this absence of the descent experiences myself by the old Yogas having been mainly confined to the psycho-spiritual-occult range of experience—in which the higher experiences come into the still mind or the concentrated heart by a sort of filtration or reflection—the field of this experience being from the Brahmarandhra downward. People went above this only in samadhi or in a condition of static mukti without any dynamic descent. All that was dynamic took place in the region of the spiritualised mental and vital-physical consciousness. In this Yoga the consciousness (after the lower field has been prepared by a certain amount of psycho-spiritual-occult experience) is drawn upwards above the Brahmarandhra to ranges above belonging to the spiritual consciousness proper and instead of merely receiving from there has to live there and from there change the lower consciousness altogether. For there is a dynamism proper to the spiritual consciousness whose nature is Light, Power, Ananda, Peace, Knowledge, infinite Wideness and that must be possessed and descend into the whole being. Otherwise one can get mukti but not perfection or transformation (except a relative psycho-spiritual change). But if I say that, there will be a general howl against the unpardonable presumption of claiming to have a knowledge not possessed by the ancient saints and sages and pretending to transcend them. In that connection I may say that in the Upanishads (notably the Taittiriya) there are some indications of these higher planes and their nature and the possibility of gathering up the whole consciousness and rising into them. But this was forgotten afterwards and people spoke only of the buddhi as the highest thing with the Purusha or Self just above, but there was no clear idea of these higher planes. Ergo, ascent possibly to unknown and ineffable heavenly regions in samadhi, but no descent possible—therefore no resource, no possibility of transformation here, only escape

from life and mukti in Goloka, Brahmaloaka, Shivaloka or the Absolute.

*

Perhaps you are of the opinion of Ramana Maharshi, “The Divine is here, how can he descend from anywhere?” The Divine may be here, but if he has covered here his Light with darkness of Ignorance and his Ananda with suffering, that, I should think, makes a big difference to the plane and, even if one enters into that sealed Light etc., it makes a difference to the Consciousness but very little to the Energy at work in this plane which remains of a dark or mixed character.

The Inclusiveness of the Yoga

I don't know why it [*a comparison between Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and someone else's*] should be disparaging to my Yoga. My Yoga takes up all the Yoga of the past and goes beyond.

*

One can feel the experiences of any sadhana as a part of this one.

Chapter Two

Asceticism and the Integral Yoga

Not an Ascetic Path

It is not indispensable to be an ascetic—it is enough if one can learn to live within in the inner being instead of on the surface, discover the soul or true individuality which is veiled by the surface mind and life forces and open the being to the superconscious Reality. But in this one cannot succeed unless one is wholly sincere and one-pointed in the effort.

As to the second question, participation in Sri Aurobindo's¹ mission depends on capacity to do a difficult Yoga or on a call to devote oneself to that ideal without thought of the claims of the ego or the vital desires. Otherwise it is better not to think of it.

*

It is good that you have decided to concentrate on the true object of your coming here, but while absorption in mental work and social contacts is not favourable for Yoga, excessive seclusion has also its spiritual disadvantage. An inner concentration supported by a limitation of external contacts is sufficient. Some kind of activity and service to the Divine is also a very necessary element in the integral spiritual life.

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To be by oneself very much needs a certain force of inner life. It may be better to vary solitude with some sort of its opposite. But each has its advantages and disadvantages and it is only by being vigilant and keeping an inner poise that one can avoid the latter.

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¹ *In this letter to an enquirer living outside the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo refers to himself in the third person. — Ed.*

I think there is still a misunderstanding in your mind about the demands of the Yoga. The Divine does *not* demand a complete solitude, aloof and lonely — it is only a few whose nature needs such concentration within to find themselves who have to do that and even for them a complete segregation is not likely to be helpful except perhaps for a time. All that is necessary is a total turning of the life to the Divine and it can be done by degrees without too much forcing of the nature. Literature, poetry, music can be as much a part of Yoga as anything else.

One can meet the Divine in speaking as well as in silence, in action as well as in physical solitude and quietude. An entire retirement can only be a personal case — and as a condition for an inward or outward work, but it is no general rule indispensable for the sadhana. In many cases, most indeed, it would do more harm than good as has been seen in many cases where it has been unduly attempted. A cheerful and sunny life is as good an atmosphere for Yoga as any the Himalayas can give.

Why then this depression and despair?

*

I may say that I am not responsible for your loss of zest in the vital. This vairagya, or loss of zest, as you have yourself said, began before you came here. I have indeed laid some stress on the conquest of sex, for obvious reasons; but I have hardly laid a compulsory stress on anything else. Certainly, I have not encouraged you to lose joy in vital creativeness; I have only held up the ideal of turning it towards the Divine and away from the ego. To keep the vital full of life and energy and to trust mainly to the inner growth and the descent of a higher consciousness for a change, using the will too but for self-mastery, not for suppression, but for subordination of the lower to the higher, has been my teaching. The turn to vairagya, to tapasya of an ascetic kind was the impulse of something in your own nature; it insisted on its necessity just as a part of the vital insisted on its opposite: even it condemned my suggestion of something less grim and strenuous as an easy-going absence of aspiration etc. I do not say that vairagya and tapasya are not ways to reach

the Divine, but done like that they are painful ways and long; if one takes them, one must be determined and go through. For one part to push all zest out of the vital and for the other to regret and say, why did I ever do it, will never do. And it is in this kind of tapasya that perfection or at least perfect purification is demanded before there can be any realisation. I have never said that for my Yoga; the only thing I insist upon is some faith, inner surrender and opening of oneself to receive, — not absolute, but just sufficient. Experience has to begin long before perfect purification and from experience to experience one comes to realisation and through realisation to more and more perfection; anything that can be called real perfection can only come at the end. But there is something in you that is impatient of gradualness, of small mercies; its motto seems to be all or nothing.

*

I am rather aghast as I stare at the detailed proposals made by you! Fastings? I don't believe in them, though I have done them myself. You would only eat like an ogre afterwards. Shaved head! Great heavens! have you realised the consequences? I pass over the aesthetic shock to myself from which I might not recover — but the row that would arise from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas! You would be famous in a new way which would cast all your previous Glories into the shade. And just when you are turning away from fame and all the things of the ego! No, no — too dangerous by half. Sleep without the mosquito net? That would mean no sleep which is as bad as no eating. Not only your eyes would become weak, but yourself also — and to boot gloomy, grey and gruesome, more gruesome than the Supramental of your worst apprehensions. No and no again. As for the rest, I placed some of them before the Mother and she eyed them without favour.

After all real asceticism is hardly possible except in a hut or on the Himalayas. The heart of asceticism, besides, is having no desires or attachment, being indifferent, able to do without things, satisfied with whatever comes. If you asceticise outwardly

it becomes a rule of life and you keep it up because it is a rule, for the principle of the thing or for the *kudos* of it or as a point of honour. But I have noticed about the ascetics by rule that when you remove the curb they become just like others — with a few exceptions, of course, — which proves that the transformation was not real. A more subtle method used by some is to give up for a time, then try the object of desire again and so go on till you have thoroughly tested yourself! E.g. you give up your potatoes and eat only Asram food for a time — if a call comes for the potatoes or from them, then you are not cured; if no call comes, still you cannot be sure till you have tried the potatoes again and seen whether the desire, attachment or sense of need revives. If it does not and the potatoes fall away from you of themselves, then there is some hope that the thing is done!

However, all this will make you think that I am hardly fit to be a guru in the path of asceticism and you will probably be right. You see, I have such a strong penchant for the inner working and am so persuaded that if you give the psychic a chance, it will get rid of the vital bonds without all this sternness and trouble.

*

Rules like these [*not reading newspapers, eating a fixed diet, keeping only a few things*] are intended to help the vital and physical to come under the discipline of sadhana and not get dispersed in fancies, impulses, self-indulgences; but they must be done simply, not with any sense of superiority or ascetic pride, but as a mere matter of course. It is true also that they can be made the occasion of a too great mental rigidity — as if they were things of supreme importance *in themselves* and not only a means. Put in their right place and done in the right spirit, they can be very helpful for their purpose.

Asceticism and Detachment

This is a feeling (the unimportance of things in Time) that the ascetic discipline sometimes uses in order to get rid of attachment

to the world — but it is not good for any positive or dynamic spiritual purpose.

*

Sannyasa does not take away attachment — it amounts only to running away from the object of attachment which may help but cannot by itself alone be the radical cure.

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After realisation whatever the Higher Will demands is the best — but first detachment is the rule. To reach the Freedom without the discipline and detachment is given to few.

Two Methods of Living in the Supreme

There are always two methods of living in the Supreme. One is to draw away the participation of the consciousness from things altogether and go so much inwards as to be separated from existence and live in contact with that which is beyond it. The other is to get to that which is the true Essence of all things, not allowing oneself to be absorbed and entangled by the external forms. Desire, attachment, slavery to the attractions of the external sense are the chief obstacles to this movement — so in either way they have to be got rid of. But it is quite possible to see the Supreme before the attraction of external sense is gone — only one cannot live securely in It if there is desire and external attachment because that is always taking one away from the inner poise.

*

This Yoga does not mean a rejection of the powers of Life, but an inner transformation and a change of the spirit in the life and the use of the powers. These powers are now used in an egoistic spirit and for undivine ends; they have to be used in a spirit of surrender to the Divine and for the purposes of the divine Work. That is what is meant by conquering them back for the Mother. If anyone feels himself too weak to resist the clutch of the egoistic money-force he need not make the endeavour.

The Human Approach to the Divine

I send you the promised letter today;² you will see that it is less a reply to the exact terms of your letter than a “Defence of the gospel of divinisation of life” against the strictures and the incomprehensions of the mentality (or more often the vitality) that either misunderstands or shrinks from it — or perhaps misunderstands because it shrinks, and shrinks too because it misunderstands both my method and my object. It is not a complete defence, but only raises or answers a main point here and there. The rest will come hereafter.

But all language is open to misunderstanding; so I had better in sending on the letter make or try to make certain things clear.

1. Although I have laid stress on things divine in answer to an excessive (because contrary) insistence on things human, it must not be understood that I reject everything human, — human love or worship or any helpful form of human approach as part of the Yoga. I have never done so, otherwise the Asram could not be in existence. The sadhaks who enter the Yoga are human beings, and if they were not allowed a human approach at the beginning and long after, they would not be able to start the Yoga or would not be able to continue it. The discussion arises only because the word “human” is used in practice, not only as identical with the human vital (and the outward mind), but with certain forms of the human vital ego-nature. But the human vital has many other things in it and is full of excellent material. All that is asked by the Yoga is that this material should be utilised in the right way and with the right spiritual attitude and, also, that the human approach to the Divine should not be constantly turned into a human revolt and reproach against it. And that too we ask only for the sake of the success of the approach itself and of the human being who is making it.

2. Divinisation itself does not mean the destruction of the human elements; it means taking them up, showing them the way to their own perfection, raising them by purification and

² See the letter beginning “*Even if things*” on pages 475–83. — *Ed.*

perfection to their full power and Ananda. And that means the raising of the whole of earthly life to its full power and Ananda.

3. If there were not a resistance in vital human nature, a pressure of forces adverse to the change, forces which delight in imperfection and even in perversion, this change would effect itself without difficulty by a natural and painless flowering — as, for example, your own powers of poetry and music have flowered out here with rapidity and ease under the light and rain of a spiritual and psychic influence — because everything in you desired that change and your vital was willing to recognise imperfections, to throw away any wrong attitude — e.g., the desire for mere fame — and to be dedicated and perfect. Divinisation of life means, in fact, a greater art of life; for the present art of life produced by ego and ignorance is something comparatively mean, crude and imperfect (like the lower forms of art, music and literature which are yet more attractive to the ordinary human mind and vital), and it is by a spiritual and psychic opening and refinement that it has to reach its true perfection. This can only be done by its being steeped in the divine Light and Flame in which its material will be stripped of all heavy dross and turned into the true metal.

4. Unfortunately, there *is* the resistance, a very obscure and obstinate resistance. That necessitates a “negative” element in the Yoga, an element of rejection of things that stand in the way and of pressure upon those forms that are crude and useless to disappear, on those that are useful but imperfect or have been perverted to attain or to recover their true movement. To the vital this pressure is very painful, first, because it is obscure and does not understand and, secondly, because there are parts of it that want to be left to their crude motions and not to change. That is why the intervention of a psychic attitude is so helpful. For the psychic has the happy confidence, the ready understanding and response, the spontaneous surrender; it knows that the touch of the Guru is meant to help and not to hurt, or, like Radha in the poem, that whatever the Beloved does is meant to lead to the Divine Rapture.

5. At the same time, it is not from the negative part of the

movement that you have to judge the Yoga, but from its positive side; for the negative part is temporary and transitional and will disappear, the positive alone counts for the ideal and for the future. If you take conditions which belong to the negative side and to a transitional movement as the law of the future and the indication of the character of the Yoga, you will commit a serious misjudgment, a grave mistake. This Yoga is not a rejection of life or of closeness and intimacy between the Divine and the sadhaks. Its ideal aims at the greatest closeness and unity on the physical as well as the other planes, at the most divine largeness and fullness and joy of life.

Vairagya

Vairagya means a positive detachment from things of this life — but it does not *immediately* carry with it a luminous aspiration except for a few fortunate people. For the positive detachment is often a pulling away by the soul while the vital clings and is gloomy and reluctant.

*

Vairagya is certainly one way of progressing towards the goal — the traditional way and a drastic if painful one. To lose the desire for human vital enjoyments, to lose the passion for literary or other success, praise, fame, to lose even the insistence on spiritual success, the inner bhoga of Yoga, have always been recognised as steps towards the goal — provided one keeps the one insistence on the Divine. I prefer myself the calmer way of equality, the way pointed out by Krishna, than the more painful one of Vairagya. But if the compulsion in one's nature — or the compulsion of one's inner being forcing its way by that means through the difficulties of the nature — is on that line, it must be recognised as a valid line. What has to be got rid of in that case is the note of despair in the vital which responds to the cry you speak of — that it will never gain the Divine because it has not yet got the Divine or that there has been no progress. There has certainly been a progress, the greater push of the psychic, this

very detachment itself always growing somewhere in you. The thing is to hold on, not to cut the cord which is pulling you up because it hurts the hands. To keep the one insistence if all the others fall away from you.

It is evident that something in you, perhaps continuing the unfinished curve of a past life, is pushing you on this path of *vairagya* and the more stormy way of *bhakti* — in spite of our preference for a less painful one and yours also — something that is determined to be drastic with the outer nature so as to make itself free to fulfil its secret aspiration. But do not listen to these suggestions of the voice that says, “You shall not succeed and it is no use trying.” That is a thing that need never be said in the Way of the Spirit, however difficult it may seem at the moment to be. Keep through all the aspiration which you express so beautifully in your poem; for it is certainly there and comes out from the depths, and if it is the cause of suffering — as great aspirations usually are in a world and nature where there is so much to oppose them — it is also the promise and surety of emergence and victory in the future.

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I quite acknowledge the utility of a temporary state of *vairagya* as an antidote to the too strong pull of the vital. But *vairagya* always tends to a turning away from life and a tamasic element in *vairagya*, despair, depression etc., often dilapidates the force of the being and may even lead in some cases to falling between two stools so that one loses earth and misses heaven. I therefore prefer to replace *vairagya* by a firm and quiet rejection of what has to be rejected, sex, vanity, ego-centrism, attachment, etc. etc.; but that does not include rejection of the activities and powers that can be made instruments of the *sadhana* and the divine work, such as art, music, poetry etc. — Yoga can be done without the rejection of life, without killing or impairing the life-joy and the vital force.

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I have objected in the past to *vairagya* of the ascetic kind and the

tamasic kind — and by the tamasic kind I mean that spirit which comes defeated from life, not because it is really disgusted with life but because it could not cope with it or conquer its prizes; for it comes to Yoga as a kind of asylum for the maimed or weak and to the Divine as a consolation prize for the failed boys in the world-class. The vairagya of one who has tasted the world's gifts or prizes but found them insufficient or, finally, tasteless and turns away towards a higher and more beautiful ideal or the vairagya of one who has done his part in life's battles but seen that something greater is demanded of the soul, is perfectly helpful and a good gate to the Yoga. Also the sattwic vairagya which has learned what life is and turns to what is above and behind life. By the ascetic vairagya I mean that which denies life and world altogether and wants to disappear into the Indefinite — and I object to it for those who come to this Yoga because it is incompatible with my aim which is to bring the Divine into life. But if one is satisfied with life as it is, then there is no reason to seek to bring the Divine into life, — so vairagya in the sense of dissatisfaction with life as it is is perfectly admissible and even in a certain sense indispensable for my Yoga.

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There is the sattwic vairagya — but many people have the rajasic or tamasic kind. The rajasic is carried by a revolt against the conditions of one's own life, the tamasic arises from dissatisfaction, disappointment, a feeling of inability to succeed or face life, a crushing under the grips and pains of life. These bring a sense of the vanity of existence, a desire to seek something less miserable, more sure and happy or else to seek a liberation from existence here, but they do not bring immediately a luminous aspiration or pure aspiration with peace and joy for the spiritual attainment.

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No, I didn't say that you chose the rajasic or tamasic vairagya. I only explained how it came, of itself, as a result of a movement of the vital in place of the sattwic vairagya which is supposed to precede and cause or accompany or result from a turning away

from the world to seek the Divine. The tamasic vairagya comes from the recoil of the vital when it feels that it has to give up the joy of life and becomes listless and joyless; the rajasic comes when the vital begins to lose the joy of life but complains that it is getting nothing in its place. Nobody chooses such movements; they come independently of the mind as habitual reactions of the human nature. To replace these things by detachment, an increasing quiet aspiration, a pure bhakti, an ardent surrender to the Divine, was what I suggested as the true forward movement.

Chapter Three

A Realistic Advaita

The World Not an Illusion

I do not agree with the view that the world is an illusion, *mithyā*. The Brahman is here as well as in the supracosmic Absolute. The thing to be overcome is the Ignorance which makes us blind and prevents us from realising Brahman in the world as well as beyond it and the true nature of existence.

Shankara, Buddhism, Evolution

I don't know that I can help you very much with an answer to your friend's questions. I can only state my own position with regard to these matters.

1. Shankara's explanation of the universe.

It is rather difficult to say nowadays what really was Shankara's philosophy: there are numberless exponents and none of them agrees with any of the others. I have read accounts given by some scores of his exegetes and each followed his own line. We are even told by some that he was no Mayavadin at all although he has always been famed as the greatest exponent of the theory of Maya, but rather, the greatest Realist in philosophical history. One eminent follower of Shankara even declared that my philosophy and Shankara's were identical, a statement which rather took my breath away. One used to think that Shankara's philosophy was this that the Supreme Reality is a spaceless and timeless Absolute (Parabrahman) which is beyond all feature or quality, beyond all action or creation, and that the world is a creation of Maya, not absolutely unreal but real only in time and while one lives in time; once we get into a knowledge of the Reality we perceive that Maya and world and all in it have no abiding or true existence. It is, if not non-existent, yet false, *jagan mithyā*; it is a mistake of the consciousness, it is

and it is not; it is an irrational and inexplicable mystery in its origin, though we can see its process or at least how it keeps itself imposed on the consciousness. Brahman is seen in Maya as Ishwara upholding the works of Maya and the apparently individual soul is really nothing but Brahman itself. In the end, however, all this seems to be a myth of Maya, *mithyā*, and not anything really true. If that is Shankara's philosophy, it is to me unacceptable and incredible, however brilliantly ingenious it may be and however boldly and incisively reasoned; it does not satisfy my reason and it does not agree with my experience.

I don't know exactly what is meant by this *yuktivāda*. If it is meant that it is merely for the sake of arguing down opponents, then this part of the philosophy has no fundamental validity; Shankara's theory destroys itself. Either he meant it as a sufficient explanation of the universe or he did not. If he did, it is no use dismissing it as *yuktivāda*. I can understand that thoroughgoing Mayavadin's declaration that the whole question is illegitimate, because Maya and the world do not really exist; in fact the problem how the world came into existence is only a part of Maya, is like Maya unreal and does not truly arise; but if an explanation is to be given it must be a real and valid satisfying explanation. If there are two planes and in putting the question we are confusing the two planes, that argument can only be of value if both planes have some kind of existence and the reasoning and explanation are true in the lower plane but cease to have any meaning for a consciousness which has passed out of it.

2. Adwaita.

People are apt to speak of the Adwaita as if it were identical with Mayavada monism, just as they speak of Vedanta as if it were identical with Adwaita only; that is not the case. There are several forms of Indian philosophy which base themselves upon the One Reality, but they admit also the reality of the world, the reality of the Many, the reality of the differences of the Many as well as the sameness of the One (*bhedābheda*). But the Many exist in the One and by the One, the differences are variations in manifestation of that which is fundamentally ever the same. This

we actually see as the universal law of existence where oneness is always the basis with an endless multiplicity and difference in the oneness; as for instance there is one mankind but many kinds of man, one thing called leaf or flower but many forms, patterns, colours of leaf and flower. Through this we can look back into one of the fundamental secrets of existence, the secret which is contained in the one Reality itself. The oneness of the Infinite is not something limited, fettered to its unity; it is capable of an infinite multiplicity. The Supreme Reality is an Absolute not limited by either oneness or multiplicity but simultaneously capable of both; for both are its aspects, although the oneness is fundamental and the multiplicity depends upon the oneness.

There is possible a realistic as well as an illusionist Advaita. The philosophy of *The Life Divine* is such a realistic Advaita. The world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore is itself real. The reality is the infinite and eternal Divine, infinite and eternal Being, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. This Divine by his power has created the world or rather manifested it in his own infinite Being. But here in the material world or at its basis he has hidden himself in what seem to be his opposites, Non-Being, Inconscience and Insentience. This is what we nowadays call the Inconscient which seems to have created the material universe by its inconscient Energy; but this is only an appearance, for we find in the end that all the dispositions of the world can only have been arranged by the working of a supreme secret intelligence. The Being which is hidden in what seems to be an inconscient void emerges in the world first in Matter, then in Life, then in Mind and finally as the Spirit. The apparently inconscient Energy which creates is in fact the Consciousness-Force of the Divine and its aspect of consciousness, secret in Matter, begins to emerge in Life, finds something more of itself in Mind and finds its true self in a spiritual consciousness and finally a supramental consciousness through which we become aware of the Reality, enter into it and unite ourselves with it. This is what we call evolution which is an evolution of consciousness and an evolution of the Spirit in things and only outwardly an evolution of species. Thus also, the delight of existence emerges from the

original insentience first in the contrary forms of pleasure and pain and then has to find itself in the bliss of the Spirit or as it is called in the Upanishads, the bliss of the Brahman. That is the central idea in the explanation of the universe put forward in *The Life Divine*.

3. Nirguna and Saguna.

In a realistic Advaita there is no need to regard the Saguna as a creation from the Nirguna or even secondary or subordinate to it: both are equal aspects of the one Reality, its position of silent status and rest and its position of action and dynamic force; a silence of eternal rest and peace supports an eternal action and movement. The one Reality, the Divine Being is bound by neither since it is in no way limited; it possesses both. There is no incompatibility between the two, as there is none between the Many and the One, the sameness and the difference. They are all eternal aspects of the universe which could not exist if either of them were eliminated, and it is reasonable to suppose that they both came from the Reality which has manifested the universe and are both real. We can only get rid of the apparent contradiction — which is not really a contradiction but only a natural concomitance — by treating one or the other as an illusion. But it is hardly reasonable to suppose that the eternal Reality allows the existence of an eternal illusion with which it has nothing to do or that it supports and enforces on being a vain cosmic illusion and has no power for any other and real action. The force of the Divine is always there in silence as in action, inactive in silence, active in the manifestation. It is hardly possible to suppose that the Divine Reality has no power or force or that its only power is to create a universal falsehood, a cosmic lie — *mithyā*.

4. Compounds and Disintegration.

No doubt all compounds, being not integral things in themselves but integrations, can disintegrate. Also it is true of life, though not a physical compound, that it has a curve of birth or integration and, after it reaches a certain point, of disintegration, decay and death. But these ideas or this rule of existence cannot be safely applied to things in themselves. The soul is not

a compound but an integer, a thing in itself; it does not disintegrate, but at most enters into manifestation and goes out of manifestation. That is true even of forms other than constructed physical or constructed life-forms; they do not disintegrate but appear and disappear or at most fade out of manifestation. Mind itself as opposed to particular thoughts is something essential and permanent; it is a power of the Divine Consciousness. So is life, as opposed to constructed living bodies; so I think is what we call material energy which is really the force of essential substance in motion, a power of the Spirit. Thoughts, lives, material objects are formations of these energies, constructed or simply manifested according to the habit of the play of the particular energy. As for the elements, what is the pure natural condition of an element? According to modern Science what used to be called elements turn out to be compounds and the pure natural condition, if any, must be a condition of pure energy; it is that pure condition into which compounds including what we call elements must go when they pass by disintegration into Nirvana.

5. Nirvana.

What then is Nirvana? In orthodox Buddhism it does mean a disintegration, not of the soul — for that does not exist — but of a mental compound or stream of associations or *samskāras* which we mistake for ourself. In illusionist Vedānta it means not a disintegration but a disappearance of a false and unreal individual self into the one real self or Brahman; it is the idea and experience of individuality that so disappears and ceases, — we may say a false light that is extinguished (*nirvāṇa*) in the true Light. In spiritual experience it is sometimes the loss of all sense of individuality in a boundless cosmic consciousness; what was the individual remains only as a centre or a channel for the flow of a cosmic consciousness and a cosmic force and action. Or it may be the experience of the loss of individuality in a transcendent being and consciousness in which the sense of cosmos as well as the individual disappears. Or again, it may be in a transcendence which is aware of and supports the cosmic action. But what do we mean by the individual? What we usually call by that name is a natural ego, a device of Nature which holds

together her action in the mind and body. This ego has to be extinguished, otherwise there is no complete liberation possible; but the individual self or soul is not this ego. The individual soul is the spiritual being which is sometimes described as an eternal portion of the Divine but can also be described as the Divine himself supporting his manifestation as the Many. This is the true spiritual individual which appears in its complete truth when we get rid of the ego and our false separative sense of individuality, realise our oneness with the transcendent and cosmic Divine and with all beings. It is this which makes possible the Divine Life. Nirvana is a step towards it; the disappearance of the false separative individuality is a necessary condition for our realising and living in our true eternal being, living divinely in the Divine. But this we can do in the world and in life.

6. Rebirth.

If evolution is a truth and is not only a physical evolution of species, but an evolution of consciousness, it must be a spiritual and not only a physical fact. In that case, it is the individual who evolves and grows into a more and more developed and perfect consciousness and obviously that cannot be done in the course of a brief single human life. If there is the evolution of a conscious individual, then there must be rebirth. Rebirth is a logical necessity and a spiritual fact of which we can have the experience. Proofs of rebirth, sometimes of an overwhelmingly convincing nature, are not lacking, but as yet they have not been carefully registered and brought together.

7. Evolution.

In my explanation of the universe I have put forward this cardinal fact of a spiritual evolution as the meaning of our existence here. It is a series of ascents from the physical being and consciousness to the vital, the being dominated by the life-self, thence to the mental being realised in the fully developed man and thence into the perfect consciousness which is beyond the mental, into the Supramental consciousness and the Supramental being, the Truth-Consciousness which is the integral consciousness of the spiritual being. Mind cannot be our last conscious expression because mind is fundamentally

an ignorance seeking for knowledge; it is only the Supramental Truth-Consciousness that can bring us the true and whole Self-Knowledge and world-Knowledge; it is through that only that we can get to our true being and the fulfilment of our spiritual evolution.

Chapter Four

Transformation in the Integral Yoga

The Meaning of Transformation

By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature—I do not mean for instance sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik's) or a transcendental (*cinmaya*) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being, an advance of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than that smaller though decisive achievement of the emerging Consciousness when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfilment, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and Yoga.

Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent. Realisation by itself does not necessarily transform the being as a whole; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness at the top so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti. One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real and total transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature; a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body

and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough, it must be the descent of the whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. Moreover, the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or it may be enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick or unexpressive. Finally, the transformation effected by the sadhana cannot be complete unless it is a supramentalisation of the being. Psychisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental Consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another.

I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas — its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. In the earlier stages which is all I deal with in books like the *Riddle* or the *Lights*¹ there is nothing in it that distinguishes it from the old Yogas except the aim underlying its comprehensiveness, the spirit in its movements and the ultimate significance it keeps before it — also the scheme of its psychology and its working, but as that was not and could not be developed systematically or schematically in these letters, it has not been grasped by those who are not already acquainted with it by mental familiarity or some amount of practice. The detail or method of the later stages of the Yoga which go into little known or untrodden regions, I have not made public and I do not at present intend to do so.

I know very well also that there have been seemingly allied ideals and anticipations — the perfectibility of the race, certain

¹ The *Riddle of This World* and *Lights on Yoga*, two small books of letters published in 1933 and 1935 respectively. A third such book, *Bases of Yoga*, was published in 1936. — Ed.

Tantric sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical siddhi by certain schools of Yoga, etc. etc. I have alluded to these things myself and have put forth the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining to the Divine beyond this world, but also for this very step forward which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has still to make. I do not therefore care in the least, — even though these ideals were, up to some extent parallel, yet not identical with mine, — whether this Yoga and its aim and method are accepted as new or not; that is in itself a trifling matter. That it should be recognised as true in itself by those who can accept or practise it and should make itself true by achievement, is the one thing important; it does not matter if it is called new or a repetition or revival of the old which was forgotten. I laid emphasis on it as new in a letter to certain sadhaks so as to explain to them that a repetition of the aim and idea of the old Yogas was not enough in my eyes, that I was putting forward a thing to be achieved that has not yet been achieved, not yet clearly visualised, even though it is one natural but still secret destined outcome of all the past spiritual endeavour.

It is new as compared with the old Yogas:

(1) Because it aims not at a departure out of world and life into a Heaven or a Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object. If there is a descent in other Yogas, yet it is only an incident on the way or resulting from the ascent — the ascent is the real thing. Here the ascent is indispensable, but what is decisive, what is finally aimed at is the resulting descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the sadhana. Even Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the release from life; here the object is the divine fulfilment of life.

(2) Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sole sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of consciousness

(the supramental) not yet organised or active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active.

(3) Because a method has been preconised for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz. the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and passing on to others that are distinctive. I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it in its totality proposed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had I should not have wasted my time in hewing out a road and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.

Towards a Transformation of Earth Life

I believe Krishnaprem's comment was on a passage in which I wrote that this Yoga was not like the old ones in that it aimed not at an ascent or passing beyond life but at a descent of the divine consciousness into life. Its aim is double — two movements fusing themselves into one — an ascending into divine consciousness and a transformation of earth life by the divine consciousness coming down here. All the old Yogas put the emphasis on going to Nirvana or to heaven, Vaikuntha, Goloka, Brahmaloaka etc. for good and so getting rid of rebirth. My emphasis is on life here and its transformation and I put that as the aim at once of my Yoga and of the terrestrial manifestation. I am quite unaware that any of the old Yogas hold this as the aim before them. Even Vaishnavism and Tantra are in the end other-worldly; mukti is the aim of their efforts and anything else could be only incidental and secondary or a result on the way. If my view is correct, then my statement was not an error.

I have not denied that the ideal of a change on earth is of old standing. It is there vaguely in the human mind perhaps since the beginning, though more often perfection is put in some golden

age of the past and deterioration and a cataclysm is the law of the future. Christianity foresees a descent of Christ and his rule on earth, but this is figured as an outward event, not as a change produced by an inward power and process or by Yoga. A reign of the saints is also foreshadowed in some Hindu scriptures, but that equally is something different from my conception. As for sainthood itself or the siddhis of Yoga including a siddha body, that too is not what I mean by transformation — it is a radical change of consciousness and nature itself that I envisage. I do not know also that these things were sought by the process of descent — the Tamil Shaiva saints for instance sought for the siddha body by tremendous austerities; the siddhis they sought were all there in the sukshma mental and vital worlds and by a stupendous effort and mastery of the body they brought them down into the physical instrument. I have always said that these things and these methods are out of my scope and eschewed by me in my Yoga. I tried some of these but after achieving some initial results I saw it was a bypath and I left it.

To get rid of or mastery over *kāma-krodha* is not the transformation, it is at best a preliminary step towards it provided it is done not in the moral way by mental self-control but in the spiritual way. Sainthood is not my object. I do not know how far Ramakrishna had gone towards the transformation as I conceive it; the metaphors you quote contain nothing precise with which I can compare my own experience or my own intuitions about the change. According to certain accounts there was a descent of Kali into his body which made it luminous, but he repressed it as something contrary to what he was seeking after. If there is something anywhere in the past which coincides with the aim and conceived process of my Yoga I shall be glad to know of it; for that would certainly be an aid to me. I put no value on the newness of what I am doing or trying to do. If the path was already there open and complete, it is a great pity that I should have wasted all my life clearing it out anew with much difficulty and peril when I could just have walked on a clear and safe avenue towards the goal of my endeavour. But the nearest I could get to it were some things in the Veda and Upanishads (secret

words, veiled hints) which seemed to coincide with or point towards certain things in my own knowledge and experience. But after incorporating certain parts of the Vedic method as far as I could interpret or recover it, I found it was insufficient and I had to seek farther.

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Transformation is a word that I have brought in myself (like supermind) to express certain spiritual concepts and spiritual facts of the integral Yoga. People are now taking them up and using them in senses which have nothing to do with the significance which I put into them. Purification of the nature by the “influence” of the Spirit is not what I mean by transformation; purification is only part of a psychic change or a psycho-spiritual change — the word besides has many senses and is very often given a moral or ethical meaning which is foreign to my purpose. What I mean by the spiritual transformation is something dynamic (not merely liberation of the self, or realisation of the One which can very well be attained without any descent). It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness dynamic as well as static in every part of the being down to the subconscious. That cannot be done by the influence of the Self leaving the consciousness fundamentally as it is with only purification, enlightenment of the mind and heart and quiescence of the vital. It means a bringing down of Divine Consciousness static and dynamic into all these parts and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that. This we find unveiled and un-mixed above mind, life and body and not in mind, life and body. It is a matter of the undeniable experience of many that this can descend and it is my experience that nothing short of its *full* descent can thoroughly remove the veil and mixture and effect the full spiritual transformation. No metaphysical or logical reasoning in the void as to what the Atman “must” do or can do or needs or needs not to do is relevant here or of any value. I may add that transformation is not the central object of other paths as it is of this Yoga — only so much purification and change is demanded by them as will lead to liberation and the

beyond-life. The influence of the Atman can no doubt do that — a full descent of a new Consciousness into the whole nature from top to bottom to transform life here is not needed at all for the spiritual escape from life.

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It is not a hope but a certitude that the complete transformation of the nature will take place.

Spiritualisation and Transformation

Spiritualisation means the descent of the higher peace, force, light, knowledge, purity, Ananda etc. which belong to any of the higher planes from Higher Mind to Overmind, for in any of these the Self can be realised. It brings about a subjective transformation; the instrumental Nature is only so far transformed that it becomes an instrument for the Cosmic Divine to get some work done while the self within remains calm and free and united to the Divine. But this is an incomplete individual transformation — the full transformation of the instrumental Nature can only come when the Supramental change takes place. Till then the nature remains full of many imperfections, but the self in the higher planes does not mind them, as it is itself free and unaffected. The inner being down to the inner physical can also become free and unaffected. The Overmind is subject to limitations in the working of the effective Knowledge, limitations in the working of the Power, subjection to a partial and limited Truth, etc. It is only in the supermind that the full Truth consciousness comes into being.

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There are many planes above man's mind — the supramental is not the only one, and on all of them the self can be realised, — for they are all spiritual planes.

Mind, vital and physical are inextricably mixed together only in the surface consciousness — the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical are separate from each other. Those who seek

the self by the old Yogas separate themselves from mind, life and body and realise the self apart from these things. It is perfectly easy to separate mind, vital and physical from each other without the need of supermind. It is done by the ordinary Yogas.

The difference between this and the old Yogas is not that they are incompetent and cannot do these things — they can do them perfectly well — but that they proceed from realisation of self to Nirvana or some Heaven and abandon life, while this does not abandon life. The supramental is necessary for the transformation of terrestrial life and being, not for reaching the self. One must realise self first — only afterwards can one realise the supermind.

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In the former Yogas it was the experience of the spirit which is always free and one with the Divine that was sought. The nature had to change only enough to prevent its being an obstacle to that knowledge and experience. The complete change down to the physical was only sought for by a few and then more as a “siddhi” than anything else, not as the manifestation of a new Nature in the earth consciousness.

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I do not know that any except a very few great Yogis have really changed their outer nature. In all the Asrams I have seen people were just as others except for certain specific moral controls put on certain kinds of outer action (food, sex etc.), but the general nature was the human nature (as in the story of Narad and Janaka). It is even a theory of the old Yogas that the *prārabdha karma* and therefore necessarily the permanent elements of external character do not change — only one gets the inner realisation and separates oneself from it so that it drops off at death like a soiled robe and leaves the spirit free to enter into Nirvana. Our object is a spiritual change and not merely an ethical control, but this can only come first by a spiritual rejection from within and then by a supramental descent from above.

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Sri Aurobindo² has no remarks to make on Huxley's comments with which he is in entire agreement. But in the phrase "to its heights we can always reach" very obviously "we" does not refer to humanity in general but to those who have a sufficiently developed inner spiritual life.³ It is probable that Sri Aurobindo was thinking of his own experience. After three years of spiritual effort with only minor results he was shown by a Yogi the way to silence his mind. This he succeeded in doing entirely in two or three days by following the method shown. There was an entire silence of thought and feeling and all the ordinary movements of consciousness except the perception and recognition of things around without any accompanying concept or other reaction. The sense of ego disappeared and the movements of the ordinary life as well as speech and action were carried on by some habitual activity of Prakriti alone which was not felt as belonging to oneself. But the perception which remained saw all things as utterly unreal; this sense of unreality was overwhelming and universal. Only some undefinable Reality was perceived as true which was beyond space and time and unconnected with any cosmic activity but yet was met wherever one turned. This condition remained unimpaired for several months and even when the sense of unreality disappeared and there was a return to participation in the world-consciousness, the inner peace and freedom which resulted from this realisation remained permanently behind all surface movements and the essence of the realisation itself was not lost. At the same time an experience intervened; something else than himself took up his dynamic activity and spoke and acted through him but without any personal

² In this letter to a disciple living outside the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo refers to himself in the third person. — Ed.

³ In his book *The Perennial Philosophy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1946, p. 74), Aldous Huxley quoted and commented on the following passage by Sri Aurobindo: "The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness — to its heights we can always reach — when we keep our feet firmly on the physical. 'Earth is His footing,' says the Upanishad whenever it images the Self that manifests in the universe." *The Life Divine*, volume 21 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 13–14. — Ed.

thought or initiative. What this was remained unknown until Sri Aurobindo came to realise the dynamic side of the Brahman, the Ishwara, and felt himself moved by that in all his sadhana and action. These realisations and others which followed upon them, such as that of the Self in all and all in the Self and all as the Self, the Divine in all and all in the Divine, are the heights to which Sri Aurobindo refers and to which he says we can always rise; for they presented to him no long or obstinate difficulty. The only real difficulty which took decades of spiritual effort to carry out towards completeness was to apply the spiritual knowledge utterly to the world and to the surface psychological and outer life and to effect its transformation both on the higher levels of Nature and on the ordinary mental, vital and physical levels down to the subconscious and the basic Inconscience and up to the supreme Truth-consciousness or Supermind in which alone the dynamic transformation could be entirely integral and absolute.

The Attempt at Physical Transformation

Sri Krishna never set out to arrive at any physical transformation, so anything of the kind could not be expected in his case.

Neither Buddha nor Shankara nor Ramakrishna had any idea of transforming the body. Their aim was spiritual mukti and nothing else. Krishna taught Arjuna to do liberated works, but he never spoke of any physical transformation.

I do not know that we can take this [*Yudhishthira's entry into the heavenly kingdom in his mortal body*] as a historical fact. Swarga is not somewhere in the Himalayas, it is another world in another plane of consciousness and substance. Whatever the story may mean, therefore, it has nothing to do with the question of physical transformation on earth.

*

Ramakrishna himself never thought of transformation or tried for it. All he wanted was bhakti for the Mother and along with that he received whatever knowledge she gave him and did whatever she made him do. He was intuitive and psychic from the

beginning and only became more and more so as he went on. There was no need in him for the transformation which we seek; for although he spoke of the divine man (Ishwarakoti) coming down the stairs as well as ascending, he had not the idea of a new consciousness and a new race and the divine manifestation in the earth-nature.

*

Whatever may have happened to Chaitanya or Ramalingam, whatever physical transformation they may have gone through is quite irrelevant to the aim of the supramentalisation of the body. Their new body was either a non-physical or subtle physical body not adapted for life on the earth. If it were not so, they would not have disappeared. The object of supramentalisation is a body fitted to embody and express the physical consciousness on earth so long as one remains in the physical life. It is a step in the spiritual evolution on the earth, not a step in the passage towards a supraphysical world. The supramentalisation is the most difficult part of the change arrived at by the supramental Yoga, and all depends on whether a sufficient change can be achieved in the consciousness at present to make such a step possible, but the nature of the step is different from that aimed at by other Yogas. There is not therefore much utility in these discussions — one has first of all to supramentalise sufficiently the mind and vital and physical consciousness generally — afterwards one can think of supramentalisation of the body. The psychic and spiritual transformation must come first, only afterwards would it be practical or useful to discuss the supramentalisation of the whole being down to the body.

Section Two

Other Spiritual Paths and the Integral Yoga

Chapter One

The Newness of the Integral Yoga

Old and New Truth

Well, I don't suppose the new race can be created by or according to logic or that any race has been. But why should the idea of the creation of a new race be illogical? It is not only my ideas that baffle reason, but Adhar Das's also! he must really be a superman, — self-made of course, outside the laboratory. As for the past seers, they don't trouble me. If going beyond the experiences of the past seers and sages is so shocking, each new seer and sage in turn has done that shocking thing — Buddha, Shankara, Chaitanya etc. all did that wicked act. If not, what was the necessity of their starting new philosophies, religions, schools of Yoga? If they were merely verifying and meekly repeating the lives and experiences of past seers and sages without bringing the world some new thing, why all that stir and pother? Of course, you may say they were simply explaining the old truth but in the right way — but this would mean that nobody had explained or understood it rightly before — which is again “giving the lie etc.” Or you may say that all the new sages (they were not among X's cherished past ones in their day), e.g. Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhwa, were each merely repeating the same blessed thing as all the past seers and sages had repeated with an unwearied monotony before them. Well, well, but why repeat it in such a way that each “gives the lie” to the others? Truly, this shocked reverence for the past is a wonderful and fearful thing! After all, the Divine is infinite and the unrolling of the Truth may be an infinite process or at least, if not quite so much, yet with some room for new discovery and new statement, even perhaps new achievement, not a thing in a nutshell cracked and its contents exhausted once for all by the first seer or sage, while the others must religiously crack the same nutshell all over again, each tremblingly careful not to give the lie to the “past” seers and sages.

Spiritual Realisation and the Supramental Transformation

This Yoga aims at the conscious union with the Divine in the supermind and the transformation of the nature. The ordinary Yogas go straight from Mind into some featureless condition of the cosmic Silence and through it try to disappear upward into the Highest. The object of this Yoga is to transcend mind and enter into the Divine Truth of Sachchidananda which is not only static but dynamic and raise the whole being into that Truth.

*

The Divine can be realised on any plane according to the capacity of that plane, as the Divine is everywhere. The Yogis and saints realise the Divine on the spiritualised mind plane, that does not mean they become supramental.

*

But why should they [*Yogis of the traditional schools*] feel any pressure [*of the supramental descent*] when they are satisfied with the realisation they have? They live in the spiritual mind and the nature of the mind is to separate — here to separate some high aspect or state of the Divine and seek that to the exclusion of all else. All the spiritual philosophies and schools of Yoga do that. If they go beyond, it is to the Absolute and mind cannot conceive of the Absolute except as something inconceivable, *neti neti*. Moreover for getting samadhi they concentrate on one single idea and what they reach is that which is represented by that idea — the samadhi is in its nature an exclusive concentration on that. So why should it open them to anything else? There are only a few who are sufficiently plastic to escape from this self-limitation of the sadhana — what they experience is that there is no end to the realisation, when you get to one peak, you find another beyond it. In order to see more than this one has to get into conscious waking touch with the supramental or at least get a glimpse of it — and that means passing beyond spiritual mind.

*

Certainly, the realisation of the Spirit comes long before the development of Overmind or Supermind; hundreds of sadhaks in all times have had the realisation of the Atman on the higher mental plane, *buddheḥ parataḥ*, but the supramental realisation was not theirs. One can get *partial* realisations of the Self or Spirit or the Divine on any plane, mental, vital, physical even, and when one rises above the ordinary mental plane of man into a higher and larger mind, the Self begins to appear in all its conscious wideness. It is by full entry into this wideness of the Self that cessation of mental activity becomes possible; one gets the inner Silence. After that this inner Silence can remain even when there is activity of any kind; the being remains silent within, the action goes on in the instruments and one receives all the necessary indications and execution of action whether mental, vital or physical from a higher source without the fundamental peace and calm of the Spirit being troubled.

The Overmind and Supermind states are something yet higher than this; but before one can understand them, one must first have the self-realisation, the full action of the spiritualised mind and heart, the psychic awakening, the liberation of the imprisoned consciousness, the purification and entire opening of the *ādhāra*. Do not think now of those ultimate things (Overmind, Supermind), but get first these foundations in the liberated nature.

*

By divine realisation is meant the spiritual realisation — the realisation of Self, Bhagavan or Brahman on the mental-spiritual plane or else the overmental plane. That is a thing (at any rate the mental-spiritual) which thousands have done. So it is obviously easier to do than the supramental. Also nobody can have the supramental realisation who has not had the spiritual.

It is true that neither can be got in any effective way unless the whole being is turned towards it — unless there is a real and very serious spirit and dynamic reality of sadhana.

It is true that I want the supramental not for myself but for the earth and souls born on the earth, and certainly therefore

I cannot object if anybody wants the supramental. But there are the conditions. He must want the Divine Will first and the soul's surrender and spiritual realisation (through works, bhakti, knowledge, self-perfection) on the way.

The central sincerity is the first thing and sufficient for an aspiration to be entertained — a total sincerity is needed for the aspiration to be fulfilled.

*

There are different statuses (*avasthā*) of the Divine Consciousness. There are also different statuses of transformation. First is the psychic transformation, in which all is in contact with the Divine through the psychic consciousness. Next is the spiritual transformation in which all is merged in the Divine in the cosmic consciousness. Third is the supramental transformation in which all becomes supramentalised in the divine gnostic consciousness. It is only with the last that there can begin the *complete* transformation of mind, life and body — in my sense of completeness.

*

You are mistaken in two respects. First, the endeavour towards this achievement [*the transformation of mind, life and body*] is not new and some Yogis have achieved it, I believe — but not in the way I want it. They achieved it as a personal siddhi maintained by Yoga-siddhi — not a dharma of the nature. Secondly, the supramental transformation is not the same as the spiritual-mental. It is a change of mind, life and body which the mental or overmental-spiritual cannot achieve. All whom you mention were spirituals, but in different ways. Krishna's mind, for instance, was overmentalised, Ramakrishna's intuitive, Chaitanya's spiritual-psychic, Buddha's illumined higher mental. I don't know about B. G. [*Bijoy Goswami*] — he seems to have been brilliant but rather chaotic. All that is different from the supramental. Then take the vital of the Paramhansas. It is said their vital behaves either like a child (Ramakrishna) or like a madman or like a demon or like something inert (cf.

Jadabharata). Well, there is nothing supramental in all that. So?

One can be a fit instrument for the Divine in any of the transformations. The question is, an instrument for what?

*

Your Guru's teaching and that of this Yoga are essentially the same; what he called *cittaśuddhi* is what we mean by the psychic change. The teaching here is more developed because it includes the Supramental means of creating a divine life. Also the getting of the truth is different, since here it is put in such a way as to initiate men of all castes, races, creeds and cultures without distinction to share in the Truth and the Divine Life. But it is no use trying to draw those who received the earlier teaching, for their sight is still circumscribed by past forms and feelings and cannot extend itself beyond them. It is good that you have freed yourself from the desire to do so and taken an impersonal position — if any have to come they will come. Our concentration must be on all preparing themselves so that what was foreseen by your Guru may be fulfilled this time and here.

Depreciation of the Old Yogas

As for the depreciation of all the old Yogas as something quite easy, unimportant and worthless, and the consequent depreciation of Buddha and Yajnavalkya and other great spiritual figures of the past, is it not evidently absurd on the face of it?

*

It [*self-realisation*] is not a long process? The whole life and several lives more are often not enough to achieve it. Ramakrishna's guru took 30 years to arrive and even then he was not satisfied that he had realised it.

*

Wonderful! The realisation of the Self which includes the liberation from ego, the consciousness of the One in all, the established and consummated transcendence out of the universal

Ignorance, the fixity of the consciousness in the union with the Highest, the Infinite and Eternal is not anything worth doing or recommending to anybody — is “not a very difficult stage”!

Nothing new? Why should there be anything new? The object of spiritual seeking is to find out what is eternally true, not what is new in Time.

From where did you get this singular attitude towards the old Yogas and Yogis? Is the wisdom of the Vedanta and Tantra a small and trifling thing? Have then the sadhaks of this Asram attained to self-realisation and are they liberated Jivan-muktas, free from ego and ignorance? If not, why then do you say, “it is not a very difficult stage”, “their goal is not high”, “is it such a long process?”

I have said that this Yoga was “new” because it aims at the integrality of the Divine in this world and not only beyond it and at a supramental realisation. But how does that justify a superior contempt for the spiritual realisation which is as much the aim of this Yoga as of any other?

The Old Lines and This Line

Plenty of people, I suppose, would go on with the old lines¹ — for it is not likely that all would be able to take this line. As for the Darshanas most of them have fallen into disuse already except as a battlefield for Pandits. It is only the Vedanta and Patanjali and the later Bhakti Yoga that are still alive, not so much as darshanas but as traditional systems of Yoga.

¹ *The correspondent asked, “Is it not likely that the Darshanas and Upanishads will be forgotten in the next hundred years as the New Yoga establishes itself in the world? If it is possible to get the necessary things from your writings and the Mother’s, who would care to read the enigmatic sutras and concealed formulas of the Darshanas, Upanishads and Vedas?” — Ed.*

Chapter Two

The Veda and the Upanishads

The Vedic Rishis

It is not I only who have done what the Vedic Rishis did not do. Chaitanya and others developed an intensity of Bhakti which is absent in the Veda and many other instances can be given. Why should the past be the limit of spiritual experience?

*

I can't say whether any of them [*the Vedic Rishis*] attained the supramental plane, but the ascent to it was their object. Swar is evidently the illumined regions of Mind, between the supramental and the human intelligence formed by the rays of the Sun. According to the Upanishads those who ascend into the rays of the Sun return, but those who ascend into the Sun itself do not come back. That is because the ascent to supermind was envisaged, but the descent and organisation of the supermind here (as apart from the descent of the Rays) was not. We need not bother about the rebirth of the Rishis — they will come along if they are needed, I suppose.

*

I don't know of any [*Vedic Rishis*] that have taken birth this time. According to the Puranic stories there must have been many Rishis who were far from being *jitendriya*, *jitakrodha*. But also there are many Yogis who are satisfied with having the inner experience of the Self but allow movements of a rajasic or tamasic nature on the surface, holding that these will fall off with the body.

*

The Vedic Rishis were mystics of the ancient type who everywhere, in India, Greece, Egypt and elsewhere, held the secret

truths and methods of which they were in possession as very sacred and secret things not to be disclosed to the unfit who would misunderstand, misapply, misuse and degrade the knowledge. Their writings were therefore so couched as only to be intelligible in their secret meaning to the initiated, *niṇyā vacāṃsi nivacanāni kavaye* — secret words that carry their significance only to the seer. They were equipped with an apparent meaning exoteric and religious for the people, esoteric, occult and spiritual for the initiates. That the people should not find out the real Truth was their intention; they wanted them only to know the outward truths for which they were fit.

*

This picture of Vedic society [*a completely pastoral life, without priests or warriors*] could easily be challenged. The householder may have lit daily the fire on the household altar, but when he wanted to offer a sacrifice he did it with the aid of sacrificial priests who knew the ritual. Sometimes the Rishi himself performed the sacrifice for the householder. He was not a priest by profession, however, for he might have any occupation in the society. Besides, in a large sacrifice there were many versed in the Vedic rites who performed different functions. In the very first verse of the Rig Veda Agni is described as being himself the Purohit, the priest representative of the householder sacrificer, Yajamana, as the Ritwik, the one who saw to the arrangement of the rites, the Hota who invoked the Gods and gave the offering, and in other hymns he is spoken of as the priest of the purification, the priest of the lustration etc. All this has obviously an esoteric sense but it testifies to the habitual presence of a number of priests at any large sacrifice. So we cannot say that there were no priests in the Vedic age. There does not seem to have been any priestly caste until later times when the four castes came definitely into being. But the Brahmins were not predominantly priests but rather scholars and intellectuals with a religious authority derived from birth and from knowledge of the scriptures and the books of the social law, Shastra. The function of priesthood has never been highly honoured in India

and it would therefore be incorrect to speak of priestcraft or any rule by priests or ecclesiastics at any time in Indian history.

As for the warriors, there are in the Rig Veda two or three hymns describing a great battle which the scholars declare to have been the fight of one king against ten allied kings, and besides that, the hymns are full of images of war and battle. These too have an esoteric meaning, but they indicate a state of things in which war and battle must have been frequent; so we cannot say that there were no warriors.

Again, your description seems to indicate that all the householders were initiated in the knowledge held by the Rishis. But this was a secret knowledge imparted by the Rishi to his family and to disciples whom he found to be fit, it was not given to everyone. The language of the Veda was also veiled and mystic, "secret words of seer-wisdom which yielded their meaning to the seer" as one of the Rishis described them, but understood in an outward sense by the ordinary uninitiated man. This principle of secrecy was common to all the mysteries in every country and it was maintained also in ancient India. The religious worship practised by the common man and any communion it might bring with the gods was only a preliminary preparation and not the deeper knowledge.

It was always held in ancient India that religion, life and society should be so arranged that every man should have the opportunity to grow spiritually by whatever means is suitable to his capacity, *adhikāra*. Everywhere there was a system of gradations by which this purpose could be served. It provided for a continual contact of man at every step with what was behind and beyond the material life. In Vedic times meditation, worship and sacrifice were the means by which this connection with the Unseen was sought to be established and maintained. The sacrifice was symbolic in its ritual and the symbols were supposed to have an occult power to create a relation between the unseen powers worshipped and the worshipper; by it they were called in to preside over and help all the action and life of the human being. Worship was for establishing a more inner relation and meditation the means of spiritual experience,

development and knowledge. The institutions which grew up in later Vedic times, such as the four Asramas and the four Var-
nas, the fourfold arrangement of society originally had the same intention and are so recognised in the Gita. So trained a man could develop until he was ready for a deeper knowledge and receive the initiation. In the Vedic times this deeper knowledge was the mystic doctrine and practice of the Vedic Rishis; it was that that afterwards developed on a hundred branching lines into the later systems of Yoga.

The Veda and the Greeks

As to the Eleusinian mysteries, about which he has asked an explanation, they were connected with the same mystic knowledge as was held in India by the Vedic Rishis. Demeter and Persephone were goddesses worshipped by the Greeks; Demeter is the Earth-Mother and Persephone was the goddess of the Harvest, but in the mystic symbols Persephone represented the earth consciousness buried in the Ignorance and emerging into the Divine Light. The Eleusinian mysteries were instituted as an outward symbol of this secret knowledge.

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The Soma wine was the symbol of the divine or spiritual Ananda. This wine was however symbolic and cannot be exactly equated with the nectar or ambrosia of the Greeks which were the food and drink of the gods and sustained their immortality; but outwardly there is some resemblance.

No Incarnation of the Vedic Gods

In the Veda there is no idea or experience of a personal emanation or incarnation of any of the Vedic gods. When the Rishis speak of Indra or Agni or Soma in men, they are speaking of the god in his cosmic presence, power or function. This is evident from the very language when they speak of Agni as the immortal in mortals, the immortal Light in man, the inner Warrior, the

Guest in human beings. It is the same with Indra or Soma. The building of the gods in man means a creation of the divine Powers, Indra the Power of the Light, Soma the Power of the Ananda in the human nature.

No doubt, the Rishis felt the actual presence of the gods above, near, around or in them, but this was a common experience of all, not special and personal, not an emanation or incarnation. One may see or feel the presence of the Divine or a divine Power above the head or in the heart or in any or all of the centres, feel the presence, see the form living there; one may be governed in all one's actions, thoughts and feelings by it; one may lose one's separate personality in it, may identify and merge. But all that does not constitute an incarnation or emanation of the Divine or of the Power. These things are universal experiences to which any Yogin may arrive; to reach this condition with relation to the Divine is indeed a common object of Yoga.

An incarnation is something more, something special and individual to the individual being. It is the substitution of the Person of a divine being for the human person and an infiltration of it into all the movements so that there is a dynamic personal change in all of them and in the whole nature; not merely a change of the character of the consciousness or a general surrender into its hands, but a subtle intimate personal change. Even when there is an incarnation from the birth, the human elements have to be taken up, but when there is a descent, there is a total conscious substitution.

This is a long, subtle and persistent process. The incarnating Person first overshadows as an influence, then enters into the centres one after the other, sometimes in the same form, sometimes in different forms, then takes up all the nature and its actions. What you describe does not correspond to this process; it seems to be an endeavour to build the gods in yourself in the Vedic sense and the Vedic manner. That can bring, if it succeeds, their powers and a sense of their presence; it cannot bring about an incarnation. An incarnation is destined, is chosen for you; the human person cannot choose or create an incarnation for

himself by his own personal will. To attempt it is to invite a spiritual disaster.

One thing must be said — that an incarnation is not the object of this Yoga; it is only a condition or means towards the object. The one and only aim we have before us is to bring down the supramental consciousness and the supramental Truth into the world; the Truth and nothing but the Truth is our aim, and if we cannot embody this Truth, a hundred incarnations do not matter. But to bring down the true supramental and nothing but the true supramental, to escape from all mental mixture is not an easy matter. The mere descent of the suns into the centres, even of all the seven suns into all the seven centres is only the seed; it is not the thing itself done and finished. One may feel the descent of suns, one may have the attempt, the beginning of an incarnation, and yet in the end one may fail if there is a flaw in the nature or a failure to pass through all the ordeals and satisfy all the hard conditions of the perfect spiritual success. Not only the whole mental, vital and physical nature of the ignorant human being has to be overcome and transformed, but also the three states of mental consciousness which intervene between the human and the supramental and like all mind are capable of admitting great and capital errors. Till then there may be descents of supramental influence, light, power, Ananda, but the supramental Truth cannot be possessed, organised, put in possession of the whole nature. One must not think before that that one possesses the supermind; for that is a delusion which would prevent the fulfilment.

One thing more. The more intense the experiences that come, the higher the forces that descend, the greater become the possibilities of deviation and error. For the very intensity and the very height of the force excites and aggrandises the movements of the lower nature and raises up in it all the opposing elements in their full force, but often in the disguise of truth, wearing a mask of plausible justification. There is needed a great patience, calm, sobriety, balance, an impersonal detachment and sincerity free from all taint of ego or personal human desire. There must be no attachment to any idea of one's own, to any experience, to any

kind of imagination, mental building or vital demand; the light of discrimination must always play to detect these things, however fair or plausible they may seem. Otherwise the Truth will have no chance of establishing itself in its purity in the nature.

Terms and Verses of the Upanishads

It is quite impossible to say to what they [*the seers of the Upanishads*] were referring in those days.¹ We have no longer a clue to their symbolism. But it is meant that the lower worlds are in the higher worlds even as the higher worlds are in the lower worlds — they penetrate each other. E.g. in our system there is a vital mental, several layers of the vital itself, a physical vital and so on in each realm. Everything contains everything else, as it were.

*

It is quite probable that the sloka [*Katha Upanishad* 2.3.4] refers to a going up into higher worlds of felicity and light and this can be called a liberation or release. In later times the idea grew strong that from all these higher worlds return is inevitable and it is only release from all cosmic existence that gives mukti. The Vedic Rishis seem to have looked to an ascent into a divine luminous world or state above the falsehood and ignorance. In the Upanishad the sun is the symbol of the supramental Truth and it is said that those who pass into it may return but those who pass through the gates of the Sun itself do not; possibly this means that an ascent into the supermind itself above the golden lid of overmind was the definitive liberation. The Veda speaks of the Truth hidden by a Truth where the Sun looses his horses from his car and there all the myriad rays are drawn together into One and that was considered the goal. The Isha Upanishad also speaks of the golden lid hiding the face of the Truth by removing which the Law of the Truth is seen and the highest

¹ *The correspondent asked for an explanation of certain terms in a passage (3.6.1) from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. — Ed.*

knowledge in which the One Purusha is known (*so'ham asmi*) is described as the *kalyāṇātama* form of the Sun. All this seems to refer to the supramental states of which the Sun is the symbol.

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The mental realisation [*of the one self*] does not bring this result [*the ending of delusion (moha) and grief (śoka)*], the spiritual does.² In the Vedantic experience “seeing” means also becoming, one is that one self, identified, — all action of Nature seems to one a movement in that one self which is itself not touched by it. Therefore there is no *moha* or *śoka*. That is, when one can keep the experience and when it is complete. Even if one has the experience only as something within while the movements of the vital continue on the surface, yet these movements are felt as external and superficial, not really belonging to oneself — the self within remains untouched, calm, griefless, at peace. If the vital also is transformed into this consciousness, then even on the surface grief becomes impossible.

*

Perception is not enough to transform the nature. *Paśyataḥ*³ in the spiritual language does not mean only perception. Perception is of the mind and a mental perception is not enough — a substantial and dynamic realisation in all the being is necessary. Otherwise one of three things may happen. (1) The mind perceives oneness but the vital is not affected, it goes on with its impulses, for the vital is governed not by thought or reason but by tendency, impulse, desire-force — it uses reason only as a justification for its tendencies. Or even the vital may say, “All is one so it does not matter what I do. Why should not I seek oneness with others in my own way?” (2) If the mind has a realisation, but the vital does not share in it or distorts it, then also the vital can insist on its own way or even carry the mind

² The correspondent asked for a clarification of verse 7 of the *Isha Upanishad*, which ends, “. . . how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?” — Ed.

³ This term appears in verse 7 of the *Isha Upanishad*. — Ed.

along with it. As the Gita says, the senses (vital) carry away the mind even of the sage who sees, as the wind carries away a ship on a stormy sea. (3) The inner being may have the realisation strongly and live in the oneness, calm, peace, but the interior parts of the outer may feel the reactions of desire etc. In this case the reactions are more superficial; but even so rejection is needed till they cease. When all the being lives in the solid realisation of calm, peace, liberation, oneness, then the desires fall away and the necessity of rejection ceases, because there is nothing to reject any longer.

*

It [*the identification of buddhi with the vijñānamaya koṣa*] is the error that came with the excessive intellectualism of the philosophers and commentators. I don't think *buddhi* includes intuition as something separate in kind from intellect — the intellectualists considered intuition to be only a rapid process of intellectual thought — and they still think that. In the Taittiriya Upanishad the sense of *vijñāna* is very clear — its essence is *ṛtam*, the spiritual Truth; but afterwards the identification with *buddhi* became general.

*

I do not suppose they [*the commentators*] mean expressly intuition [*by buddhi*]; they regard *buddhi* as the means of knowledge, so they include all knowledge in it, and as the *vijñānamaya koṣa* is the Knowledge sheath, they think it must mean *buddhi*. Obviously it doesn't. The description you have quoted⁴ evidently means something much higher than *buddhi*. It is the *satyam ṛtam br̥hat* of the Upanishad — the truth-consciousness of the Veda.

The Vedantin

No, certainly I did not mean that the Vedantin who sees a greater working behind the appearances of the world is living

⁴ From the Taittiriya Upanishad 2.4.1. — Ed.

in a different world from this material one — if I had meant that, all that I had written would be without point or sense. I meant a Vedantin who lives in this world with all its suffering and ignorance and ugliness and evil and has had a full measure of these things, betrayal and abandonment by friends, failure of outward objects and desires in life, attack and persecution, accumulated illnesses, constant difficulty, struggles, stumblings in his Yoga. It is not that he lives in a different world, but he has a different way of meeting its ordeals, blows and dangers. He takes them as the nature of this world and the result of the ego-consciousness in which it lives. He tries therefore to grow into another consciousness in which he feels what is behind the outward appearance, and as he grows into that larger consciousness he begins to feel more and more a working behind which is helping him to grow in the spirit and leading him toward mastery and freedom from ego and ignorance and he sees that all has been used for that purpose. Till he reaches this consciousness with its larger knowledge of things, he has to walk by faith and his faith may sometimes fail him, but it returns and carries him through all the difficulties. Everybody is not bound to accept this faith and this consciousness, but there is something great and true behind it for the spiritual life.

*

I doubt whether the condition of which you speak is that of the realised Vedantin⁵ — except of course the loss of the sense of personality and the non-identification with desire and the movements of Prakriti. Still perhaps the condition of the *jaḍavat* Paramhansa (like Jada Bharata) may resemble it. The theory of *prārabdha karma* goes farther than that — it assumes that even if there are vital movements, that is also only the continuance of the machine of Prakriti and will drop off at death. They may, perhaps. I don't base the gospel of the transformation of Nature

⁵ *The correspondent wrote that he felt dull, sleepy and mechanical, with no sense of desire or personality; therefore he could easily imagine why the realised Vedantin could say that with the static realisation of Brahman one's past karma would fall off at death.*
— Ed.

on an impossibility of taking a static release as final — the static release is necessary, but I don't consider that to take it as final is the object of coming into world-existence. I hold that the static release is only a beginning, a first step in the Divine. If anyone is satisfied with the first step as all that is possible for him, I have no objection to his taking it like that.

Chapter Three

Jainism and Buddhism

Jainism

The Jain philosophy is concerned with individual perfection. Our effort is quite different. We want to bring down the Supermind as a new faculty. Just as the mind is now a permanent state of consciousness in humanity, so also we want to create a race in which the Supermind will be a permanent state of consciousness.

*

Why cannot one love or experience [*the Cosmic Divine or the Transcendent Divine*] concretely? many have done it. And why assume that He is immobile, silent and aloof? The Cosmic Divine can be as close to one as one's own self and the Transcendent as intimate as the closest friend or lover. It is only in the physical consciousness that there is some difficulty in realising it.

The Jain realisation of an individual godhead is all right so far as it goes — its defect is that it is too individual and isolated.

Buddhism

Buddhist teaching does not recognise any inner self or soul — there is only a stream of consciousness from moment to moment — the consciousness itself is only a bundle of associations — it is kept moving by the wheel of Karma. If the associations are untied and thrown away (they are called *sanskaras*), then it dissolves; the idea of self or a persistent person ceases; the stream flows no longer, the wheel stops. There is left, according to some, *Sunya*, a mysterious Nothing from which all comes; according to others a mysterious Permanent in which there is no individual existence. This is Nirvana. Buddha himself always refused to say what there was beyond cosmic existence; he spoke neither of God nor Self nor Brahman. He said there was no utility in

discussing that — all that was necessary was to know the causes of this unhappy temporal existence and the way to dissolve it.

*

Buddha, it must be remembered, refused always to discuss what was beyond the world. But from the little he said it would appear that he was aware of a Permanent beyond equivalent to the Vedantic Para-Brahman, but which he was quite unwilling to describe. The denial of anything beyond the world except a negative state of Nirvana was a later teaching, not Buddha's.

*

If Buddha really combated and denied all Vedantic conceptions of the Self then it can be no longer true that Buddha refrained from all metaphysical speculations or distinct pronouncements as to the nature of the ultimate Reality. The view you take of his conception of Nirvana seems to concur with the Mahayanist interpretation and its conception of the Permanent, *dhruvam*, which could be objected to as a later development like the opposite Nihilistic conception of the Shunyam. What Buddha very certainly taught was that the world is not-Self and that the individual has no true existence since what does exist in the world is a stream of impermanent consciousness from moment to moment and the individual person is fictitiously constituted by a bundle of *sankaras* and can be dissolved by dissolving the bundle. This is in conformity with the Vedantic Monistic view that there is no true individual. As to the other Vedantic view of the one Self, impersonal and universal and transcendent, it does not seem that Buddha made any distinct and unmistakable pronouncements on abstract metaphysical questions; but if the world or all in the world is not-Self, *anātman*, there can be no more room for a universal Self, only at most for a transcendent Real Being. His conception of Nirvana was of something transcendent of the universe, but he did not define what it was because he was not concerned with any abstract metaphysical speculations about the Reality; he must have thought them unnecessary and irrelevant and any indulgence in them likely to divert from the

true object. His explanation of things was psychological and not metaphysical and his methods were all psychological, the breaking up of the false associations of consciousness which cause the continuance of desire and suffering, so getting rid of the stream of birth and death in a purely phenomenal (not an unreal) world; the method of life by which this liberation could be effected was also a psychological method, the eightfold path developing right understanding and right action. His object was pragmatic and severely practical and so were his methods; metaphysical speculations would only draw the mind away from the one thing needful.

As to Buddha's attitude towards life, I do not quite see how service to mankind or any ideal of improvement of the world-existence can have been part of his aim, since to pass out of life into a transcendence was his object. His eightfold path was the means towards that end and not an aim in itself or indeed in any way an aim. Obviously if right understanding and right action became the common rule of life, there would be a great improvement in the world, but for Buddha's purpose that could be an incidental result and not at all part of his central object. You say, "Buddha himself urged the necessity to serve mankind: his ideal was to achieve a consciousness of inner eternity and then be a source of radiant influence and action." But where and when did Buddha say these things, use these terms or express these ideas? "The service of mankind" sounds like a very modern and European conception; it reminds me of some European interpretations of the Gita as merely teaching the disinterested performance of duty or the pronouncement that the whole idea of the Gita is service. The exclusive stress or overstress on mankind or humanity is also European. Mahayanist Buddhism laid stress on compassion, fellow-feeling with all, *vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*, just as the Gita speaks of the feeling of oneness with all beings and preoccupation with the good of all beings, *sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*, but this does not mean humanity only but all beings and *vasudhā* means all earth-life. Are there any sayings of Buddha which would justify the statement that the object or one object of attaining to Nirvana was to become a

source of radiant influence and action? The consciousness of inner eternity may have that result, but can we really say that that was Buddha's ideal, the object which he held in view or for which he came?

*

Buddhism is the turning away from *duḥkha* and its causes to the peace of Nirvana. The *duḥkhavāda* did not exist in India, except in the theory of the Vaishnava *viraha*; otherwise it was not considered as a means or even a stage in the sadhana. But that does not mean that *duḥkha* does not come in the sadhana — it comes and has to be rejected and overcome, overpassed — excepting the psychic sorrow which does not disturb or depress but rather liberates the vital. To make a *vāda* or gospel of sorrow is dangerous because sorrow if indulged becomes a habit, sticks and few things, if once they stick, can be more sticky.

Buddhist Nirvana

The Buddhist Nirvana and the Adwaitin's Moksha are the same thing. It corresponds to a realisation in which one does not feel oneself any longer as an individual with such a name or such a form, but an infinite eternal Self spaceless (even when in space), timeless (even when in time). Note that one can perfectly well do actions in that condition and it is not to be gained only by Samadhi.

*

It [*the Nirvana of Buddha*] is the same [*as the Nirvana of the Gita*]. Only the Gita describes it as Nirvana in the Brahman while Buddha preferred not to give any name or say anything about that into which the nirvana took place. Some later schools of Buddhists described it as Sunya, the equivalent of the Chinese Tao, described as the Nothing which is everything.

*

The feeling of the Self as a vast peaceful Void, a liberation from

existence as we know it, is one that one can always have, Buddhist or no Buddhist. It is the negative aspect of Nirvana — it is quite natural for the mind, if it follows the negative movement of withdrawal, to get that first, and if you lay hold on that and refuse to go farther, being satisfied with this liberated Non-Existence, then you will naturally philosophise like the Buddhists that Sunya is the eternal truth. Lao Tse was more perspicacious when he spoke of it as the Nothing that is All. Many of course have the positive experience of the Atman first, not as a void but as pure unrelated Existence like the Advaitins (Shankara) or as the one Existent.

*

They [*those who have had the experience of Nirvana*] do not feel as if they had any existence at all. In the Buddhistic Nirvana they feel as if there were no such thing at all, only an infinite zero without form. In the Advaita Nirvana there is felt only one vast existence, no separate being is discernible anywhere. There are forms of course but they are only forms, not separate beings. Mind is silent, thought has ceased, — desires, passions, vital movements there are none. There is consciousness but only a formless elemental consciousness without limits. The body moves and acts, but the sense of body is not there. Sometimes there is only the consciousness of pure existence, sometimes only pure consciousness, sometimes all that exists is only a ceaseless limitless Ananda. Whether all else is really dissolved or only covered up is a debatable point, but at any rate it is an experience as if of their dissolution.

*

I don't think I have written, but I said once that souls which have passed into Nirvana may (not "must") return to complete the larger upward curve. I have written somewhere, I think, that for this Yoga (it might also be added, in the natural complete order of the manifestation) the experience of Nirvana can only be a stage or passage to the complete realisation. I have said also that there are many doors by which one can pass into the

realisation of the Absolute (Parabrahman) and Nirvana is one of them, but by no means the only one. You may remember Ramakrishna's saying that the Jivakoti can ascend the stairs, but not return, while the Ishwarakoti can ascend and descend at will. If that is so, the Jivakoti might be those who describe only the curve from Matter through Mind into the silent Brahman and the Ishwarakoti those who get to the integral Reality and can therefore combine the Ascent with the Descent and contain the "two ends" of existence in their single being.

*

The realisation of this Yoga is not lower but higher than Nirvana or Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

*

In our Yoga the Nirvana is the beginning of the higher Truth, as it is the passage from the Ignorance to the higher Truth. The Ignorance has to be extinguished in order that the Truth may manifest.

Different Kinds of Buddhism

Buddhism is of many kinds and the entirely nihilistic kind is only one variety. Most Buddhism admits a Permanent as beyond the creation of Karma and Sanskaras. Even the Sunya of the Sunyapanthis is described like the Tao of Lao Tse as a Nothing which is All. So as a higher "above mental" state is admitted which one tries to reach by a strong discipline of the consciousness, it may be called spirituality.

*

There are elements in most Yogas which enter into this one, so it is not surprising if there is something in Buddhism also. But such notions as a Higher Evolution beyond Nirvana seem to me not genuinely Buddhistic, unless of course there is some offshoot of Buddhism which developed something so interpreted by the author. I never heard of it as part of Buddha's teachings

— he always spoke of Nirvana as the goal and refused to discuss metaphysically what it might be.

*

About the One [*of the Buddhists*] there are different versions. I just read somewhere that the Buddhist One is a Superbuddha from whom all Buddhas come — but it seemed to me a rehash of Buddhism in Vedantic terms born of a modern mind. The Permanent of Buddhism has always been supposed to be Supracosmic and Ineffable — that is why Buddha never tried to explain what it was; for, logically, how can one talk about the Ineffable? It has really nothing to do with the Cosmos which is a thing of *sanskaras* and Karma.

*

There is no reason why the passage about Buddhism [*in an essay of the correspondent*] should be omitted. It gives one side of the Buddhistic teaching which is not much known or is usually ignored, for that teaching is by most rendered as Nirvana (*Sunyavada*) and a spiritualised humanitarianism. The difficulty is that it is these sides that have been stressed especially in the modern interpretations of Buddhism and any strictures I may have passed were in view of these interpretations and that one-sided stress. I am aware of course of the opposite tendencies in the Mahayana and the Japanese cult of Amitabha Buddha which is a cult of *bhakti*. It is now being said even of Shankara that there was another side of his doctrine — but his followers have made him stand solely for the Great Illusion, the inferiority of *bhakti*, the uselessness of Karma — *jagan mithyā*.

Buddhism and Vedanta

The impressions in the approach to Infinity or the entry into it are not always quite the same; much depends on the way in which the mind approaches it. It is felt first by some as an infinity above, by others as an infinity around into which the mind disappears (as an energy) by losing its limits. Some feel

not the absorption of the mind energy into the infinite, but a falling entirely inactive; others feel it as a lapse or disappearance of energy into pure Existence. Some first feel the infinity as a vast existence into which all sinks or disappears, others, as you describe it, as an infinite ocean of Light above, others as an infinite ocean of Power above. A certain school of Buddhists felt it in their experience as a limitless Sunya, the Vedantists on the contrary see it as a positive Self-Existence featureless and absolute. No doubt the various experiences were erected into various philosophies, each putting its conception as definitive; but behind each conception there was such an experience. What you describe as a completely emptied mind substance devoid of energy or light, completely inert, is the condition of neutral peace and empty stillness which is or can be a stage of the liberation. But it can afterwards feel itself filled with infinite existence, consciousness (carrying energy in it) and finally Ananda.

*

The universe is only a partial manifestation and Brahman as its foundation is the Sat. But there is also that which is not manifested and beyond manifestation and is not contained in the basis of manifestation. The Buddhists and others get from that the conception of Asat as the ultimate thing.

Another meaning given is: Sat = the Eternal, Asat = the Temporary and Unreal.

*

The ego and its continuity, they [*the Buddhists*] say, are an illusion, the result of the continuous flowing of energies and ideas in a determined current. There is no real formation of an ego. As to the liberation, it is in order to get free from *duḥkha* etc., — it is a painful flow of energies and to get free from the pain they must break up their continuity. That is all right, but how it started, why it should end at all and how anybody is benefited by the liberation, since there is nobody there, only a mass of idea and action — these things are insoluble mysteries. But is there not the same difficulty with the Mayavadin also, since there is

no Jiva really, only Brahman and Brahman is by nature free and unbound for ever? So how did the whole absurd affair of Maya come into existence and who is liberated? That is what the old sages said at last: “There is none bound, none freed, none seeking to be free.” It was all a mistake (a rather long-standing one though). The Buddhists, I suppose, could say that also.

Chapter Four

Sankhya and Yoga

Sankhya

In the spiritual thought of India during the time of the Rishis and even before, the Sankhya and Vedanta elements were always combined. The Sankhya account of the constitution of the being (Purusha, Prakriti, the elements, Indriyas, Buddhi etc.) was universally accepted and Kapila was mentioned with veneration everywhere. In the Gita he is mentioned among the great Vibhūtis; Krishna says, "I am Kapila among the sages."

Patanjali's Yoga

Divine union [*was the aim of Yoga in Patanjali's day*], yes — but for the ascetic schools it was union with the featureless Brahman, the Unknowable beyond existence or, if with the Ishwara, still it was the Ishwara in a supracosmic consciousness. From that point of view Patanjali's aphorism¹ is sound enough. When he says Yoga, he means the process of Yoga, the object which has to be kept in view in the process — for by the cessation of *cittavṛtti* one gets into *samādhi* and *samādhi* is the only way of uniting solely and completely with the Brahman beyond existence.

*

Stopping the movements of the chitta [*is what is meant by cittavṛttinirodha*]. In our Yoga it is more necessary to transform these movements than to stop them altogether, but the power to stop them is necessary — it is usually done by the mind falling into silence and then imposing the same silence on the vital nature.

*

¹ Yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ (Yogasūtra 1.2). — *Ed.*

Chit is the pure consciousness — as in Sat Chit Ananda.

Chitta is the stuff of mixed mental-vital-physical consciousness out of which arise the movements of thought, emotion, sensation, impulse etc. It is these that in Patanjali's system have to be stilled altogether so that the consciousness may be immobile and go into samadhi.

It [*stopping the movements of the chitta*] has a different function [*in this Yoga*]. The movements of the ordinary consciousness have to be quieted and into the quietude there has to be brought down a higher consciousness and its powers which will transform the nature.

*

If you suppress [*the cittavṛttis*], you will have no movements of the chitta at all; all will be immobile until you remove the suppression or will be so immobile that there cannot be anything else than immobility.

If you still, the chitta will be quiet; whatever movements there are will not disturb the quietude.

If you control or master, then the chitta will be immobile when you want, active when you want, and its action will be such that what you wish to get rid of will go, only what you accept as true and useful will come.

*

Some people do get disgusted with the body for its uncleanness, but I should say it is very few.

The suggestion of Patanjali² supposes that the mind is everything, so if I get the idea that the body is an unclean thing, all my feelings will harmonise with that idea. But it is not so — there are other parts which do not care for the idea or knowledge in the mind and are not affected by it but are led by their own instincts and desires. It is only those who have already the turn to vairagya who can make use of Patanjali's suggestion to help

² The suggestion that disgust for one's body arises from the idea of cleanliness. In his letter the correspondent quoted Patanjali's aphorism, Śaucāt svāṅga-jugupsā (Yogasūtra 2.40). — Ed.

their already existing vairagya. The medical man for instance holds his knowledge of the composition of the body as a matter of fact of science, he keeps it separate there in the scientific compartment of his mind and it does not in the least affect his other ideas, feelings or activities.

The Yoga-Vasishtha

I have not myself read the Yoga-Vasishtha, but from what I have read about it, it must be a book written by somebody with a remarkable occult knowledge.

Asanas and Pranayama

No use doing asanas and pranayam. It is not necessary to burn with passion. What is needed is a patient increasing of the power of concentration and steady aspiration so that the silence you speak of may fix in the heart and spread to the other members. Then the physical mind and subconscious can be cleared and quieted.

*

The asanas are one means for control of the body, as is Pranayam for the life-forces, but neither is indispensable.

*

Mother thinks that the shirshasan is not safe for your eyes. While some of these asanas are simple and safe, others are not so; they require a training of the body or practice under the eye of an expert. It might not be prudent for you to take them up in an amateur fashion.

*

Pranayam is safe only if one knows how to do it and is on guard against its possible dangers: (1) danger to health by mistakes in the method, (2) rising of the vital forces, especially lust, egoism and wrongly directed strength and force, (3) the awakening of

concealed sanskaras of the physical nature or latent karma from past lives.

*

Tell him it is not safe to do Pranayam without guidance by one who is expert in Rajayoga or Hathayoga. Pranayam is not a part of the sadhana here.

*

You can write to him that it is not safe to do Pranayam except under the directions of a guru who is siddha in either Rajayoga or Hathayoga. Gaspings is obviously a sign of something wrong — for the breathing in Pranayam must be perfectly unimpeded and regular. It is better either to stop the Pranayam or to find out somebody who is practised in the method and take instructions from him what to do.

*

Your experience is correct. The true breathing is not merely the inspiration and expiration from the lungs which is merely the mechanism of it, but a drawing in of the universal energy of Prana into every cell of the body.

Chapter Five

The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita

The Teaching of the Gita

This world *is* as the Gita describes it, *anityam asukham*, so long as we live in the present world-consciousness; it is only by turning from that to the Divine and entering into the Divine Consciousness that one can possess, through the world also, the Eternal.

*

The Gita cannot be described as exclusively a gospel of love. What it sets forth is a Yoga of knowledge, devotion and works based on a spiritual consciousness and realisation of oneness with the Divine and of the oneness of all beings in the Divine. Bhakti, devotion and love of God carrying with it unity with all beings and love for all beings is given a high place but always in connection with knowledge and works.

Apparent Contradictions in the Gita

The language of the Gita in many matters seems sometimes contradictory because it admits two apparently opposite truths and tries to reconcile them. It admits the ideal of departure from sansara into the Brahman as one possibility; also it affirms the possibility of living free in the Divine (in Me, it says) and acting in the world as the Jivanmukta. It is this latter kind of salvation on which it lays the greatest emphasis. So Ramakrishna put the “divine souls” (Ishwarakoti) who can descend the ladder as well as ascend it higher than the ordinary Jivas (Jivakoti) who, once having ascended, have not the strength to descend again for divine work. The full truth lies in the supramental consciousness and the power to work from there on life and matter.

*

There is no real contradiction; the two passages¹ indicate in the Gita's system two different movements of its Yoga, the complete surrender being the crowning movement. One has first to conquer the lower nature, deliver the self involved in the lower movement by means of the higher Self which rises into the divine nature; at the same time one offers all one's actions including the inner action of the Yoga as a sacrifice to the Purushottama, the transcendent and immanent Divine. When one has risen into the higher Self, has the knowledge and is free, one makes the complete surrender to the Divine, abandoning all other dharmas, living only by the divine Consciousness, the divine Will and Force, the divine Ananda.

Our Yoga is not identical with the Yoga of the Gita although it contains all that is essential in the Gita's Yoga. In our Yoga we begin with the idea, the will, the aspiration of the complete surrender; but at the same time we have to reject the lower nature, deliver our consciousness from it, deliver the self involved in the lower nature by the self rising to freedom in the higher nature. If we do not do this double movement, we are in danger of making a tamasic and therefore unreal surrender, making no effort, no tapas and therefore no progress; or else we may make a rajasic surrender not to the Divine but to some self-made false idea or image of the Divine which masks our rajasic ego or something still worse.

*

It was not your account of the inconsistencies of the Gita, but those that have been urged against the combining of sadhanas of which the Gita is the finest example that I was speaking of. Your objection to Krishna's pouring contradictory sadhanas on Arjuna was, I said, akin to these and not more sustainable.

All the other side questions I consider irrelevant and of no importance. The setting of the Gita is poetic and legendary and I consider it an admirable setting, but if you consider it a bad

¹ *The correspondent asked how to reconcile two passages in the Gita: "Deliver the self by means of the Self" and "Abandon all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone" (Gita 6.5 and 18.66). — Ed.*

one, that does not matter. It makes no difference, even if you are right, to the spiritual excellence of the Gita. I care nothing whether Sanjaya and Krishna and Arjuna of the Mahabharat were myths or real persons. The only thing that is important is that the sadhana of the Gita is a real thing and can be lived and that if spiritually lived, its so-called inconsistencies are no inconsistencies but many well-related aspects of a single Divine Truth — the vision seen by Arjuna included. The rest is a matter of opinion and, as I say, of no spiritual importance.

*

The Gita was *not* meant by the writer to be an allegory — you can say, if you like, that now we should dismiss the ancient war element by interpreting it as if it were an allegory. The Gita is Yoga, spiritual truth applied to external life and action — but it may be *any* action and not necessarily an action *resembling* that of the Gita. The *principle* of the spiritual consciousness applied to action has to be kept; the particular example used by the Gita may be treated as a thing belonging to a past world.

The Gita, the Divine Mother and the Purushottama

The Gita does not speak expressly of the Divine Mother; it speaks always of surrender to the Purushottama — it mentions her only as the Para Prakriti who becomes the Jiva, i.e., who manifests the Divine in the multiplicity and through whom all these worlds are created by the Supreme and he himself descends as the Avatar. The Gita follows the Vedantic tradition which leans entirely on the Ishwara aspect of the Divine and speaks little of the Divine Mother because its object is to draw back from world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation beyond it; the Tantrik tradition leans on the Shakti or Ishwari aspect and makes all depend on the Divine Mother, because its object is to possess and dominate the world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation through it. This Yoga insists on both the aspects; the surrender to the Divine Mother is essential, for without it there is no fulfilment of the object of the Yoga.

In regard to the Purushottama the Divine Mother is the supreme divine Consciousness and Power above the worlds, Adya Shakti; she carries the Supreme in herself and manifests the Divine in the worlds through the Akshara and the Kshara. In regard to the Akshara she is the same Para Shakti holding the Purusha immobile in herself and also herself immobile in him at the back of all creation. In regard to the Kshara she is the mobile cosmic Energy manifesting all beings and forces.

*

I do not know that there is anything like a Purushottama consciousness which the human being can attain or realise *for himself*, — for, in the Gita, the Purushottama is the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Being who is beyond the Immutable and the Mutable and contains both the One and the Many. Man, says the Gita, can attain the Brahmic consciousness, realise himself as an eternal portion of the Purushottama and live in the Purushottama. The Purushottama consciousness is the consciousness of the Supreme Being and man by loss of ego and realisation of his true essence can *live in* it.

The Gita and the Integral Yoga

It is not a fact that the Gita gives the whole base of Sri Aurobindo's message; for the Gita seems to admit the cessation of birth in the world as the ultimate aim or at least the ultimate culmination of Yoga; it does not bring forward the idea of spiritual evolution or the idea of the higher planes and the supramental Truth-Consciousness and the bringing down of that consciousness as the means of the complete transformation of earthly life.

The idea of the supermind, the Truth-Consciousness is there in the Rig Veda according to Sri Aurobindo's interpretation and in one or two passages of the Upanishads, but in the Upanishads it is there only in seed in the conception of the being of knowledge, *vijñānamaya puruṣa*, exceeding the mental, vital and physical being; in the Rig Veda the idea is there but in

principle only, it is not developed and even the principle of it has disappeared from the Hindu tradition.

It is these things among others that constitute the novelty of Sri Aurobindo's message as compared with the Hindu tradition, — the idea that the world is not either a creation of Maya or only a play, *līlā*, of the Divine, or a cycle of births in the ignorance from which we have to escape, but a field of manifestation in which there is a progressive evolution of the soul and the nature in Matter and from Matter through Life and Mind to what is beyond Mind till it reaches the complete revelation of Sachchidananda in life. It is this that is the basis of the Yoga and gives a new sense to life.

*

To the question in your last letter there can be no reply except that it is only either a single-minded faith or a fixed will that can give you the open road to the Yoga. It is because your ideas and your will are in a constant state of flux or of oscillation that you do not succeed. Even with a deficient faith, a fixed mind and will can carry one on and bring the experiences by which an uncertain faith is changed into certitude.

It is the reason why it is difficult for me to answer your questions about the different alternatives. I may say that the way of the Gita is itself a part of the Yoga here and those who have followed it, to begin with or as a first stage, have a stronger basis than others for this Yoga. To look down on it therefore as something separate and inferior is not a right standpoint. But whatever it is, you must yourself choose, nobody can do it for you. Those who go and come, can do so profitably only if or because they have made the decision and keep to it; when they are here, it is for the Yoga that they come, when they are elsewhere, the will for the Yoga remains with them there. You have to get rid of your constant reasonings and see whether you can do without the impulse towards Yoga or not — if you cannot, then it is useless thinking of the ordinary life without Yoga — your nature will compel you to seek after it even if you have to seek all your life with a small result. But the small result

is mainly due to the mind which always came in the way and the vital weakness which gives it its support for its reasonings. If you fixed your will irrevocably, that would give you a chance — and whether you followed it here or elsewhere would make only a minor difference.

I suggested the Gita method for you because the opening which is necessary for the Yoga here seems to be too difficult for you. If you made a less strenuous demand upon yourself, there might be a greater chance. In any case, if you cannot return to the ordinary life, it seems, in the absence of an opening to the Power that is here, the only course for you.

Chapter Six

The Adwaita of Shankaracharya

Shankara's Mayavada

If Shankara's conception of the undifferentiated pure Consciousness as the Brahman is your view of it, then it is not the path of this Yoga that you should choose; for here the realisation of pure Consciousness and Being is only a first step and not the goal. But an inner creative urge from within can have no place in an undifferentiated Consciousness — all action and creation must necessarily be foreign to it.

I do not base my Yoga on the insufficient ground that the Self (not soul) is eternally free. That affirmation leads to nothing beyond itself, or, if used as a starting-point, it could equally well lead to the conclusion that action and creation have no significance or value. The question is not that but of the meaning of creation, whether there is a Supreme who is not merely a pure undifferentiated Consciousness and Being, but the source and support also of the dynamic energy of creation and whether the cosmic existence has for It a significance and a value. That is a question which cannot be settled by metaphysical logic which deals in words and ideas, but by a spiritual experience which goes beyond Mind and enters into spiritual realities. Each mind is satisfied with its own reasoning, but for spiritual purposes that satisfaction has no validity, except as an indication of how far and on what line each one is prepared to go in the field of spiritual experience. If your reasoning leads you towards the Shankara idea of the Supreme, that might be an indication that the Vedanta Adwaita (Mayavada) is your way of advance.

This Yoga accepts the value of cosmic existence and holds it to be a reality; its object is to enter into a higher Truth-Consciousness or Divine Supramental Consciousness in which action and creation are the expression not of ignorance and imperfection, but of the Truth, the Light, the Divine Ananda.

But for that, surrender of the mortal mind, life and body to that Higher Consciousness is indispensable, since it is too difficult for the mortal human being to pass by its own effort beyond mind to a supramental consciousness in which the dynamism is no longer mental but of quite another power. Only those who can accept the call to such a change should enter into this Yoga.

*

The Shankara knowledge is, as your Guru pointed out, only one side of the Truth; it is the knowledge of the Supreme as realised by the spiritual Mind through the static silence of the pure Existence. It was because he went by this side only that Shankara was unable to accept or explain the origin of the universe except as illusion, a creation of Maya. Unless one realises the Supreme on the dynamic as well as the static side, one cannot experience the true origin of things and the equal reality of the active Brahman. The Shakti or Power of the Eternal becomes then a power of illusion only and the world becomes incomprehensible, a mystery of cosmic madness, an eternal delirium of the Eternal. Whatever verbal or ideative logic one may bring to support it, this way of seeing the universe explains nothing; it only erects a mental formula of the inexplicable. It is only if you approach the Supreme through his double aspect of Sat and Chit-Shakti, double but inseparable, that the total truth of things can become manifest to the inner experience. The other side was developed by the Shakta Tantrics. The two together, the Vedantic and the Tantric truth unified, can arrive at the integral knowledge.

But philosophically this is what your Guru's teaching comes to and it is obviously a completer truth and a wider knowledge than that given by the Shankara formula. It is already indicated in the Gita's teaching of the Purushottama and the Parashakti (Adya Shakti) who becomes the Jiva and upholds the universe. It is evident that Purushottama and Parashakti are both eternal and are inseparable and one in being; the Parashakti manifests the universe, manifests too the Divine in the universe as the Ishwara and herself appears at his side as the Ishwari Shakti. Or, one may say, it is the Supreme Consciousness-Power of the

Supreme that manifests or puts forth itself as Ishwara Ishwari, Atma Atmashakti, Purusha Prakriti, Jiva Jagat. That is the truth in its completeness as far as the mind can formulate it. In the Supermind these questions do not even arise — for it is the mind that creates the problem by erecting oppositions between aspects of the Divine which are not really opposed to each other but are one and inseparable.

This supramental knowledge has not yet been attained, because the supermind itself has not been attained, but the reflection of it in intuitive spiritual consciousness is there and that was what was evidently realised in experience by your Guru and what he was expressing in mental terms in the quoted passage. It is possible to go towards this knowledge by beginning with the experience of dissolution in the One, but on condition that you do not stop there, taking it as the highest Truth, but proceed to realise the same One as the supreme Mother, the Consciousness Force of the Eternal. If on the other hand you approach through the supreme Mother, she will give you the liberation in the silent One also as well as the realisation of the dynamic One and from that it is easier to arrive at the Truth in which both are one and inseparable. At the same time the gulf created by Mind between the Supreme and his Manifestation is bridged and there is no longer a fissure in the truth which makes all incomprehensible. If in the light of this you examine what your Guru taught, you will see that it is the same thing in less metaphysical language.

*

They [*two philosophers*] want to show that Shankara was not so savagely illusionist as he is represented — that he gave a certain temporary reality to the world, admitted Shakti etc. But these (supposing he made them) are concessions inconsistent with the logic of his own philosophy which is that only the Brahman exists and the rest is ignorance and illusion. The rest has only a temporary and therefore an illusory reality in Maya. He farther maintained that Brahman could not be reached by works. If that was not his philosophy, I should like to know what was his philosophy. At any rate that was how his philosophy has been

understood by people. Now that the general turn is away from the rigorous Illusionism, many of the Adwaitins seem to want to hedge and make Shankara hedge with them.

Vivekananda accepted Shankara's philosophy with modifications, the chief of them being Daridra-Narayan-seva which is a mixture of Buddhist compassion and modern philanthropy.

*

I believe according to the Adwaitins God is only the reflection of Brahman in Maya — just as Brahman is seen outwardly as the world which has only a practical not a real reality, so subjectively Brahman is seen as God, Bhagavan, Ishwara, and that also would be a practical not a real reality — which is and can be only the relationless Brahman all by itself in a worldless eternity. At least that is what I have read — I don't know whether Shankara himself says that. One is always being told by modern Adwaitins that Shankara did not mean what people say he meant — so one has to be careful in attributing any opinion to him.

*

Of course Shankara must have meant Mayavada. It is hardly possible that everybody should have misunderstood his ideas (which were not in the least veiled or enigmatic) till his modern apologists discovered what they really were.

*

Shankara surely stands or falls by the Mayavada. Even the *Bhaja Govindam* poem is Mayavadic in spirit. I am not well-acquainted with these other writings¹ — so it is difficult for me to say anything about that side of the question.

*

Chittashuddhi belongs to Rajayoga. In the pure Adwaita the method is rather to detach oneself by vichara and viveka and

¹ *Writings attributed to Shankara such as Prabodhasudhākara. The correspondent asked whether Shankara changed his view from Mayavada to Lilavada later in his life.* — Ed.

realise “I am not the mind, not the life, etc. etc.” In that case, no shuddhi would be necessary — the self would separate from the nature good or bad and regard it as a machinery which having no more the support of the egoless man would fall away of itself along with the body. Of course chittashuddhi can be resorted to also, but for cessation of the chittavrittis, not for their better dynamism as an instrument of the Divine. Shankara insists that all karma must fall off before one can be liberated — the soul must realise itself as *akartā*, there is no salvation in or by works in the pure Yoga of knowledge. So how could Shankara recognise dynamism? Even if he recognises chittashuddhi as necessary, it must be as a preparation for getting rid of karma, not for anything else.

Mayavada and Nirvana

About Nirvana:

When I wrote in the *Arya*, I was setting forth an overmind view of things to the mind and putting it in mental terms, that was why I had sometimes to use logic. For in such a work — mediating between the intellect and the supra-intellectual — logic has a place, though it cannot have the chief place it occupies in purely mental philosophies. The Mayavadin himself labours to establish his point of view or his experience by a rigorous logical reasoning. Only, when it comes to an explanation of Maya he, like the scientist dealing with Nature, can do no more than arrange and organise his ideas of the process of this universal mystification; he cannot explain how or why his illusionary mystifying Maya came into existence. He can only say, “Well, but it is there.”

Of course, it is there. But the question is, first, “What is it? is it really an illusionary Power and nothing else, or is the Mayavadin’s idea of it a mistaken first view, a mental imperfect reading, even perhaps itself an illusion?” And next, “Is illusion the sole or the highest Power which the Divine Consciousness or Superconsciousness possesses?” The Absolute is an absolute Truth free from Maya, otherwise liberation would not be

possible. Has then the supreme and absolute Truth no other active Power than a power of falsehood and with it, no doubt, for the two go together, a power of dissolving or disowning the falsehood, — which is yet there for ever? I suggested that this sounded a little queer. But queer or not, if it is so, it is so — for as you point out, the Ineffable cannot be subjected to the laws of logic.

But who is to decide whether it is so? You will say, those who get there. But get where? To the Perfect and the Highest, *pūrṇam param*. Is the Mayavadin's featureless Brahman that Perfect, that Complete — is it the very Highest? Is there not or can there not be a higher than that highest, *parātparam*? That is not a question of logic, it is a question of spiritual fact, of a supreme and complete experience. The solution of the matter must rest not upon logic, but upon a growing, ever heightening, widening spiritual experience — an experience which must of course include or have passed through that of Nirvana and Maya, otherwise it would not be complete and would have no decisive value.

Now to reach Nirvana was the first radical result of my own Yoga. It threw me suddenly into a condition above and without thought, unstained by any mental or vital movement; there was no ego, no real world — only when one looked through the immobile senses, something perceived or bore upon its sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without true substance. There was no One or many even, only just absolutely That, featureless, relationless, sheer, indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real. This was no mental realisation nor something glimpsed somewhere above, — no abstraction — it was positive, the only positive reality — although not a spatial physical world, pervading, occupying or rather flooding and drowning this semblance of a physical world, leaving no room or space for any reality but itself, allowing nothing else to seem at all actual, positive or substantial. I cannot say there was anything exhilarating or rapturous in the experience, as it then came to me, — the ineffable Ananda I had years afterwards, — but what it brought was an inexpressible Peace, a

stupendous silence, an infinity of release and freedom. I lived in that Nirvana day and night before it began to admit other things into itself or modify itself at all, and the inner heart of experience, a constant memory of it and its power to return remained until in the end it began to disappear into a greater Superconsciousness from above. But meanwhile realisation added itself to realisation and fused itself with this original experience. At an early stage the aspect of an illusionary world gave place to one in which illusion² is only a small surface phenomenon with an immense Divine Reality behind it and a supreme Divine Reality above it and an intense Divine Reality in the heart of everything that had seemed at first only a cinematic shape or shadow. And this was no reimprisonment in the senses, no diminution or fall from supreme experience, it came rather as a constant heightening and widening of the Truth; it was the spirit that saw objects, not the senses, and the Peace, the Silence, the freedom in Infinity remained always with the world or all worlds only as a continuous incident in the timeless eternity of the Divine.

Now that is the whole trouble in my approach to Mayavada. Nirvana in my liberated consciousness turned out to be the beginning of my realisation, a first step towards the complete thing, not the sole true attainment possible or even a culminating finale. It came unasked, unsought for, though quite welcome. I had no least idea about it before, no aspiration towards it, in fact my aspiration was towards just the opposite, spiritual power to help the world and do my work in it, yet it came — without even a “May I come in” or a “By your leave”. It just happened and settled in as if for all eternity or as if it had been really there always. And then it slowly grew into something not less but greater than its first self! How then could I accept Mayavada or persuade myself to pit against the Truth imposed on me from above the logic of Shankara?

But I do not insist on everybody passing through my experience or following the Truth that is its consequence. I have

² In fact it is not an illusion in the sense of an imposition of something baseless and unreal on the consciousness, but a misinterpretation by the conscious mind and sense and a falsifying misuse of manifested existence.

no objection to anybody accepting Mayavada as his soul's truth or his mind's truth or their way out of the cosmic difficulty. I object to it only if somebody tries to push it down my throat or the world's throat as the sole possible, satisfying and all-comprehensive explanation of things. For it is not that at all. There are many other possible explanations; it is not at all satisfactory, for in the end it explains nothing; and it is — and must be unless it departs from its own logic — all-exclusive, not in the least all-comprehensive. But that does not matter. A theory may be wrong or at least one-sided and imperfect and yet extremely practical and useful. That has been amply shown by the history of science. In fact a theory whether philosophical or scientific is nothing else than a support for the mind, a practical device to help it to deal with its object, a staff to uphold it and make it walk more confidently and get along on its difficult journey. The very exclusiveness and one-sidedness of the Mayavada make it a strong staff or a forceful stimulus for a spiritual endeavour which means to be one-sided, radical and exclusive. It supports the effort of the Mind to get away from itself and from Life by a short cut into superconscience. Or rather it is the Purusha in Mind that wants to get away from the limitations of Mind and Life into the superconscient Infinite. Theoretically, the most radical way for that is for the mind to deny all its perceptions and all the preoccupations of the vital and see and treat them as illusions. Practically, when the mind draws back from itself, it enters easily into a relationless peace in which nothing matters — for in its absoluteness there are no mental or vital values — and from which the mind can rapidly move towards that great short cut to the Superconscient, mindless trance, *susupti*. In proportion to the thoroughness of that movement all the perceptions it had once accepted become unreal to it — illusion, Maya. It is on its road towards immergence.

Mayavada, therefore, with its sole stress on Nirvana, quite apart from its defects as a mental theory of things, serves a great spiritual end and, as a path, can lead very high and far. Even, if the Mind were the last word and there were nothing beyond it except the pure Spirit, I would not be averse to accepting it as

the only way out. For what the mind with its perceptions and the vital with its desires have made of life in this world, is a very bad mess, and if there were nothing better to be hoped for, the shortest cut to an exit would be the best. But my experience is that there is something beyond Mind; Mind is not the last word here of the Spirit. Mind is an ignorance-consciousness and its perceptions cannot be anything else than either false, mixed or imperfect — even when “true”, a partial reflection of the Truth and not the very body of Truth herself. But there is a Truth-Consciousness, not static only and self-introspective, but also dynamic and creative, and I prefer to get at that and see what it says about things and can do rather than take the short cut away from things offered as its own end by the Ignorance.

Still, I would have no objection, if your attraction towards Nirvana were not merely a mood of the mind and vital but an indication of the mind's true road and the soul's issue. But it seems to me that it is only the vital recoiling from its own disappointed desires in an extreme dissatisfaction, not the soul leaping gladly to its true path. This vairagya is itself a vital movement; vital vairagya is the reverse side of vital desire — though the mind of course is there to give reasons and say ditto. Even this vairagya, if it is one-pointed and exclusive, can lead or can point towards Nirvana. But you have many sides to your personality or rather many personalities in you; it is indeed their discordant movements each getting in the way of the other, as happens when they are expressed through the external mind, that have stood much in the way of your sadhana. There is the vital personality which was turned towards success and enjoyment and got it and wanted to go on with it but could not get the rest of the being to follow. There is the vital personality that wanted enjoyment of a deeper kind and suggested to the other that it could very well give up these unsatisfactory things if it got an equivalent in some faeryland of a higher joy. There is the psycho-vital personality that is the Vaishnava within you and wanted the Divine Krishna and bhakti and Ananda. There is the personality which is the poet and musician and a seeker of beauty through these things. There is the mental-vital personality which when it saw the vital

standing in the way insisted on a grim struggle of Tapasya, and it is no doubt that also which approves vairagya and Nirvana. There is the physical-mental personality which is the Russellite, extrovert, doubter. There is another mental-emotional personality all whose ideas are for belief in the Divine, Yoga, bhakti, Guruvada. There is the psychic being also which has pushed you into the sadhana and is waiting for its hour of emergence.

What are you going to do with all these people? If you want Nirvana, you have either to expel them or stifle them or beat them into coma. All authorities assure us that this exclusive Nirvana business is a most difficult job (*duḥkham dehavadbbhiḥ* says the Gita), and your own fatal attempt at suppressing the others was not encouraging, — according to your own account it left you as dry and desperate as a sucked orange, no juice left anywhere. If the desert is your way to the promised land, that does not matter. But —

Well, if it is not, then there is another way — it is what we call the integration, the harmonisation of the being. That cannot be done from outside, it cannot be done by the mind and vital being — they are sure to bungle their affair. It can be done only from within by the soul, the Spirit which is the centraliser, itself the centre of these radii. In all of them there is a truth that can harmonise with the true truth of the others. For there is a truth in Nirvana — Nirvana is nothing but the peace and freedom of the Spirit which can exist in itself, be there world or no world, world-order or world-disorder. Bhakti and the heart's call for the Divine have a truth — it is the truth of the divine Love and Ananda. The will for Tapasya has in it a truth — it is the truth of the Spirit's mastery over its members. The musician and poet stand for a truth, it is the truth of the expression of the Spirit through beauty. There is a truth behind the mental Affirmer; even there is a truth behind the mental doubter, the Russellian, though far behind him — the truth of the denial of false forms. Even behind the two vital personalities there is a truth, the truth of the possession of the inner and outer worlds — not by the ego but by the Divine. That is the harmonisation for which our Yoga stands — but it cannot be achieved by any

outward arrangement, it can only be achieved by going inside and looking, willing and acting from the psychic and from the spiritual centre. For the truth of the being is there and the secret of Harmony also is there.

The Illusionist Metaphors

The illusionist metaphors all fail when you drive them home — they are themselves an illusion. Identification with the body is an error, not an illusion. We are not the body, but the body is still something of ourselves. With realisation the erroneous identification ceases — in certain experiences the existence of the body is not felt at all. In the full realisation the body is within us, not we in it, it is an instrumental formation in our wider being — our consciousness exceeds but also pervades it; it can be dissolved without our ceasing to be the self. That is about all.

*

Your objection is correct. The snake-rope image cannot be used to illustrate the non-existence of the world, it would only mean that our seeing of the world is not that of the world as it really is. The idea of complete illusion would better be illustrated by the juggler's rope-climbing trick, where there is no rope and no climber, and yet one is persuaded that they are there.

Laya

According to both Buddha and Shankara liberation means *laya* of the individual in some transcendent Permanence that is not individualised — so logically a belief in the individual soul must prevent liberation while the sense of misery in the world leads to the attempt to escape.

*

The impulse towards *laya* is a creation of the mind, it is not the sole possible destiny of the soul. When the mind tries to abolish its own Ignorance, it finds no escape from it except *laya*,

because it supposes that there is no higher principle of cosmic existence beyond itself — beyond itself is only the pure Spirit, the absolute impersonal Divine. Those who go through the heart (love, bhakti) do not accept laya, they believe in a state beyond of eternal companionship with the Divine or dwelling in the Divine without laya. All this quite apart from supramentalisation. What then becomes of your starting point that laya is the inevitable destiny of the soul and it is only the personal descent of the Avatar that saves it from inevitable laya?

*

There were two points of error [*in the correspondent's remarks about laya*]. (1) That the soul formerly had no other possibility once it reached the Divine than laya. There were other possibilities, e.g. passing into a higher plane, living in the Divine or in the presence of the Divine. Both imply the refusal of birth and leaving the Lila on earth. (2) That it was only for the sake of living with the incarnate Divine and by reason of this descent that the soul consented to give up laya. The capital point is the supramentalisation of the being which is the Divine intention in the evolution on earth and cannot fail to come; the descent or incarnation is only an instrumentation for bringing that about. Your statement therefore became wrong by incompleteness.

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It is the Vedantic Advaita experience of laya. It is only one phase of experience — not the whole or the highest Truth of the Divine.

Chapter Seven

Tantra

Tantra and the Integral Yoga

Veda and Vedanta are one side of the one Truth; Tantra with its emphasis on Shakti is another. In this Yoga all sides of the Truth are taken up, not in the systematic forms given them formerly, but in their essence and carried to the fullest and highest significance. But Vedanta deals more with the principles and essentials of the divine knowledge and therefore much of its spiritual knowledge and experience has been taken bodily into the *Arya*. Tantra deals more with forms and processes and organised powers — all these could not be taken as they were, for the integral Yoga needs to develop its own forms and processes, but the ascent of the consciousness through the centres and other Tantrik knowledge are there behind the process of transformation to which so much importance is given by me — also the truth that nothing can be done except through the force of the Mother.

*

The ascension and descent of the Force in this Yoga accomplishes itself in its own way without any necessary reproduction of the details laid down in the books [*on Tantra*]. Many become conscious of the centres, but others simply feel the ascent or descent in a general way or from level to level rather than from centre to centre, that is to say, the Force descending first to the head, then to the heart, then to the navel and still below. It is not at all necessary to become aware of the deities in the centres according to the Tantrik description, but some feel the Mother in the different centres. In these things our sadhana does not cleave to the knowledge given in the books, but only keeps to the central truth behind and realises it independently without any subjection to the old forms and symbols. The centres themselves

have a different interpretation here from that given in the books of the Tantriks.

Kundalini, the Chakras and the Integral Yoga

The process of the Kundalini awakened rising through the centres as also the purification of the centres is a Tantrik knowledge. In our Yoga there is no willed process of the purification and opening of the centres, no raising up of the Kundalini by a set process either. Another method is used, but still there is the ascent of the consciousness from and through the different levels to join the higher consciousness above; there is the opening of the centres and of the planes (mental, vital, physical) which these centres command; there is also the descent which is the main key of the spiritual transformation. Therefore there is, I have said, a Tantrik knowledge behind the process of transformation in this Yoga.

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There is [*in the Integral Yoga*] no willed opening of the chakras, they open of themselves by the descent of the Force. In the Tantrik discipline they open from down upwards, the Muladhara first — in our Yoga, they open from up downward. But the ascent of the force from the Muladhara does take place.

*

The ascent of the Kundalini — not its descent, so far as I know — is a recognised phenomenon; there is one that corresponds in our Yoga, the feeling of the consciousness ascending from the vital or physical to meet the higher consciousness. This is not necessarily through the chakras but is often felt in the whole body. Similarly the descent of the higher consciousness is not felt necessarily or usually through the chakras but as occupying the whole head, neck, chest, abdomen, body.

*

In the Tantra the centres are opened and Kundalini is awakened

by a special process, its action of ascent is felt through the spine. Here it is the pressure of the Force from above that awakens it and opens the centres. There is an ascension of the consciousness going up till it joins the higher consciousness above. This repeats itself (sometimes a descent also is felt) until all the centres are open and the consciousness rises above the body. At a later stage it remains above and widens out into the cosmic consciousness and the universal Self. This is a usual course, but sometimes the process is more rapid and there is a sudden and definite opening above.

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It [*a force in the navel region rising upward in a coiling, pulsating movement*] is what is meant by the Kundalini rising towards the Brahmarandhra — not the whole of it, but something of it is released coiling or circling upward with vibrations (*spandana*) from the Muladhara. It is not always felt like that. Sometimes one simply feels currents or a Force of some kind rising up or just an ascending movement of consciousness. But in all cases it is the release of the Yogic consciousness which is shut up in the chakras and its ascent to meet the Divine Consciousness above. It is this and the corresponding descent from above that make Yogic experiences and realisations possible.

*

It [*the Kundalini*] is the Yogic force asleep in the Muladhara and covered up in the other centres by the ordinary consciousness. When it is liberated, it rises up to join the Brahmic (Divine) consciousness above passing through the centres on its way.

*

There is no Kundalini Shakti above the head. Above the head is the universal or Divine Consciousness and Force. The Kundalini is the latent power asleep in the chakras.

*

The Energy in the Kundalini is the Mother's.

*

I am afraid the attempt to apply scientific analogies to spiritual or Yogic things leads more often to confusion than to anything else,—just as it creates confusion if thrust upon philosophy also. Kundalini coiled in the Muladhara is asleep, plunged in the inconscience, supporting the play of the Ignorance. Naturally if she heaves up from there, there may be a disturbance or disruption of the states of the Ignorance, but that would be rather a salutary upheaval and helpful to the purpose of Yoga. Kundalini becoming conscious rises up to meet the Brahman in the thousand-petalled lotus. A mere ejection from her uniting with the higher consciousness would hardly lead to a radical change. Of course she need not abandon connection with the physical centre altogether; but she is no longer coiled there: if she were, the great occult force residing there would not be liberated. The usual image of her risen and awake is, I believe, that of a serpent standing erect, the tail touching the lowest centre, the head the highest at the Brahmarandhra. Thus with all the centres open and active she unites the two poles, superior and inferior, of the being, the spirit with Matter.

*

Sri Aurobindo¹ cannot undertake to guide you as your Guru, for the reason that he takes as disciples only those who follow his special path of Yoga; your experiences follow a different line. In his Yoga there may be an occasional current in the spine as in other nerve channels or different parts of the body, but no awakening of the Kundalini in this particular and powerful fashion. There is only a quiet uprising of the consciousness from the lower centres to join the spiritual consciousness above and a descent of the Divine Force from above which does its own work in the mind and body — the manner and stages varying in each sadhak. A perfect confidence in the Divine Mother and a vigilance to repel all wrong suggestions and influences is the main law of this Yoga. Your opening having once been so powerful on

¹ This letter was written by Sri Aurobindo in the third person and sent to the enquirer through his secretary. — Ed.

the more usual Tantric lines (even without your own will intervening), it is hardly probable that it could now change easily to other lines — any such effort might create a serious disturbance. In speaking of a competent Guru Sri Aurobindo meant one who had himself practised this opening of the centres and become siddha in that line of Yoga. It should not be impossible to find one — when one has the call for the Guru, the Guru sooner or later comes. Meanwhile to put away fear and have confidence in the Divine working is indispensable — but no effort should be made to force the pace by concentrated meditation unless you have a guide whom you can trust — a clear guidance from within or a guide from without. The inspiration about the Ida nadi and the subsequent waking of the Shakti show that there was an intervention at a critical moment and that the call to it whenever needed is likely to be effective.

In the experiences proper related in your first letter there is absolutely nothing that should have disturbed you — all was quite normal, the usual experiences of the Yogin at such a juncture and very good and powerful, such as do not come except by the grace of the Divine. Probably the opening came after slow invisible preparation as a result of the meditation on the lotus at the top of the head; for that is always an invitation to the Kundalini to awake or for the lower consciousness to rise and meet the higher. The disturbing factor came with the feeling of discomfort in the heart due to some resistance in the physical being which is very often felt and can be overcome by the working of the Force itself and the fear that came afterwards in the seats of the vital Nature, heart, navel etc. But that was no part of the experience, it was an interference by a wrong reaction from the lower or exterior consciousness. If you had not allowed yourself to be disturbed, probably nothing untoward would have disturbed the process. One must not get frightened by unusual states or movements or experiences, the Yogi must be fearless, *abhīḥ*; it is absurd to have a fear because one can control one's states; that is a power very much to be desired and welcomed in Yoga.

The crisis related in the second letter would hardly have

come, if there had not been this reaction; but in any case there was the intervention and setting right of the trouble. However these reactions and the fact that the disturbance came show that something in the exterior consciousness is not altogether prepared; it is better to wait and seek for a guide so that ignorant steps or reactions may not bring again a serious trouble or danger. This is all that Sri Aurobindo can say by way of enlightenment and advice. He does not usually intervene with anyone not his disciple, but as your case was an unusual one and your call urgent, he has given you what light he can on your experience.

Levels of Speech (Vak)

The Tantriks locate these forms of speech in different chakras. Speech may be internal or external, either may have the stamp of the same power. But if it is to be measured by withdrawal from externality, then Para ought to mean something of the causal realm beyond mind.

*

Pashyanti is evidently speech with the vision of Truth in it — Para is probably the revelatory and inspired speech. I am not certain about the exact nature of the others [*Vaikhari and Madhyama*].

Chapter Eight

Bhakti Yoga and Vaishnavism

The Vaishnava Theory and Sadhana

They [*the Vaishnavas*] accept the world as a Lila, but the true Lila is elsewhere in the eternal Brindavan. All the religions which believe in the personal Godhead accept the universe as a reality, a Lila or a creation made by the will of God, but temporal and not eternal. The aim is the eternal status above.

*

The idea of a temporary Kingdom of heaven on earth is contained in the Puranas and conceived by some Vaishnava saints or poets; but it is a devotional idea, no philosophical basis is given for the expectation. I think the Tantric overcoming of imperfection is more individual, not collective.

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It is the Vaishnava theory — that if you only repeat the name of Hari it is enough — nothing else needed. Even if you do it by accident, you will go posthaste to Heaven. It has always seemed to be the apotheosis of laziness and incompetence. There are plenty of people who have a little Bhakti for Krishna but I don't find them revelling in all the fruits of tapasya.

*

If you can feel the Name bringing you peace, it should be able to bring everything else, bhakti, joy, the revelation of the Power and the Presence and the full feeling and consciousness of it to you. That is indeed the process of the Vaishnava sadhana and the power of the Name in it. Only, keep your poise and persevere.

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The Supramental is something in which the basis is absolute calm

and however intense a Divine Love there is in it it does not disturb the calm but increases its depth. Chaitanya's experience was not that of Supermind, but of a Love and Ananda brought from above into the vital — the response of the vital is an extreme passion and exultation of Godward love and Ananda, the result of which is these *vikāras*. Chaitanya claimed this supremacy for the Radha experience because Ananda is higher than the experiences of the spiritual mind, Ananda being according to the Upanishads the supreme plane of experience. But this is a logical conclusion which cannot be accepted wholly — one must pass through the supermind to arrive to the highest Ananda and in the supermind there is a unification and harmonisation of all the divine Powers (Knowledge, etc. as well as Love and Ananda). Different sadhanas emphasise one aspect or another as the highest, but it is this union of all that must be the true base of the highest realisation and experience.

Vaishnava Bhakti and the Integral Yoga

It is not necessary to repeat past forms [*of Bhakti Yoga*] — to bring out the bhakti of the psychic being and give it whatever forms come naturally in the development is the proper way for our sadhana.

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What three signs [*of the Paramhansa*] ? If you refer to the four conditions (child, madman, demon, inert), it is not Ramakrishna who invented that. It is an old Sanskrit sloka, *bālonmādaṭṭiśāca-jaḍavat*, describing the Paramhansa or rather the various forms of Paramhansahood. The Paramhansa is a particular grade of realisation, there are others supposed to be lower or higher.

I have no objection to them [*vital manifestations of love and bhakti*] in their own place. But I must remind you that in my Yoga all vital movements must come under the control of the psychic and of the spiritual calm, knowledge and peace. If they conflict with the psychic or the spiritual control, they upset the balance and prevent the forming of the base of transformation.

If unbalance is good for other paths, that is the business of those who follow them. It does not suit mine.

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Everybody must be made to understand clearly that this is not a sadhana of emotional and egoistic *bhakti*, but of surrender. One who makes demands and threatens to commit suicide if his demands are not complied with, is not meant for this Yoga. . . .

This Yoga is not a Yoga of emotional egoistic vital *bhakti* full of demands and desires. There is no room in it for *ābdār* of any kind. It is only for those who surrender to the Divine and obey implicitly the directions given to them by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The True Vaishnava Attitude

Your whole-hearted acceptance of the Vaishnava idea and *bhakti* becomes rather bewildering when it is coupled with an insistence that love cannot be given to the Divine until one has experience of the Divine. For what is more common in the Vaishnava attitude than the joy of *bhakti* for its own sake? “Give me *bhakti*,” it cries, “whatever else you may keep from me. Even if it is long before I can meet you, even if you delay to manifest yourself, let my *bhakti*, my seeking for you, my cry, my love, my adoration be always there.” How constantly the Bhakta has sung, “All my life I have been seeking you and still you are not there, but still I seek and cannot cease to seek and love and adore.” If it were really impossible to love God unless you first experience him, how could this be? In fact your mind seems to be putting the cart before the horse. One seeks after God first, with persistence or with passion, one finds him afterwards, some sooner than others, but most after a long seeking. One does not find him first, then seek after him. Even a glimpse only comes after long or fervent seeking. One has the love of God or at any rate some heart’s desire for him and afterwards one becomes aware of God’s love, its reply to the heart’s desire, its response of the supreme joy and Ananda. One does not say to God, “Show your love for

me first, shower on me the experience of yourself, satisfy my demand, then I will see whether I can love you so long as you deserve it.” It is surely the seeker who must seek and love first, follow the quest, become impassioned for the Sought — then only does the veil move aside and the Light be seen and the Face manifest that alone can satisfy the soul after its long sojourn in the desert.

Then again you may say, “Yes, but whether I love or not, I want, I have always wanted and now I want more and more, but I get nothing.” Yes, but wanting is not all. As you now begin to see, there are conditions that have to be met — like the purification of the heart. Your thesis was, “Once I want God, God must manifest to me, come to me, at least give glimpses of himself to me, the real solid concrete experiences, not mere vague things which I can’t understand or value. God’s Grace must answer my call for it, whether I yet deserve it or not — or else there is no Grace.” God’s Grace may indeed do that in certain cases, but where does the “must” come in? If God must do it, it is no longer God’s Grace, but God’s duty or an obligation or a contract or a treaty. The Divine looks into the heart and removes the veil at the moment which he knows to be the right moment to do it. You have laid stress on the bhakti theory that one has only to call his name and he must reply, he must at once be there. Perhaps, but for whom is this true? For a certain kind of Bhakta surely who feels the power of the Name, who has the passion of the Name and puts it into his cry. If one is like that, then there may be the immediate reply — if not, one has to become like that, then there will be the reply. But some go on using the Name for years, before there is an answer. Ramakrishna himself got it after a few months, but what months! and what a condition he had to pass through before he got it! Still he succeeded quickly because he had a pure heart already — and that divine passion in it.

It is not surely the Bhakta but the man of knowledge who demands experience first. He can say, “How can I know without experience?”, but even he goes on seeking like Tota Puri even though for thirty years, striving for the decisive realisation. It is

really the man of intellect, the rationalist who says, “Let God, if he exists, prove himself to me first, then I will believe, then I will make some serious and prolonged effort to explore him and see what he is like.”

All this does not mean that experience is irrelevant to *sadhana* — I certainly cannot have said such a stupid thing. What I have said is that the love and seeking of the Divine can be and ordinarily is there before the experience comes — it is an instinct, an inherent longing in the soul and it comes up as soon as certain coverings of the soul disappear or begin to disappear. The next thing I have said is that it is better to get the nature ready first (the purified heart and all that) before the “experiences” begin rather than the other way round and I base that on the many cases there have been of the danger of experiences before the heart and vital are ready for the true experience. Of course in many cases there is a true experience first, a touch of the Grace, but it is not something that lasts and is always there, but rather something that touches and withdraws and waits for the nature to get ready. But this is not so in every case, not even in many cases, I believe. One has to begin with the soul’s inherent longing, then the struggle with the nature to get the temple ready, then the unveiling of the Image, the permanent Presence in the sanctuary.

P.S. All this is of course only an answer couched in mental terms to your one objection or inability to conceive how one can love God without having first known Him or had experience of Him. But mental reasoning by itself leads to nothing — it is something in yourself that has to see and then there is no difficulty. Fortunately, you are moving near to that. Nor would I trouble at all about this point, if you did not make of it a support for depression and despair. Otherwise it would have no importance, since with one idea or with the other one can arrive at the goal because the soul drives towards it.

The Sunlit Way of Yoga

Peace was the very first thing that the Yogins and seekers of old

asked for and it was a quiet and silent mind — and that always brings peace — that they declared to be the best condition for realising the Divine. A cheerful and sunlit heart is the fit vessel for the Ananda and who shall say that Ananda or what prepares it is an obstacle to the Divine union? As for despondency, it is surely a terrible burden to carry on the way. One has to pass through it sometimes, like Christian of *The Pilgrim's Progress* through the Slough of Despond, but its constant reiteration cannot be anything but an obstacle. The Gita specially says, "Practise the Yoga with an undespondent heart", *anirvinñacetasā*.

I know perfectly well that pain and suffering and struggle and excesses of despair are natural — though not inevitable — on the way, — not because they are helps, but because they are imposed on us by the darkness of this human nature out of which we have to struggle into the Light. I do not suppose Ramakrishna or Vivekananda would have recommended the incidents you allude to as an example for others to follow — they would surely have said that faith, fortitude, perseverance were the better way. That after all was what they stuck to in the end in spite of these bad moments and they would never have dreamed of giving up the Yoga or the aspiration for the Divine on the ground that they were unfit and not meant for the realisation.

At any rate Ramakrishna told the story of Narada and the ascetic Yogi and the Vaishnava Bhakta with approval of its moral. I put it in my own language but keep the substance. Narada on his way to Vaikuntha met a Yogi practising hard tapasya on the hills. "O Narada," cried the Yogi, "you are going to Vaikuntha and will see Vishnu. I have been practising terrific austerities all my life and yet I have not even now attained to Him. Ask Him at least for me when I shall reach Him." Then Narada met a Vaishnava, a Bhakta who was singing songs to Hari and dancing to his own singing, and he cried also, "O Narada, you will see my Lord, Hari. Ask my Lord when I shall reach Him and see His face." On his way back Narada came first to the Yogi. "I have asked Vishnu; you will realise Him after six more lives." The Yogi raised a cry of loud lamentation,

“What, so many austerities! such gigantic endeavours! and my reward is realisation after six long lives! O how hard to me is the Lord Vishnu.” Next Narada met again the Bhakta and said to him, “I have no good news for you. You will see the Lord, but only after a lakh of lives.” But the Bhakta leapt up with a great cry of rapture, “Oh, I shall see my Lord Hari! after a lakh of lives I shall see my Lord Hari! How great is the grace of the Lord.” And he began dancing and singing in a renewed ecstasy. Then Narada said, “Thou hast attained. Today thou shalt see the Lord!” Well, you may say, “What an extravagant story and how contrary to human nature!” Not so contrary as all that and in any case hardly more extravagant than the stories of Harishchandra and Shivi. Still I do not hold up the Bhakta as an example, for I myself insist on the realisation in this life and not after six or a lakh of births more. But the point of these stories is in the moral and surely when Ramakrishna told it, he was not ignorant that there was a sunlit path of Yoga! He even seems to say that it is the quicker way as well as the better! You are quite mistaken in thinking that the possibility of the sunlit path is a discovery or original invention of mine. The very first books on Yoga I read more than thirty years ago spoke of the dark and sunlit way and emphasised the superiority of the second over the other.

It is not either because I have myself trod the sunlit way or flinched from difficulty and suffering and danger. I have had my full share of these things and the Mother has had ten times her full share. But that was because the finders of the Way had to face these things in order to conquer. No difficulty that can come on the sadhak but has faced us on the path; against many we have had to struggle hundreds of times (in fact that is an understatement) before we could overcome; many still remain protesting that they have a right until the perfect perfection is there. But we have never consented to admit their inevitable necessity for others. It is in fact to ensure an easier path to others hereafter that we have borne that burden. It was with that object that the Mother once prayed to the Divine that whatever difficulties, dangers, sufferings were necessary for the path might be laid on

her rather than on others. It has been so far heard that as a result of daily and terrible struggles for years those who put an entire and sincere confidence in her *are* able to follow the sunlit path and even those who cannot, yet when they do put the trust find their path suddenly easy and, if it becomes difficult again, it is only when distrust, revolt, abhiman, or other darkneses come upon them. The sunlit path is not altogether a fable.

But you will ask what of those who cannot? Well, it is for them I am putting forth all my efforts to bring down the supramental Force within a measurable time. I know that it will descend but I am seeking its near descent and, with whatever dark obstruction of the earth-nature or furious inroads of the Asuric forces seeking to prevent it, it is approaching the terrestrial soil. The supramental is not, as you imagine, something cold, hard and rocklike. It bears within it the presence of the Divine Love as well as the Divine Truth and its reign here means for those who accept it the straight and thornless path on which there is no wall or obstacle of which the ancient Rishis saw the far-off promise.

The dark path is there and there are many who make like the Christians a gospel of spiritual suffering; many hold it to be the unavoidable price of victory. It may be so under certain circumstances, as it has been in so many lives at least at the beginning, or one may choose to make it so. But then the price has to be paid with resignation, fortitude or a tenacious resilience. I admit that if borne in that way the attacks of the Dark Forces or the ordeals they impose have a meaning. After each victory gained over them, there is then a sensible advance; often they seem to show us the difficulties in ourselves which we have to overcome and to say, "Here you must conquer us and here." But all the same it is a too dark and difficult way which nobody should follow on whom the necessity does not lie.

In any case one thing can never help and that is to despond always and say, "I am unfit; I am not meant for the Yoga." And worse still are these perilous mental formations such as you are always accepting that you must fare like X (one whose difficulty of exaggerated ambition was quite different from yours) and

that you have only six years etc. These are clear formations of the Dark Forces seeking not only to sterilise your aspiration but to lead you away and so prevent your sharing in the fruit of the victory hereafter. I do not know what Krishnaprem has said but his injunction, if you have rightly understood it, is one that cannot stand as valid, since so many have done Yoga relying on tapasya or anything else but not confident of any divine Grace. It is not that, but the soul's demand for a higher Truth or a higher life that is indispensable. Where that is, the Divine Grace whether believed in or not, will intervene. If you believe, that hastens and facilitates things; if you cannot yet believe, still the soul's aspiration will justify itself with whatever difficulty and struggle.

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Prāyopaveśana would be quite the wrong movement, it would be a sort of Satyagraha against the Divine. In essence it is an attempt to force the Divine to do what one wants instead of trusting to him to do what is best according to his own divine will and wisdom; it is a culminating act of vital impatience and disappointed desire, while the true movement is a pure aspiration and an ardent surrender.

After all, one has not a *right* to call on the Divine to manifest himself; it can come only as a response to a spiritual or psychic state of consciousness or to a long course of sadhana rightly done; or, if it comes before that or without any apparent reason, it is a grace; but one cannot demand or compel grace; grace is something spontaneous which wells out from the Divine Consciousness as a free flower of its being. The bhakta looks for it, but he is ready to wait in perfect reliance, even if need be all his life, knowing that it will come, never varying in his love and surrender because it does not come now or soon. That is the spirit of so many songs of the devotees, which you have sung yourself; I heard one such song from you in a record some time ago and a very beautiful song it was and beautifully sung — “Even if I have not won thee, O Lord, still I adore.”

What prevents you from having that, is the restless element

of vital impatience and ever recurring or persisting disappointment at not having what you want from the Divine. It is the idea, “I wish so much for it, surely I ought to have it; why is it withheld from me?” But wanting, however strongly, is not a passport to getting; there is something more to it than that. Our experience is that too much vital eagerness and insistence often blocks the way, it makes a sort of obstructing mass or a whirl of restlessness and disturbance which leaves no quiet space for the Divine to get in or for the thing wished for to come. Often it does come, but when the impatience has been definitely renounced and one waits, quietly open, for whatever may be (or for the time not be) given. But so often when you are preparing for a greater progress in the true devotion the habit of this vital element stands up and takes hold and interrupts the progress made.

The joylessness also comes from the vital. It is partly due to the disappointment but not solely, for it is a very common phenomenon when there is a pressure from the mind and soul on the vital to give up its attachments and its full unpurified acceptance of the outward life; it often gets a rajasic or tamasic vairagya instead of the sattwic kind, refuses to take a joy in anything, becomes dry, listless or unhappy, or it says, “Well, I have given up, I am giving up, but in exchange I must have the realisation you promise me; why don’t I get it, I can’t wait.” To get rid of that, it is best, even while observing it, not to identify oneself with it; if the mind or some part of the mind sanctions or justifies, it will persist or recur. If sorrow there must be, the other kind you described in the previous letter is preferable, the sadness that has a sweetness in it, no revolt, no despair, only the psychic longing for the true thing to come.

It is not by *prāyopaveśana* or anything of the kind that it must come, but by the increase of the pure and true bhakti. You have been constantly told so by us and lately by Krishnaprem and his guru; remember that she told you that the presence of Krishna during your singing was a sure sign that it would come, — not necessarily today or tomorrow or the day after, but that it would surely come. We can’t be all of us wrong and your vital

impatience only in the right. For heaven's sake, get rid of it and settle down to quiet aspiration and an ever growing devotion and surrender leaving it to Krishna to do what he is sure to do in his own way and time.

Ordinary Life, Vaishnava Traditions and the Supramental Yoga

Even if things were as bad as you say, I don't see how going away would help you in the least — (it would certainly not make you non-human); some have tried before this device of progress by departure and it has never succeeded, they have had to come back and face their difficulty. Why do you always come back to this notion of going away or entertain it at all? It is quite meaningless from any rational point of view; it only encourages the adverse Force which wants to take you away from the path to return to the attack, and it prevents the speedy conversion of that dissatisfied part of your vital which is always kicking against the pricks — the pricks of your soul and of your spiritual destiny. However sad the prospect may seem to this dissatisfied vital fragment, your destiny is to be a Yogi and the sooner it reconciles itself to the prospect the better for it and for all the other personalities in you. Your alleged or inferred unfitness is a delusion, an imagination of this vital part; it doesn't exist. If persistence of difficulties is a proof of unfitness, then there is nobody in this Asram who is fit for the Yoga. We would all have to pack up our belongings or give them away and start either to get back to the ordinary world or en route for the Himalayas.

You describe the rich human egoistic life you might have lived and you say “not altogether a wretched life, you will admit”. On paper, it sounds even very glowing and satisfactory, as you describe it. But there is no real or final satisfaction in it, except for those who are too common or trivial to seek anything else, and even they are not really satisfied or happy, — and in the end, it tires and palls. Sorrow and illness, clash and strife, disappointment, disillusionment and all kinds of human suffering come and beat its glow to pieces — and then decay and death.

That is the vital egoistic life as man has found it throughout the ages, and yet it is that which this part of your vital regrets? How do you fail to see, when you lay so much stress on the desirability of a merely human consciousness, that suffering is its badge? When the vital resists the change from the human into the divine consciousness, what it is defending is its right to sorrow and suffering and all the rest of it, varied and relieved no doubt by some vital or mental pleasures and satisfactions, but very partially relieved by them and only for a time. In your own case, it was already beginning to pall on you and that was why you turned from it. No doubt, there were the joys of the intellect and of artistic creation, but a man cannot be an artist alone; there is the outer quite human lower vital part and, in all but a few, it is the most clamorous and insistent part. But what was dissatisfied in you? It was the soul within, first of all, and through it the higher mind and the higher vital. Why then find fault with the Divine for misleading you when it turned you to the Yoga or brought you here? It was simply answering to the demand of your own inner being and the higher parts of your nature. If you have so much difficulty and become restless, it is because you are still divided and something in your lower vital still regrets what it has lost or, as a price for its adhesion or a compensation — a price to be *immediately* paid down to it, — asks for something similar and equivalent in the spiritual life. It refuses to believe that there is a greater compensation, a larger vital life waiting for it in which there shall not be the old inadequacy and unrest and final dissatisfaction. The foolishness is not in the Divine guidance, but in the irrational and obstinate resistance of this confused and obscure part of you to the demand, made not only by this Yoga, but by all Yoga — to the necessary conditions for the satisfaction of the aspiration of your own soul and higher nature.

The “human” vital consciousness has moved always between these two poles, the ordinary vital life which cannot satisfy and the recoil from it to the ascetic solution. India has gone fully through that see-saw; now Europe is beginning once more after a full trial to feel the failure of the mere vital egoistic life.

The traditional Yogas — to which you appeal — are founded upon the movement between these two poles. On one side are Shankara and Buddha and most go, if not by the same road, yet in that direction; on the other are Vaishnava or Tantric lines which try to combine asceticism with some sublimation of the vital impulse. And where did these lines end? They fell back to the other pole, to a vital invasion, even corruption and a loss of their spirit. At the present day the general movement is towards an attempt at reconciliation, and you have alluded sometimes to some of the protagonists of this attempt and asked me my opinion about them, yours being unfavourable. But these men are not mere charlatans, and if there is anything wrong with them (on which I do not pronounce), it can only be because they are unable to resist the magnetic pull of this lower pole of the egoistic vital desire-nature. And if they are unable to resist, it is because they have not found the true force which will not only neutralise that pull and prevent deterioration and downward lapse, but transform and utilise and satisfy in their own deeper truth, instead of destroying or throwing away, the life-force and the embodiment in matter; for that can only be done by the supermind power and by no other.

You appeal to the Vaishnava-Tantric traditions, to Chaitanya, Ramprasad, Ramakrishna. I know something about them and, if I did not try to repeat them, it is because I do not find in them the solution, the reconciliation I am seeking. Your quotation from Ramprasad does not assist me in the least — and it does not support your thesis either. Ramprasad is not speaking of an embodied, but of a bodiless and invisible Divine — or visible only in a subtle form to the inner experience. When he speaks of maintaining his claim or case against the Mother until she lifts him into her lap, he is not speaking of any outer vital or physical contact, but of an inner psychic experience; precisely, he is protesting against her keeping him in the external vital and physical nature and insists on her taking him on the psycho-spiritual plane into *spiritual* union with her. All that is very good and very beautiful, but it is not enough; the union has indeed to be realised in the inner psycho-spiritual experience first, because

without that nothing sound or lasting can be done; but also there must be a realisation of the Divine in the outer consciousness and life, in the vital and physical planes on their own essential lines. It is that which, without your mind understanding it or how it is to be done, you are asking for, and I too; only I see the necessity of a vital transformation, while you seem to think and to demand that it should be done without any radical transformation, leaving the vital as it is. In the beginning, before I discovered the secret of the supermind, I myself tried to seek the reconciliation through an association of the spiritual consciousness with the vital, but my experience and all experience shows that this leads to nothing definite and final, — it ends where it began, midway between the two poles of human nature. An association is not enough, a transformation is indispensable.

The tradition of later Vaishnava bhakti is an attempt to sublimate the vital impulses through love by turning human love towards the Divine. It made a strong and intense effort and had many rich and beautiful experiences; but its weakness was just there, that it remained valid only as an inner experience turned towards the inner Divine, but it stopped at that point. Chaitanya's *prema* was nothing but a psychic divine love with a strong sublimated vital manifestation. But the moment Vaishnavism before or after him made an attempt at greater externalisation, we know what happened — a vitalistic deterioration, much corruption and decline. You cannot appeal to Chaitanya's example as against psychic or divine love; it was not something merely vital-human; in its essence, though not in its form, it was very much the first step in the transformation, which we ask of the sadhaks, to make their love psychic and use the vital not for its own sake, but as an expression of the soul's realisation. It is the first step and perhaps for some it may be sufficient, for we are not asking everybody to become supramental; but for any *full* manifestation on the physical plane the supramental is indispensable.

In this later Vaishnava tradition the sadhana takes the form of an application of human vital love in all its principal turns to the Divine; *viraha*, *abhimāna*, even complete separation (like the

departure of Krishna to Mathura) are made prominent elements of this Yoga. But all that was only meant — in the sadhana itself, not in the Vaishnava poems — as a passage of which the end is *milana* or complete union; but the stress laid on the untoward elements by some would almost seem to make strife, separation, *abhimāna*, the whole means if not the very object of this kind of *prema-yoga*. Again, this method was only applied to the inner, not to a physically embodied Divine and had a reference to certain states and reactions of the inner consciousness in its seeking after the Divine. In the relations with the embodied Divine manifestation, or, I may add, of the disciple with the Guru, such things might rise as a result of human imperfection, but they were not made part of the theory of the relations. I do not think they formed a regular and authorised part of the relations of the bhaktas to Chaitanya or of the disciples at Dakshineswar towards Ramakrishna! On the contrary, the relation of the disciple to the Guru in the Guruvada is supposed always to be that of worship, respect, complete happy confidence, unquestioning acceptance of the guidance. The application of the unchanged vital relations to the embodied Divine or the Guru may lead and has led to movements which are not conducive to the progress of the Yoga.

Ramakrishna's Yoga was also turned only to an inner realisation of the inner Divine, — nothing less but also nothing more. I believe his sentence about the claim of the sadhak on the Divine for whom one has sacrificed everything was the assertion of an inner and not an outer claim, on the inner rather than on any physically embodied Divine: it was a claim for the full spiritual union, the God-lover seeking the Divine, but the Divine also giving himself and meeting the God-lover. There can be no objection to that; such a claim all seekers of the Divine have; but as to the modalities of this Divine meeting, it does not carry us much farther. In any case, my object is a realisation on the physical plane and I cannot consent merely to repeat Ramakrishna. I seem to remember too that for a long time he was withdrawn into himself, all his life was not spent with his disciples! He got his siddhi first in retirement and when

he came out and received everyone — well, a few years of it wore out his body. To that, I suppose, he had no objection; he even pronounced a theory, when Keshav Chandra was dying, that spiritual experience *ought* to wear out the body! But at the same time, when asked why he got his illness in the throat, he answered that it was the sins of his disciples which they threw upon him and he had to swallow! Not being satisfied, as he was, with an inner liberation alone, I cannot accept these ideas or these results, for it does not sound to me like a successful meeting of the Divine and the sadhak *on the physical plane*, however successful it might have been for the inner life. Krishna did great things and was very clearly a manifestation of the Divine. But I remember a passage of the Mahabharata in which he complains of the unquiet life his followers and adorers gave him, their constant demands, reproaches, their throwing of their unregenerate vital nature upon him. And in the Gita he speaks of this human world as a transient and sorrowful affair and, in spite of his gospel of divine action, seems almost to admit that to leave it is after all the last solution! The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, — in the past; but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future.

There is the rub that you seem all to ignore entirely, the difficulties of the physical embodiment and the divine realisation on the physical plane. For most, it seems to be a simple alternative; either the Divine comes down in full power and the thing is done — no difficulty, no necessary conditions, no law or process, only miracle and magic, or else, well, this can't be the Divine! Again you all (or almost all) insist on the Divine becoming human, remaining in the human consciousness and you protest against any attempt to make the human divine; on the other hand there is an outcry of disappointment, bewilderment, distrust, perhaps indignation, if there are human difficulties, if there is strain in the body, a swaying struggle with adverse forces, obstacles, checks, illness, and some begin to say, "Oh, there is nothing divine here!" — as if one could remain, vitally and physically, in the

untransformed undivinisised human consciousness, in unchanged contact with it, satisfying its demands, and yet be immune under all circumstances and in all conditions against strain and struggle and illness. If I want to divinise the human consciousness, to bring down the supramental, the Truth-Consciousness, the Light, the Force into the physical to transform it, to create there a great fullness of Truth and Light and Power and Bliss and Love, and make these other things impossible, the response is repulsion, or fear, or unwillingness — or a doubt whether it is possible. On one side there is the claim that illness and the rest should be impossible, on the other a violent rejection of the only condition under which these things can become impossible. I know that this is the natural inconsistency of the human vital mind wanting two inconsistent and incompatible things together; but that is one reason why it is necessary to transform the human and put something a little more luminous in its place.

But is the Divine then something so terrible, horrible or repellent that the idea of its entry into the physical, its divinising of the human should create this shrinking, refusal, revolt or fear? I can understand that the unregenerate vital attached to its own petty sufferings and pleasures, to the brief ignorant drama of life, should shrink from what will change it. But why should a God-lover, a God-seeker, a sadhak fear the divinisation of the consciousness! Why should he object to becoming one in nature with what he seeks, why should he recoil from *sādr̥śya-mukti*? Behind this fear there are usually two causes: first, there is the feeling of the vital that it will have to cease to be obscure, crude, muddy, egoistic, unrefined (spiritually), full of stimulating desires and small pleasures and interesting sufferings (for it shrinks even from the Ananda which will replace them); next, there is some vague ignorant idea of the mind, due, I suppose, to the ascetic tradition, that the divine nature is something cold, bare, empty, austere, aloof, without the glorious riches of the egoistic human vital life. As if there were not a divine vital and as if that divine vital is not itself and, when it gets the means to manifest, will not make the life on earth also infinitely more full of beauty, love, radiance, warmth, fire, intensity and divine passion and

capacity for bliss than the present impotent, suffering, pettily and transiently excited and soon tired vitality of the still so imperfect human creation!

But you will say that it is not the Divine from which you recoil, rather you accept and ask for it (provided that it is not too divine), but what you object to is the supramental—grand, aloof, incomprehensible, unapproachable, a sort of austere Nirakara Brahman. The supramental so described is a bogey created by this part of your vital mind in order to frighten itself and justify its attitude. Behind this strange description there seems to be an idea that the supramental is a new version of the Vedantic featureless and incommunicable Parabrahman, vast, grand, cold, empty, remote, devastating, overwhelming; it is not quite that, of course, since it can come down, but for all practical purposes it is just as bad! It is curious that you admit your ignorance of what the supramental can be, and yet you in these moods not only pronounce categorically what it is like, but reject emphatically my experience about it as of no practical validity or not valid for anybody but myself! I have not insisted, I have answered only casually because I am not asking you now to be non-human or divine, much less to be supramental; but as you are always returning to this point when you have these attacks and making it the pivot—or at least a main support—of your depression, I am obliged to answer. The supramental is *not* grand, aloof, cold and austere; it is not something opposed to or inconsistent with a full vital and physical manifestation; on the contrary, it carries in it the only possibility of the full fullness of the vital force and the physical life on earth. It is because it is so, because it was so revealed to me and for no other reason that I have followed after it and persevered till I came into contact with it and was able to draw down some power of it and its influence. I am concerned with the earth and not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits. All other Yogas regard this life as an illusion or a passing phase; the supramental Yoga alone regards it as a thing created by the Divine for a progressive manifestation and takes the fulfilment

of the life and the body for its object. The supramental is simply the Truth-Consciousness and what it brings in its descent is the full truth of life, the full truth of consciousness in Matter. One has indeed to rise to high summits to reach it, but the more one rises, the more one can bring down below. No doubt, life and body have not to remain the ignorant, imperfect, impotent things they are now; but why should a change to fuller life-power, fuller body-power be considered something aloof, cold and undesirable? The utmost Ananda the body and life are now capable of is a brief excitement of the vital mind or the nerves or the cells which is limited, imperfect and soon passes; with the supramental change all the cells, nerves, vital forces, embodied mental forces can become filled with a thousandfold Ananda, capable of an intensity of bliss which passes description and which need not fade away. How aloof, repellent and undesirable! The supramental love means an intense unity of soul with soul, mind with mind, life with life, and an entire flooding of the body consciousness with the physical experience of oneness, the presence of the Beloved in every part, in every cell of the body. Is that too something aloof and grand but undesirable? With the supramental change, the very thing on which you insist, the possibility of the free physical meeting of the embodied Divine with the sadhak without conflict of forces and without undesirable reactions becomes possible, assured and free. That too is, I suppose, something aloof and undesirable? I could go on — for pages, but this is enough for the moment.

Different Approaches through Love and Bhakti

It seems to me that these differences of valuation come from the mind laying stress on one side or another of the approach to the Divine or exalting one aspect of realisation over another. When there is the approach through the heart, through Love and Bhakti, its highest culmination is in a transcendent Ananda, an unspeakable Bliss or Beatitude of union with the Divine through Love. The school of Chaitanya laid especial and indeed sole emphasis on this way and made this the whole reality of

Krishna consciousness. But the transcendent Ananda is there at the origin and end of all existence and this is not and cannot be the sole way to it. One can arrive at it also through the Vasudeva consciousness, which is a wider, more mentalised approach — as in the method of the Gita where knowledge, works, bhakti are all centred in Krishna, the One, the Supreme, the All and arrive through the cosmic consciousness to the luminous transcendence. There is the way too described in the Taittiriya Upanishad, the Vedanta's Gospel of Bliss. These are certainly wider methods, for they take up the whole existence through all its parts and ways of being to the Divine. If less intense at their starting point, a vaster and slower movement, there is no reason to suppose that they are less intense on their summits of arrival. It is the same transcendence to which all arrive, either with a large movement gathering up everything spiritual in us to take it there in a vast sublimation, or in a single intense uplifting from one point, a single exaltation leaving all the rest aside. But who shall say which is profounder of the two? Concentrated love has a profundity of its own which cannot be measured; concentrated wisdom has a wider profundity but one cannot say that it is deeper.

Cosmic values are only reflections of the truth of the Transcendence in a lesser truth of time experience which is separative and sees diversely a thousand aspects of the One. As one rises through the mind or any part of the manifested being, any one or more of these aspects can become more and more sublimated and tend towards its supreme transcendental intensity, and whatever aspect is so experienced is declared by the spiritualised mental consciousness to be the supreme thing. But when one goes beyond mind all tends not only to sublimate but to fuse together until the separated aspects recover their original unity, indivisible in the absoluteness of all made one. Mind can conceive and have experience of existence without consciousness or Ananda and this receives its utmost expression in the inconscience attributed to Matter. So also it can conceive of Ananda or Love as a separate principle; it even feels consciousness and existence losing themselves in a trance or swoon of

Love or Ananda. So too the limited personal loses itself in the illimitable Person, the lover in the supreme Beloved, or else the personal in the Impersonal, — the lover feels himself immersed, losing himself in the transcendental reality of Love or Ananda. The personal and the impersonal are themselves posited and experienced by mind as separate realities — and one or other is declared and seen as supreme, so that the personal can have *laya* in the Impersonal or on the contrary the impersonal disappear into the absolute reality of the supreme and divine Person; the impersonal in that view is only an attribute or power of the personal Divine. But at the summit of spiritual experience passing beyond mind one begins to feel the fusion of all these things into one. Consciousness, Existence, Ananda return to their indivisible unity, Sachchidananda. The personal and the impersonal become irrevocably one, so that to posit one as against the other appears as an act of ignorance. This tendency of unification is the basis of the supramental consciousness and experience; for cosmic or creative purposes the supermind can put forward one aspect prominently where that is needed, but it is aware of all the rest behind it or contained in it and does not admit into its view any separation or opposition anywhere. For that reason a supramental creation would be a multifold harmony and not a separative process fragmenting or analysing the One into parts and setting these parts over against each other or else putting them contradictorily against each other and having afterwards to synthesise and piece them together in order to arrive at harmony or else to exclude some or all of the parts in order to realise the indivisible One.

You speak of the Vaishnava school emphasising the personal felicities, as in the classification of the *bhāvas*, and you say that these are short and quick feelings and lack in vastness or amplitude. No doubt, when they are first felt and as they are felt by the limited consciousness in its ordinary functioning and movement; but that is only because the emotional in man with this imperfect bodily instrument acts largely by spasms of intensity when it wants to sublimate and cannot maintain either the continuity or the extension or the sublimated paroxysm of

these things. But as the individual becomes cosmic (the universalising of the individual without his losing his higher individuality as a divine centre is one of the processes which lead towards the supramental Truth), this disability begins to disappear. The truth behind the *dāsya* or *madhura* or any other *bhāva* or fusion of *bhāvas* becomes a vast and ample continuous state, — if by chance they lose something of their briefer intensities by this extension of themselves, they recover them a thousandfold in the movement of the universalised individual towards the Transcendence. There is an ever enlarging experience which takes up the elements of spiritual realisation and in this uplifting and transforming process they become other and greater things than they were and more and more they take their place by sublimation, first in the spiritual-cosmic, then in the all-embracing transcendent whole.

The difference of view between Shankara and Ramanuja and on the other side Chaitanya about Krishna arises from the turn of their experience. Krishna was only an aspect of Vishnu to the others because that ecstatic form of love and bhakti which had become associated with Krishna was not for them the whole. The Gita, like Chaitanya, but from a different viewpoint, regarded Krishna as the Divine himself. To Chaitanya he was Love and Ananda, and Love and Ananda being for him the highest transcendental experience, so Krishna too must be the Supreme. For the writer of the Gita, Krishna was the source of Knowledge and Power as well as Love, the Destroyer, Preserver, Creator in one, so necessarily Vishnu was only an aspect of this universal Divine. In the Mahabharat indeed Krishna comes as an incarnation of Vishnu, but that can be turned by taking it that it was through the Vishnu aspect as his frontal appearance that he manifested, for that the greater Godhead can manifest later than others is logical if we consider the manifestation as progressive, — just as Vishnu is in the Veda a younger Indra, Upendra, but gains upon his elder and subsequently takes place above him in the Trimurti.

I cannot say much about the Vaishnava idea of the form of Krishna. Form is the basic means of manifestation and without

it it may be said that the manifestation of anything is not complete. Even if the Formless logically precedes Form, yet it is not illogical to assume that in the Formless, Form is inherent and already existent in a mystic latency, otherwise how could it be manifested? For any other process would be the creation of the non-existent, not manifestation. If so, it would be equally logical to assume that there is an eternal form of Krishna, a spirit body. As for the highest Reality, it is no doubt absolute Existence, but is it only that? Absolute Existence as an abstraction may exclude everything else from itself and amount to a sort of very positive zero; but Absolute Existence as a reality — who shall define and say what is or is not in its inconceivable depths, its illimitable Mystery? Mind can ordinarily conceive of the Absolute Existence only as a negation of its own concepts spatial, temporal or other. But it cannot tell what is at the basis of manifestation or what manifestation is or why there is any manifestation at all out of its positive zero — and the Vaishnavas, we must remember, do not admit this conception as the absolute and original truth of the Divine. It is therefore not rigidly impossible that what we conceive and perceive as spatial form may correspond to some mysterious power of the spaceless Absolute. I do not say all that as a definite statement of Truth, I am only pointing out that the Vaishnava position on its own ground is far from being logically or metaphysically untenable.

Love and Bhakti for Krishna

As for Krishna, why not approach simply and straight? The simple approach means trust. If you pray, trust that he hears. If the reply takes long in coming, trust that he knows and loves and that he is wisest in the choice of the time. Meanwhile quietly clear the ground, so that he may not have to trip over stone and jungle when he comes. That is my suggestion and I know what I am saying — for whatever you may say, I know very well all human difficulties and struggles and I know of the cure. That is why I press always on the things that would minimise and shorten the struggles and difficulties, — the psychic turn, faith, perfect

and simple confidence and reliance. These, let me remind you, are tenets of the Vaishnava Yoga. Of course, there is the other Vaishnava way which swings between yearning and despair — ardent seeking and the pangs of viraha. It is that you seem to be following and I do not deny that one can arrive by that as one can by almost any way, if followed sincerely. But then those who follow it find a rasa even in viraha, in the absence and the caprice of the Divine Lover. Some of them have sung that they have followed after him all their lives but always he has slipped away from their vision and even in that they find a rasa and never cease following. But you find no rasa in it. So you cannot expect me to approve of that for you. Follow after Krishna by all means, but follow with the determination to arrive: don't do it with the expectation of failure or admit any possibility of breaking off half-way.

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As for the “hostile forces”, it is quite true that to persuade the sadhak to cut off outer contact with us on the plea of solitude and intense sadhana, is a favourite device of theirs and has often led to disaster. It gives them a freer field to bring in their own influence and represent it as the divine influence or as our own influence, and it ends often by a revolt and finally the sadhak cuts off the inner relation also or even turns hostile. This has happened fairly often and that is one reason why I have usually discouraged that or any kind of complete solitude. Absence from darshan for a short time if there is good reason for it, but more than that is inadvisable.

The direct approach to Krishna is not safe or easy; it can sometimes be terribly risky, if there is anything in the sadhak that interferes with the clarity and singleness of his attitude. In that case any wrong desire, vanity, pride, sexual impurity, ambition, or any other pronounced weakness may open the way to serious distortion of the sadhana, turning into wrong ways, breakdown or collapse, even to spiritual perdition. Krishna's own influence cannot be a wrong influence, if it is really his, but it is easy to mistake and accept some other influence as his. Especially, he is

the Lord of Love and Beauty and Delight, and nothing is easier for men who are always going in the wrong way in search of these things, to bring their wrong ways into their search for him also. That experience must be one of the reasons why the seers insist on the approach through the guru and say that Krishna cannot be attained otherwise. It is the reason why they insist on *vairagya*, detachment from the ordinary aims and ends of human nature as so necessary. That is also why Krishna does not like to show himself until the field is clear for him! The intervention of some power or influence that represents itself as he, even puts on an imitation of his form or voice would be fatal if accepted; but even his real manifestation might bring about an upset in someone not really ready for it. One must be on guard against these dangers and it is the guru who can interpose himself as a shield against them.

The identification of the guru with the Divine is a common rule, not peculiar to the Vaishnava bhakti. Ordinarily, so far as the outer mind is concerned, it is a firm belief; the outer mind can believe, can by its faith have some feeling of it, can with the help of the heart worship, adore, serve with humility and fidelity; ordinarily, this is enough and it prepares besides for something deeper. But to realise the identity is another matter, [*incomplete*]

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I do not know that I can answer your question about what Krishnaprem means by Krishna's light. It is certainly not what people ordinarily mean by knowledge. He may mean the light of the Divine Consciousness, or if you like, the light that is the Divine Consciousness or the light that comes from it or he may mean the luminous being of Krishna in which all things are in their supreme truth, — the truth of Knowledge, the truth of Bhakti, the truth of ecstasy and Ananda, everything is there.

There is also a manifestation of Light — the Upanishads speak of *jyotir brahma*, the Light that is Brahman. Very often the sadhak feels a flow of Light upon him or around him or a flow of Light invading his centres or even his whole being and body, penetrating and illumining every cell and in that Light

there grows the spiritual consciousness and one becomes open to all or many of its workings and realisations. Appositely I have a review of a book of Ramdas (of the *Vision*) before me in which is described such an experience got by the repetition of the Rama mantra, but, if I understand rightly, after a long and rigorous self-discipline. "The mantra having stopped automatically, he beheld a small circular light before his mental vision. This yielded him thrills of delight. This experience having continued for some days, he felt a dazzling light like lightning, flashing before his eyes, which ultimately permeated and absorbed him. Now an inexpressible transport of bliss filled every pore of his physical frame." It does not always come like that — very often it comes by stages or at long intervals, at first, working on the consciousness till it is ready.

We speak here also of Krishna's light — Krishna's light in the mind, Krishna's light in the vital; but it is a special light — in the mind it brings clarity, freedom from obscurity, mental error and perversion; in the vital it clears out all perilous stuff and where it is there is a pure and divine happiness and gladness.

There are some however who seem to regard this invasion of Light not merely as a thing without value but a thing of evil or, possibly, one that can be such and so to be distrusted: for I have before me a letter describing an experience very similar to Ramdas's, but it was condemned by the writer's Guru as an attempt at possession by a devil to be dispelled by uttering the name of Ramakrishna!

But why limit oneself, insist on one thing alone and shut out every other? Whether it be by Bhakti or by Light or by Ananda or by Peace or by any other means whatsoever that one gets the initial realisation of the Divine, to get it is the thing and all means are good that bring it.

If it is Bhakti that one insists on, it is by Bhakti that Bhakti comes and Bhakti in its fullness is nothing but an entire self-giving, as Krishnaprem very rightly indicates. Then all meditation, all tapasya, all means of prayer or mantra must have that as its end and it is when one has progressed sufficiently in that that the Divine Grace descends and the realisation comes

and develops till it is complete. But the moment of its advent is chosen by the wisdom of the Divine alone and one must have the strength to go on till it arrives; for when all is truly ready it cannot fail to come.

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As to the point that puzzles you, it only arises from a confusion between the feeling of the devotee and the observation of the observer. Of course the devotee loves Krishna because Krishna is lovable and not for any other reason—that is his feeling and his true feeling. He has no time to bother his head about what in himself made him able to love, the fact that he does love is sufficient for him and he does not need to analyse his emotions. The Grace of Krishna consists for him in Krishna's very lovable-ness, in his showing of himself to the devotee, in his call, the cry of his flute. That is enough for the heart or, if there is anything more, it is the yearning that others or all may hear the flute, see the face, feel all the beauty and rapture of this love.

It is not the heart of the devotee but the mind of the observer that questions how it is that the Gopis were called or responded at once and others—the Brahmin women, for instance—were not called or did not respond at once. Once the mind puts the question, there are two possible answers, the mere will of Krishna without any reason, what the mind would call his absolute divine choice or his arbitrary divine caprice or else the readiness of the heart that is called, and that amounts to *adhikāri-bheda*. A third reply would be—circumstances, as for instance, the parking off of the spiritual ground into closed preserves. But how can circumstances prevent the Grace from acting? In spite of the parking off, it works—Christians, Mahomedans do answer to the Grace of Krishna. Tigers, ghouls must love if they see him, hear his flute? Yes, but why do some hear it and see him, others not? We are thrown back on the two alternatives, Krishna's Grace calls whom it wills to call without any determining reason for the choice or rejection, his mercy or his withholding or at least delaying of his mercy, or else he calls the hearts that are ready to vibrate and leap up at his call—and even there he waits till the moment has come. To say that it does not depend

on outward merit or appearance of fitness is no doubt true; the something that was ready to wake in spite, it may be, of many hard layers in which it was enclosed, may be something visible to Krishna and not to us. It was there perhaps long before the flute began to play, but he was busy melting the hard layers so that the heart in its leap might not be pressed back by them when the awakening notes came. The Gopis heard and rushed out into the forest — the others did not — or did they think it was only some rustic music or some rude cowherd lover fluting to his sweetheart, not a call that learned and cultured or virtuous ears could recognise as the call of the Divine? There is something to be said for the *adhikāri-bheda*. But of course it must be understood in a large sense, — some may have the *adhikāra* for recognising Krishna's flute, some for the call of Christ, some for the dance of Shiva — to each his own way and his nature's answer to the Divine Call. *Adhikāra* cannot be stated in rigid mental terms, it is something spiritual and subtle, something mystic and secret between the called and the Caller.

As for the swelled head, the theory of Grace may no doubt contribute to it, though I should imagine that the said head never felt the Grace but only the magnanimity of its own ego. The swelling may come equally in the way of personal effort as by the craving for Grace. It is fundamentally not due to either, but to a natural predisposition to this kind of oedema.

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If Krishna was always and by nature cold and distant (Lord, what a discovery — Krishna of all people!), how could human devotion and aspiration come near him — he and it would soon be like the North and South Pole, growing icier and icier, always facing each other but never seeing because of the earth's bulge. Also, if Krishna did not want the human bhakta as well as the bhakta wanting him, who could get at him? — he would be always sitting on the snows of the Himalayas like Shiva. History describes him otherwise and he is usually charged with being too warm and sportive.

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If one wants Krishna, one gets Krishna — but he is a sufficiently trying Deity and does not come at once, though he may come suddenly at any time. But usually one has to want him so badly and obstinately that one is prepared to pay any price. One has to know how to wait as well as to want — to go on insisting and insisting without taking heed of even the longest denial. The psychic can do that — but the mind and the vital have to learn how to do it also.

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Certainly Krishna is credited with much caprice, difficult dealings and a playfulness (*lila!*) which the played-with do not always immediately appreciate. But there is a reasoning as well as a hidden method in his caprices, and when he does come out of it and takes a fancy to be nice to you, he has a supreme attractiveness, charm and allurements which compensates and more than compensates for all you have suffered.

*

Well, why should not Krishna ride a horse if he so wants?¹ His actions or habits cannot be fixed by the human mind or by an immutable tradition. Especially Krishna is a law to himself. Perhaps he was in a hurry to get to the place where he wanted to flute.

*

The Gopis are not ordinary people in the proper sense of the word — they are extraordinary by their extremeness of love, passionate devotion, unreserved self-giving. Whoever has that, however humble his position in other respects, learning, external sanctity etc. etc., can easily follow after Krishna and reach him; that seems to me the sense of the symbol of the Gopis. There are many other significances, of course — that is only one among the many.

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¹ *The correspondent wrote about a disciple who had a vision of Krishna galloping on a horse. — Ed.*

Radha is the personification of the absolute love for the Divine, total and integral in all parts of the being from the highest spiritual to the physical, bringing the absolute self-giving and total consecration of all the being and calling down into the body and the most material Nature the supreme Ananda.

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The coming of sex on seeing the image of Krishna and Radha is due to the past association of sex with the cult of Radha-Krishna. But in fact the image has nothing to do with sex. The true symbol for it would not be the human sex-attraction, but the soul, the psychic, hearing the call of the Divine and flowering into the complete love and surrender that brings the supreme Ananda. That is what Radha and Krishna by their divine union bring about in the human consciousness and it is so that you must regard it, throwing aside the old sex-associations.

Love of Krishna and This Yoga

What you were told of the incompatibility of love and adoration of Krishna with this Yoga, is not true. There is not and cannot be any such incompatibility. Otherwise we would not have encouraged you in your aspiration. You can seek for him quite as well here as in Brindaban.

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As regards Krishna and devotion, I think I have already answered more than once. I have no objection at all to the worship of Krishna or the Vaishnava form of devotion, nor is there any incompatibility between Vaishnava bhakti and my supramental Yoga. There is in fact no special and exclusive form of supramental Yoga: all ways can lead to the Supermind, just as all ways can lead to the Divine.

Certainly, I will help you and am helping and will always help you; the idea that I can stop doing it or will send you away has no sense in it. If you persevere, you cannot fail to get the permanent bhakti you want and the realisation you want, but

you should learn to put an entire reliance on Krishna to give it when he finds all ready and the time come. If he wants you to clear out imperfections and impurities first, that is after all understandable. I don't see why you should not succeed in doing it, now that your attention is being so constantly turned on it. To see them clearly and acknowledge them is the first step, to have the firm will to reject them is the next, to separate yourself from them entirely so that if they enter at all it will be as foreign elements, no longer parts of your normal nature but suggestions from outside, brings their last state; even, once seen and rejected, they may automatically fall away and disappear; but for most the process takes time. These things are not peculiar to you; they are parts of universal human nature; but they can, do and will disappear.

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But I have already told you more than once that I have no objection to your seeking Krishna or to your asking for Ananda or milan or anything else. I have never pressed you or others either to seek after Supermind or to accept me as an Avatar. These things have risen as an answer to questions put by yourself or others and I have treated them as matters of knowledge. But each must go by his own way and his own nature to his own goal. Ahaituki bhakti according to the Vaishnava ideal is the highest way and also the quickest, but if one does not feel equal to it, sahaituki bhakti will do well enough. Or if one has no turn for bhakti at all, there are plenty of other ways. Or if one does not care to follow any way, there is, as I said, in answer to X's question, the pressure of something in the nature to find the Self, if that is what it is after, or God or Krishna or the Mother or whatever it may be.

If you know the urge in you, well, follow it straight — there is no need of questioning or going this side or that. Follow the heart's urge till it reaches what it is seeking.

Chapter Nine

The Teachings of Some Modern Indian Yogis

Ramana Maharshi

According to Brunton's description of the sadhana he (Brunton) practised under the Maharshi's instructions,¹ it is the Overself one has to seek within, but he describes the Overself in a way that is at once the Psychic Being, the Atman and the Ishwara. So it is a little difficult to know what is the exact reading.

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The methods described in the account [*of Ramana Maharshi's technique of self-realisation*] are the well-established methods of Jnanayoga — (1) one-pointed concentration followed by thought-suspension, (2) the method of distinguishing or finding out the true self by separating it from mind, life, body (this I have seen described by him [*Brunton*] more at length in another book) and coming to the pure I behind; this also can disappear into the Impersonal Self. The usual result is a merging in the Atman or Brahman — which is what one would suppose is meant by the Overself, for it is that which is the real Overself. This Brahman or Atman is everywhere, all is in it, it is in all, but it is in all not as an individual being in each but is the same in all — as the Ether is in all. When the merging into the Overself is complete, there is no ego, no distinguishable I, or any formed separative person or personality. All is *ekākāra* — an indivisible and undistinguishable Oneness either free from all formations or carrying all formations in it without being affected — for one can realise it in either way. There is a realisation in which all

¹ *The correspondent sent to Sri Aurobindo two paragraphs from Paul Brunton's book A Message from Arunachala (London: Rider & Co., n.d. [1936], pp. 205–7). — Ed.*

beings are moving in the one Self and this Self is there stable in all beings; there is another more complete and thoroughgoing in which not only is it so but all are vividly realised as the Self, the Brahman, the Divine. In the former, it is possible to dismiss all beings as creations of Maya, leaving the one Self alone as true — in the other it is easier to regard them as real manifestations of the Self, not as illusions. But one can also regard all beings as souls, independent realities in an eternal Nature dependent upon the One Divine. These are the characteristic realisations of the Overself familiar to the Vedanta. But on the other hand you say that this Overself is realised by the Maharshi as lodged in the heart-centre, and it is described by Brunton as something concealed which when it manifests appears as the real Thinker, source of all action, but now guiding thought and action in the Truth. Now the first description applies to the Purusha in the heart, described by the Gita as the Ishwara situated in the heart and by the Upanishads as the Purusha Antaratma; the second could apply also to the mental Purusha, *manomayah prāṇasarīra netā* of the Upanishads, the mental Being or Purusha who leads the life and the body. So your question is one which on the data I cannot easily answer. His Overself may be a combination of all these experiences, without any distinction being made or thought necessary between the various aspects. There are a thousand ways of approaching and realising the Divine and each way has its own experiences which have their own truth and stand really on a basis, one in essence but complex in aspects, common to all, but not expressed in the same way by all. There is not much use in discussing these variations; the important thing is to follow one's own way well and thoroughly. In this Yoga, one can realise the psychic being as a portion of the Divine seated in the heart with the Divine supporting it there — this psychic being takes charge of the sadhana and turns the whole being to the Truth and the Divine, with results in the mind, the vital, the physical consciousness which I need not go into here, — that is a first transformation. We realise it next as the one Self, Brahman, Divine, first *above* the body, life, mind and not only within the heart supporting them — above

and free and unattached as the static Self but also extended in wideness through the world as the silent Self in all and dynamic too as the active Divine Being and Power, Ishwara-Shakti, containing the world and pervading it as well as transcending it, manifesting all cosmic aspects. But, what is most important for us, is that it manifests as a transcending Light, Knowledge, Power, Purity, Peace, Ananda of which we become aware above and which descends into the being and progressively replaces the ordinary consciousness by its own movements — that is the second transformation. We realise also the consciousness itself as moving upward, ascending through many planes physical, vital, mental, overmental to the supramental and Ananda planes. This is nothing new; it is stated in the Taittiriya Upanishad that there are five Purushas, the physical, the vital, the mental, the Truth Purusha (supramental) and the Bliss Purusha; it says that one has to draw the physical self up into the vital, the vital into the mental, the mental into the Truth Self, the Truth Self into the Bliss Self and so attain perfection. But in this Yoga we become aware not only of this taking up but of a pouring down of the powers of the higher Self, so that there comes in the possibility of a descent of the Supramental Self and nature to dominate and change our present nature and turn it from nature of Ignorance into nature of Truth-Knowledge (and through the supramental into nature of Ananda) — this is the third or supramental transformation. It does not always go in this order, for with many the spiritual descent begins first in an imperfect way before the psychic is in front and in charge, but the psychic development has to be attained before a perfect and unhampered spiritual descent can take place, and the last or supramental change is impossible so long as the two first have not become full and complete. That's the whole matter, put as briefly as possible.

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The Upanishads do not say that about the Atman² — what they

² *That is, the Upanishads do not say that the Atman is situated in the core of the heart.*
—Ed.

say about the Atman is that it is in all and all is in it, it is everywhere and all this universe is the Atman. What they speak of as situated in the deeper inner heart is the Purusha in the heart or Antaratman.³ This is in fact what we call the psychic being, *caitya puruṣa*.

The heart spoken of by the Upanishads corresponds with the physical cardiac centre; it is the *hrītpadma* of the Tantriks. As a subtle centre, *cakra*, it is supposed to have its apex on the spine and to broaden out in front. Exactly where in this area one or another feels it does not matter much; to feel it there and be guided by it is the main thing. I cannot say what the Maharshi has realised — but what Brunton describes in his book as the Self is certainly this Purusha Antaratma but concerned more with *mukti* and a liberated action than with transformation of the nature. What the psychic realisation does bring is a psychic change of the nature purifying it and turning it altogether towards the Divine. After that or along with it comes the realisation of the cosmic Self. It is these two things that the old Yogas encompassed and through them they passed to Moksha, Nirvana or the departure into some kind of celestial transcendence. The Yoga practised here includes both liberation and transcendence, but it takes liberation or even a certain Nirvana, if that comes, as a first step and not as the last step of its siddhi. Whatever exit to or towards the Transcendent it achieves is an ascent accompanied by a descent of the power, light, consciousness that has been achieved and it is by such descents that is to be achieved the spiritual and supramental transformation here. This possibility does not seem to be admitted in the Maharshi's thought, — he considers the Descent as superfluous and logically impossible. "The Divine is here, from where will He descend?" is his argument. But the Divine is everywhere, he is above as well as within, he has many habitats, many strings to his bow of Power, there are many levels of his dynamic Consciousness and each has its own light and force. He is not confined to his position in the heart or to the single cord of the psycho-spiritual

³ *aṅguṣṭhamātrah puruṣo antarātmā*.

realisation. He has also his supramental station above the heart-centre and mind-centres and can descend from there if He wants to do so.

Swami Ramatirtha

I think Ramatirtha's realisations were more mental than anything else. He had opening of the higher mind and a realisation there of the cosmic Self, but I find no evidence of a transformed mind and vital; that transformation is not a result or object of the Yoga of Knowledge. The realisation of the Yoga of Knowledge is when one feels that one lives in the wideness of something silent, featureless and universal (called the Self) and all else is seen as only forms and names; the Self is real, nothing else. The realisation of "*my* self in other forms" is a part of this or a step towards it, but in the full realisation the "*my*" should drop so that there is only *the* one Self or rather only the Brahman. For the Self is merely a subjective aspect of the Brahman, just as the Ishwara is its objective aspect. That is the Vedantic "Knowledge". Its result is peace, silence, liberation. As for the active Prakriti, (mind, vital, body), the Yoga of Knowledge does not make it its aim to transform them — that would be no use as the idea is that if the liberation has come, it will all drop off at death. The only change wanted is to get rid of the idea of ego and realise as true only the supreme Self, the Brahman.

Swami Ramdas

I have not read Ramdas's writings nor am I at all acquainted with his personality or what may be the level of his experience. The words you quote from him could be expressions either of a simple faith or of a pantheistic experience; evidently, if they are used or intended to establish the thesis that the Divine is everywhere and is all and therefore all is good, being Divine, they are very insufficient for that purpose. But as an experience, it is a very common thing to have this feeling or realisation in the Vedantic sadhana — in fact without it there would be

no Vedantic sadhana. I have had it myself on various levels of consciousness and in numerous forms and I have met scores of people who have had it very genuinely — not as an intellectual theory or perception, but as a spiritual reality which was too concrete for them to deny whatever paradoxes it may entail for the ordinary intelligence.

Of course it does not mean that all here is good or that in the estimation of values a brothel is as good as an Asram, but it does mean that all are part of one manifestation and that in the inner heart of the harlot as in the inner heart of the sage or saint there is the Divine. Again his experience is that there is one Force working in the world both in its good and in its evil — one Cosmic Force; it works both in the success (or failure) of the Asram and in the success (or failure) of the brothel. Things are done in this world by the use of the force, although the use made is according to the nature of the user, one uses it for the works of light, another for the works of Darkness, yet another for a mixture. I don't think any Vedantin (except perhaps some modernised ones) would maintain that all is good here — the orthodox Vedantic idea is that all is here an inextricable mixture of good and evil, a play of the Ignorance and therefore a play of the dualities. The Christian missionaries, I suppose, hold that all that God does is morally good, so they are shocked by the Taoist priests aiding the work of the brothel by their rites. But do not the Christian priests invoke the aid of God for the destruction of men in battle and did not some of them sing *Te Deums* over a victory won by the massacre of men and the starvation of women and children? The Taoist who believes only in the Impersonal Tao is more consistent and the Vedantin who believes that the Supreme is beyond good and evil, but that the Cosmic Force the Supreme has put out here works through the dualities, therefore through both good and evil, joy and suffering, has a thesis which at least accounts for the double fact of the experience of the Supreme which is All Light, All Bliss and All Beauty and a world of mixed light and darkness, joy and suffering, what is fair and what is ugly. He says that the dualities come by a separative Ignorance and so long as you

accept this separative Ignorance, you cannot get rid of that, but it is possible to draw back from it in experience and to have the realisation of the Divine in all and the Divine everywhere and then you begin to realise the Light, Bliss and Beauty behind all and this is the one thing to do. Also you begin to realise the one Force and you can use it or let it use you for the growth of the Light in you and others — no longer for the satisfaction of the ego and for the works of the ignorance and darkness.

As to the dilemma about the cruelty of things, I do not know what answer Ramdas would give. One answer might be that the Divine within is felt through the psychic being and the nature of the psychic being is that of the divine light, harmony, love, but it is covered by the mental and separative vital ego from which strife, hate, cruelty naturally come. It is therefore natural to feel in the kindness the touch of the Divine, while the cruelty is felt as a disguise or perversion in Nature, although that would not prevent the man who has the realisation from feeling and meeting the Divine behind the disguise. I have known even instances in which the perception of the Divine in all accompanied by an intense experience of universal love or a wide experience of an inner harmony had an extraordinary effect in making all around kind and helpful, even the most coarse and hard and cruel. Perhaps it is some such experience which is at the base of Ramdas's statement about the kindness. As for the Divine working, the experience of the Vedantic realisation is that behind the confused mixture of good and evil something is working that he realises as the Divine and in his own life he can look back and see what each step, happy or unhappy, meant for his progress and how it led towards the growth of his spirit. Naturally this comes fully as the realisation progresses; before that he had to walk by faith and may have often felt his faith fail and yielded to grief, doubt and despair for a time.

As for my writings, I don't know if there is any that would clear up the difficulty. You would find mostly the statement of the Vedantic experience, for it is that through which I passed and, though now I have passed to something beyond, it seems to me the most thorough-going and radical preparation for whatever

is Beyond, though I do not say that it is indispensable to pass through it. But whatever the solution, it seems to me that the Vedantin is right in insisting that one must, to arrive at it, admit the two facts, the prevalence of evil and suffering here and the experience of that which is free from these things — and it is only by the progressive experience that one can get a solution — whether through reconciliation, a conquering descent or an escape. If we start from the basis taken as an axiom that the prevalence of suffering and evil in the present and in the hard, outward fact of things, disproves of itself all that has been experienced by sages and mystics of the other side, the realisable Divine, then no solution seems possible.

Chapter Ten

Christianity and Theosophy

Christianity

The gospel of suffering, the obsessing sense of sin and the dramatic vital turn which goes with these things are certainly the most prominent defects of the Christian attitude, and they keep the religion even in its esoteric movements too much tied to a half-spiritualised vital movement. Christianity seems to me to have never clarified its intelligence by the spiritual light in the higher reaches of the mind; it is lacking in a spiritual philosophy and never really went beyond theology — in spite of one or two large thinkers who were the exception rather than the rule. One has to pass beyond even the higher mind, but not to have developed the spiritual light in it leaves the instrument defective and, instead of going above the mind, one is then apt to be content to remain below receiving whatever flashes and upliftings one can from a high and far-off and very much veiled Divine. And in such a state it is easier to mistake partial deities or even, if one is not careful, undivine Powers for the Supreme.

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There is no connection between the Christian conception (of the Kingdom of Heaven) and the idea of the supramental descent. The Christian conception supposes a state of things brought about by religious emotion and moral purification; but these things are no more capable of changing the world, whatever value they may have for the individual, than mental idealism or any other power yet called upon for the purpose. The Christian proposes to substitute the sattwic religious ego for the rajasic and tamasic ego, but although this can be done as an individual achievement, it has never succeeded and will never succeed in accomplishing itself in the mass. It has no higher spiritual or psychological knowledge behind it and ignores the foundations

of human character and the source of the difficulty — the duality of mind, life and body. Unless there is a descent of a new Power of Consciousness, not subject to the dualities but still dynamic which will provide a new foundation and a lifting of the centre of consciousness above the mind, the Kingdom of God on earth can only be an ideal, not a fact realised in the general earth-consciousness or earth-life.

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I feel it difficult to say anything about X's Christ and Krishna. The attraction which she says people feel for Christ has never touched me, partly because I got disgusted with the dryness and deadness of Christianity in England and partly because the Christ of the gospels (apart from a few pregnant episodes) is luminous no doubt, but somewhat shadowy and imperfectly constructed in his luminosity; there is more of the ethical put forward than of the spiritual or divine man. The Christ that has strongly lived in the Western saints and mystics is the Christ of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa and others. But apart from that, is it a fact that Christ has been strongly or vividly loved by Christians? Only by a very few, it seems to me. As for Krishna, to judge him and his revealing tradition by the Christ figure and Christ tradition is not possible. The two stand in two different worlds. There is nothing in the latter of the great and boundless and sovereign spiritual knowledge and power of realisation we find in the Gita, nothing of the emotional force, passion, beauty of the Gopi symbol and all that lies behind it, nothing of the many-sided manifestation of the Krishna figure. The other has other qualities: there is no gain in putting them side by side and trying to weigh them against each other. That is the besetting sin of the Christian mind even in those who are most liberal like Dr. Stanley Jones; they cannot get altogether free from the sectarian narrowness and leave each manifestation to its own inner world for those to follow who have the inner drawing to the one or the other. I have always refrained from these comparisons in my published writings in order to avoid this error. What I feel

personally is for myself—I can't ask others to conform to my measure.

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I do not gather from these extracts¹ the true nature of the transformation spoken of here. It seems to be something mental and moral with the love of God and a certain kind of union in separateness brought about by this divine love as the spiritualising element.

Love of God and union in separateness through that love and a transformation of the nature by realising certain mental, ethical, emotional, perhaps even physical possibilities (for the Vaishnavas speak of a new *cinmaya* body) is the principle of Vaishnava Yoga. So there is nothing here that was not already present in that line of Asiatic mysticism which looks to a Personal Deity and insists on the eternal pre-existence and survival of the individual being. A spiritual raising of the nature to its highest possibilities is a part of the Tantric discipline — so that too is not absent from Indian Yoga. The writer seems like most European writers to know only Illusionism and Buddhism and to accept them as the whole wisdom of Asia (*sagesse asiatique*); but even there he misinterprets their idea and their experience. Advaita even in its extreme form does not aim at the extinction of existence, the adoption of nothingness, the end of the being and destruction of the essence. Only a certain kind of Nihilistic Buddhism aims at that and even so that Nothingness, Sunya, is described on another side of it as the Permanent. What these disciplines aim at is a passing from Time to Eternity, a putting off of the finite and putting on of the Infinite, a casting off of the bonds of ego and its results, desire, suffering, a falsified existence, in order to live in the true Self. These descriptions of the Christian writer betray an entire ignorance of the realisation which he decries, its infinity, freedom, surpassing peace, the ecstasy of the Brahmananda. It is an extinction of the limited individual personality but a liberation into cosmic and then into

¹ Brief extracts from a book by Henri Massis, *Défense de l'Occident* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1927), pp. 214–24. — Ed.

transcendental consciousness — an extinction of thought and life but a liberation into an unlimited consciousness and knowledge and being. The personality is extinguished but in something greater than itself, not in something less nor in mere “*Néant*”. If it be said that that negates earthly life, so does the Christian ideal, for the Christian ideal aims at the attainment of a celestial existence beyond the earth existence (beyond this single earth life, for reincarnation is not admitted), which is only a vale of sorrows and a passing ordeal. It insists on the preservation of the spiritual personality, but so do Vaishnavism and Shaivism and other “Asiatic” ideals. The writer’s ignorance of the many-sidedness of Asiatic wisdom deprives his depreciation of it of all value.

The phrases which struck you as resembling superficially at least our ideal of transformation are of a general character and could be adopted without hesitation by almost any spiritual discipline, even Illusionism would be willing to include it as a stage or experience on the way. All depends on the content you put into the words, what actual change in the consciousness and life they are intended to cover. If the transformation be “from sin to sainthood” by the union of the soul with God “in an intellectual light full of love” — which is the most definite description of it in these extracts, — then it is not at all identical, but rather very far from what I mean by transformation. For the transformation I aim at is not from sin to sainthood but from the lower nature of the Ignorance to the Divine Nature of Light, Peace, Truth, Divine Power and Bliss beyond the Ignorance. It journeys towards a supreme self-existent good and leaves behind it the limited struggling human conception of sin and virtue; it is not an intellectual light that is the sun of its aspiration but a spiritual supra-intellectual supramental light; it is not sainthood that is its culmination but divine consciousness — or if you like, soul-hood, spirit-hood, conscious self-hood, divine-hood. There is therefore between these two kinds or two degrees of transformation an immense difference.

I. *“It is a heroic surrender in which the soul reaches the summit of free activity, the being is transformed and its faculties are*

purified, deified by Grace, without its essence being destroyed."²

What is meant by free activity? With us the freedom consists in freedom from the darkness, limitation, error, suffering, transience of the ignorant lower Nature, but also in a total surrender to the Divine. Free action is the action of the Divine in us and through us; no other action can be free. That seems to be accepted in II and III; but this perception, this conception is as old as spiritual knowledge itself — it is not peculiar to Catholicism. What again is meant by the purification and deification of the faculties by Grace? If it is an ethical purification, that goes a very small way and does not bring deification. Again, if the deification is limited by the intellectual light, it must be a rather petty affair at the best. There was a similar aim in ancient Indian spirituality, but it had a larger sweep and a higher height than that. No spiritual discipline aims at purification or deification by the destruction of the essence — there can be no such thing, the very phrase is meaningless and self-contradictory. The essence of the being is indestructible. Even the most rigid Advaita discipline does not aim at any such destruction; its object is the purest purity of the essential self. Transformation aims at this essential purity of the pure Spirit, but it asks also for the purity and divinity of the supreme Nature; it is not the essence of being but the accidents of our undeveloped imperfect nature that are destroyed and replaced by the manifestation of the divine Nature. The monistic Advaita aims at the disappearance of the ego, not of the essence of the person; it arrives at its disappearance by identity with the One, by dissolution of the Nature-constructed ego into the reality of the eternal Self, for that, it says, not ego, is the essence of the person — *so'ham, tat tvam asi*. In our idea of transformation also there is the destruction of the ego, its dissolution into the cosmic and the divine consciousness, but by that destruction we recover the true or spiritual person which is an eternal portion of the Divine.

II. "*The contemplation of the Christian . . . is inseparable*

² This extract and those that follow appear here in translation. The original French extracts are given in the Note on the Texts. — Ed.

from the state of Grace³ and the divine life. Even when he annuls himself, his personality still triumphs by allowing itself to be torn away from all that is not itself, by breaking all the bonds that tie it to the flesh so that the living God may seize him, possess him and dwell in him."

III. *"Freedom means first to subordinate what is inferior in one's nature to what is superior."*

These passages can be taken in the above sense and as approximating to our ideal; but the confusion here is in the use of the word "personality". Personality is a temporary formation and to eternise it would be to eternise ignorance and limitation. The true "I" is not the mental ego or the present personality which is only a mask, but the eternal I which assumes various personalities in various lives. The Christian and European conception of a single life on earth tends to bring about this error by making our present personality appear as if it were our whole self . . . Again, it is not merely the bodily individuality to which ignorance ties us, but the mental individuality and vital individuality also. All these ties have to be broken, the imperfect forms of mind and life transcended, mind transformed into something beyond mind, life into divine life, if the transformation is to be real and not merely a new shaping or heightening of the lights of the Ignorance.

IV. *"This solitude of the soul [of the Asiatic ascetic] is not the true spiritual leisure, the active solitude in which the transformation from sin to sainthood takes place through the soul's union with God in an intellectual light full of love."*

I have commented already on this description of the transformation to be effected and have to add only one more reserve. The solitude of the self in the Divine has no doubt to be active as well as static and passive; but none who has not arrived at the silence and motionless solitude of the eternal Self can have the free and integral activity of the higher divine Nature. For the

³ Grace is not a conception peculiar to the Christian spiritual idea — it is there in Vaishnavism, Shaivism, the Shakta religion, — it is as old as the Upanishads.

action is based on the silence and by the silence it is free.

V. “. . . *the Christian life, a mystic, progressive life which is an enrichment, an infinite enlargement of the human being.*”

This is not our idea of transformation — for the human person is the mental being limited by life and body. An enrichment and enlargement of it cannot go beyond the extreme limit of that formula, it can only widen and adorn its present poverty and narrowness. It cannot ascend out of the mental ignorance into a greater Truth and Light or bring that down in any fullness into earthly nature, which is the aim of transformation as we conceive it.

VI. “*For the Asiatic, the personality is the fall of man; for the Christian it is the very plan of God, the principle of union, the summit of the natural creation, and it calls wholly to the Grace.*”

The personality of this single life in man is a formation in the Ignorance, therefore a fall; it cannot be the summit of the being. We do not admit that it is the summit of the natural creation either, but say there are higher summits to which we have to climb and reveal their powers in earthly nature. The natural creation is an evolution of the hidden Divine Consciousness in Nature which is limited and disguised at first by the Ignorance. It has still to climb out of the Ignorance — therefore to get beyond the human person into the divine person. It is in this spiritual evolution that the Plan Divine (*dessein de Dieu*) manifests its central and significant line and calls all creation to the crowning Grace.

You will see therefore that the resemblance of the transformation here to our ideal is only on the surface, in the words, but not in the content of the words which is much narrower and of another order. So far as there is agreement and coincidence, it is because there is contained in them what is common (a certain conversion of the consciousness) to all spiritual disciplines; for all, in East or in West, have a common core of experience — it is in their developments, range, turn to this or that aspect or else their will towards the totality of the Truth that they differ.

Theosophy

It [*Theosophy*] is a movement that has taken from each previous movement European or Asiatic some of its knowledge and mixed it with much error and imagination of a rather vital character. It is that mixture and the mental character of its knowledge that prevent it from being a sound thing. Many start with it, but have to leave it if they want to get to real spiritual life and knowledge.

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

LETTERS ON YOGA—II, the second of four volumes, contains letters in which Sri Aurobindo speaks about the practice of his system of Yoga. The letters have been arranged in three parts dealing with these broad subject areas:

1. The Path of the Integral Yoga
2. The Synthetic Method of the Integral Yoga
3. The Integral Yoga and Other Spiritual Paths

The letters in this volume have been selected from the extensive correspondence Sri Aurobindo carried on with his disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Letters from this corpus appear in seven volumes of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO: *Letters on Poetry and Art* (Volume 27), *Letters on Yoga* (Volumes 28–31), *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* (Volume 32), and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (Volume 35). The titles of these works specify the nature of the letters included in the volumes, but there is some overlap. For example, a number of letters in the present volume are also published in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*.

The Writing of the Letters

Between 1927 and 1950, Sri Aurobindo replied to hundreds of correspondents in tens of thousands of letters, some of them many pages in length, others only a few words long. Most of his replies, however, were sent to just a few dozen disciples, almost all of them resident members of his Ashram; of these disciples, about a dozen received more than half the replies. Sri Aurobindo wrote most of these letters between 1931 and 1937, the prime period of his correspondence. Letters before and after this period were written on a more restricted scale and confined to a few persons for special reasons.

Disciples in the Ashram wrote to Sri Aurobindo on loose sheets or

sent him the notebooks in which they kept diaries as a record of their spiritual endeavour and a means of communicating with him. These notebooks and loose sheets reached Sri Aurobindo via an internal “post” once or twice a day. Letters from outside which his secretary thought he might like to see were sent at the same time. Correspondents wrote in English if they knew the language well enough, but a good number wrote in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi or French, all of which Sri Aurobindo read fluently, or in other languages that were translated into English for him. The disciples usually addressed their letters to the Mother, since Sri Aurobindo had asked them to do so, but most assumed that he would answer them. He generally replied in the notebook or on the sheets sent by the correspondent, writing beneath the correspondent’s remarks or in the margin or between the lines; sometimes, however, he wrote his reply on a separate sheet of paper. In some cases he had his secretary prepare a typed copy of his letter, which he revised before it was sent. For correspondents living outside the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo sometimes addressed his reply not to the correspondent but to his secretary, who quoted, paraphrased or translated the reply and signed the letter himself. In these indirect replies, Sri Aurobindo often referred to himself in the third person.

While going through Sri Aurobindo’s letters, the reader should keep in mind that each letter was written to a specific person at a specific time, in specific circumstances and for a specific purpose. The subjects taken up arose in regard to the needs of the person. Sri Aurobindo varied the style and tone of his replies according to his relationship with the correspondent; to those with whom he was close, he sometimes employed humour, irony and even sarcasm.

Although written to specific recipients, these letters contain much of general interest, which justifies their inclusion in a volume destined for the general public. For the reasons mentioned above, however, the advice in them does not always apply equally to everyone. Aware of this, Sri Aurobindo himself made some cautionary remarks about the proper use of his letters:

I should like to say, in passing, that it is not always safe to apply practically to oneself what has been written for another.

Each sadhak is a case by himself and one cannot always or often take a mental rule and apply it rigidly to all who are practising the Yoga.

The tendency to take what I lay down for one and apply it without discrimination to another is responsible for much misunderstanding. A general statement, too, true in itself, cannot be applied to everyone alike or applied now and immediately without consideration of condition or circumstance or person or time.

It is not a fact that all I write is meant equally for everybody. That assumes that everybody is alike and there is no difference between sadhak and sadhak. If it were so everybody would advance alike and have the same experiences and take the same time to progress by the same steps and stages. It is not so at all.¹

The Typing and Revision of the Letters

Most of the shorter items in this volume, and many of the longer ones, were not typed or revised during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime and are reproduced here directly from his handwritten manuscripts. A good number of the letters, however, as mentioned above, were typed for Sri Aurobindo and revised by him before sending. Other letters were typed by the recipients for their own use or for circulation within the Ashram. At first, circulation of the letters was restricted to members of the Ashram and others whom Sri Aurobindo had accepted as disciples. When these letters were circulated, personal references were removed. Persons mentioned by Sri Aurobindo were indicated by their initials or by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. Copies of these typed letters were kept by Sri Aurobindo's secretary and sometimes presented to Sri Aurobindo for revision before publication. These typed copies sometimes contained errors, most of which were corrected by him while revising.

¹ First and third passages: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 473 and 475. Second passage: *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, volume 32, p. 349.

Sri Aurobindo's revision sometimes amounted merely to making minor changes here and there, sometimes to a complete rewriting of the letter. He generally removed personal references if this had not already been done by the typist. When necessary, he also rewrote the openings or other parts of the replies in order to free them from dependence on the correspondent's question. As a result, some of these letters have an impersonal tone and read more like brief essays than personal communications.

The Publication of the Letters

Around 1933, Sri Aurobindo's secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta began to compile selections from the growing body of letters in order to publish them. During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, four small books of letters were published: *The Riddle of This World* (1933), *Lights on Yoga* (1935), *Bases of Yoga* (1936) and *More Lights on Yoga* (1948). Sri Aurobindo revised the typescripts of most of the letters in these books. During this revision, he continued the process of removing personal references. A letter he wrote in August 1937 alludes to his approach to the revision:

I had no idea of the book being published as a collection of personal letters — if that were done, they would have to be published whole as such without a word of alteration. I understood the book was meant like the others [*i.e.*, like *Bases of Yoga*, *etc.*] where only what was helpful for an understanding of things Yogic was kept with necessary alterations and modifications. . . . With that idea I have been not only omitting but recasting and adding freely. Otherwise as a book it would be too scrappy and random for public interest. In the other books things too personal were omitted — it seems to me the same rule must hold here — except very sparingly where unavoidable.

A number of letters not included in the four books mentioned above were published in the mid and late 1940s in several journals associated with the Ashram: *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, *The Advent* and *Mother India*. Many letters in these journals

were revised by Sri Aurobindo before publication.

By the mid-1940s a significant body of letters had been collected, typed and revised. In 1945 plans were made, with Sri Aurobindo's approval, to publish a collection of his letters. The work of compiling and editing these letters was done under his guidance. At that time, many typed or printed copies of letters, some revised, some not, were presented to Sri Aurobindo for approval or revision. The resulting material was arranged and published in a four-volume series entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*. Series One appeared in 1947, Series Two and Three in 1949 and Series Four in 1951. The first, second and fourth series contained letters on Yoga, the third letters on poetry and literature. In 1958, most of these letters on Yoga, along with many additional ones, were published under the titles *On Yoga II: Tome One* and *On Yoga II: Tome Two*, as Volumes VI and VII of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre collection. The first tome, with further additions, was reissued in 1969. In 1970 a new edition of the letters was published under the title *Letters on Yoga*; this edition contained many new letters not included in *On Yoga II*. The three volumes of the enlarged edition constituted volumes 22, 23 and 24 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library.

The present edition, also titled *Letters on Yoga*, incorporates the Centenary Library letters, but also contains a large number of letters that have come to light in the four decades between the two editions. One source of new letters is the correspondences of several disciples which were published in books after the Centenary Library edition had been issued. Govindbhai Patel's correspondence was published in 1974 in a book entitled *My Pilgrimage to the Spirit*; an enlarged edition appeared in 1977. Nagin Doshi's correspondence, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo: Letters to a Young Disciple*, was brought out in three volumes in 1974, 1976 and 1987. *Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* came out in two volumes in 1983 and 1984. Sahana Devi's correspondence came out in 1985 in a book entitled *At the Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*. Prithwi Singh's correspondence came out in 1988 as *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to Prithwi Singh*. Dilip Kumar Roy's correspondence was issued in four volumes in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2011 under the title *Sri Aurobindo to Dilip*. A second source of new material is individual letters and small collections of

letters published in Ashram journals and elsewhere after the Centenary Library had been issued. A third source is letters transcribed from manuscripts or from early typed copies. Many unpublished letters were discovered while reviewing correspondences long held by the Ashram; some of these had never been assessed to find letters for publication; others had been assessed, but relatively few letters were selected at the time. Additional letters were received by the Ashram upon the passing away of disciples. From the three sources mentioned above, many letters have been found that are worthy of publication. The present edition contains about one-third more letters than appear in the Centenary Library.

The Selection, Arrangement and Editing of the Letters

In compiling the present edition, all known manuscripts, typed copies or photographic copies of manuscripts and printed texts of letters were checked. From these sources, letters that seemed to be of general interest were selected. Electronic texts of the letters were then made and carefully checked at least twice against the handwritten, typed, photocopied, and printed versions of the texts.

The selected letters have been arranged according to subject and placed in the four volumes of the present edition. Each volume is divided and subdivided into parts, sections, chapters and groups with descriptive headings; each group, the lowest unit of division, contains one or more letters devoted to the specific subject of the group.

The present volume consists of 1163 separate items, an “item” being defined as what is published between one heading or asterisk and another heading or asterisk. Many items correspond exactly to individual letters; a good number, however, contain only part of the individual letters; a small number consist of two or more letters (or parts of them) that were joined together by early typists or editors and then revised in that form by Sri Aurobindo.

Whenever possible, the letters are reproduced to their full extent. In some cases, however, portions of the letters have been omitted because they are not of general interest. A number of letters, for example, begin with personal remarks by Sri Aurobindo unrelated to the more substantial remarks which follow; these personal openings have often

been removed. In some letters, Sri Aurobindo marked the transition from one part of a letter to another with a phrase such as “As to”; these transitional phrases have often been retained and stand at the beginning of abbreviated letters — that is, letters in which the first part of the letter has been omitted or placed elsewhere.

A number of letters, or portions of them, have been published in more than one volume of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Most of this doubling of letters occurs between *Letters on Yoga* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. The form of these letters is not always the same in both places. In *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, the manuscript version of a given letter has often been used because it contains Sri Aurobindo’s remarks on himself or the Mother or members of the Ashram. These personal remarks, as noted above, were usually removed by Sri Aurobindo when he revised the letter for publication as a letter on Yoga. This revised form of the letter has generally been reproduced in *Letters on Yoga*. Thus, a number of letters are available both in their original form and their revised form.

As in previous collections of Sri Aurobindo’s letters, the names of Ashram members and others have often been replaced by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. In any given letter, X stands for the first name replaced, Y for the second, Z for the third, A for the fourth, and so on. An X in a given letter has no necessary relation to an X in another letter. Names of Ashram members to whom Sri Aurobindo referred not as sadhaks but as holders of a certain position — notably Nolini Kanta Gupta in his position as Sri Aurobindo’s secretary — are given in full. Sometimes the names of people who played a role in the history of the period are also given.

In his letters Sri Aurobindo sometimes wrote Sanskrit words in the devanagari script; these words have been transliterated into roman script in this edition. Words in Bengali script have likewise been transliterated. This policy is in accord with the practice followed in Sri Aurobindo’s lifetime.

The reader may note that Sri Aurobindo almost always spelled the word “Asram” without an “h” in his manuscripts. Around 1945, due to failing eyesight, he began dictating most of his writings to his amanuensis Nirodbaran; Nirodbaran sometimes spelled the word without an “h”, sometimes with one. In the present edition, the word

is always spelled as it occurs in the manuscripts, both those of Sri Aurobindo and of Nirodbaran. In headings and other editorial matter, the spelling “Ashram” has been used, since this is now the official spelling of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

**Original French Texts of Six Extracts
Cited in the Letter on Pages 506–10**

I. *“C’est un abandon héroïque, où l’âme parvient au sommet de l’activité libre, où la personne se transforme, où ses facultés sont épurées, déifiées par la grâce, sans que son essence soit détruite.”*

II. *“La contemplation du chrétien . . . est inséparable de l’état de grâce et de vie divine. S’il doit s’anéantir, c’est encore sa personnalité qui triomphe en se laissant arracher à tout ce qui n’est pas elle, en brisant tous les liens qui l’unissent à son individu de chair, afin que le Dieu vivant puisse s’en saisir, l’assumer, l’habiter.”*

III. *“Liberté qui consiste d’abord à subordonner ce qui est inférieur dans sa nature à ce qui lui est supérieur.”*

IV. *“Cette solitude de l’âme [de l’ascète asiatique] . . . n’est pas le vrai loisir spirituel, la solitude active où s’opère la transformation du péché en sainteté par l’union de l’âme avec Dieu dans ‘une lumière intellectuelle toute pleine d’amour’.”*

V. *“ . . . la vie chrétienne. Mystique progressive qui est un enrichissement, un élargissement infini de la personne humaine.”*

VI. *“Pour l’Asiatique la personnalité est la chute de l’homme; pour le chrétien, c’est le dessein même de Dieu, le principe de l’union, le sommet naturel de la création qu’il appelle tout entière à la grâce.”*

Letters on Yoga

III



Sri Aurobindo

Letters on Yoga — III

Experiences and Realisations
in the Integral Yoga

VOLUME 30
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO
© Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust 2014
Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department
Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry
PRINTED IN INDIA

Publisher's Note

Letters on Yoga — III comprises letters written by Sri Aurobindo on the experiences and realisations that may occur in the practice of the Integral Yoga. It is the third of four volumes of *Letters on Yoga*, arranged by the editors as follows:

- I. Foundations of the Integral Yoga
- II. Practice of the Integral Yoga
- III. Experiences and Realisations in the Integral Yoga
- IV. Transformation of Human Nature in the Integral Yoga

The letters in these volumes have been selected from the large body of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Other letters from this period are published in *Letters on Poetry and Art*, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volumes 27, 32 and 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Letters written before 1927 are reproduced in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS.

During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, relatively few of his letters were published. Three small books of letters on Yoga were brought out in the 1930s. A more substantial collection came out between 1947 and 1951 in a four-volume series entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (including one volume of letters on poetry and literature). In 1958, many more letters were included in the two large tomes of *On Yoga — II*. A further expanded collection in three volumes entitled *Letters on Yoga* was published in 1970 as part of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. The present collection, also entitled *Letters on Yoga*, constitutes volumes 28–31 of THE COMPLETE WORKS. These volumes incorporate previously published letters and contain many new ones as well.

About one-third of the letters in the present volume were not published in the Centenary Library.

The present volume is arranged by subject in four parts:

1. The Place of Experiences in the Practice of Yoga
2. The Opening of the Inner Senses
3. Experiences of the Inner Consciousness and the Cosmic Consciousness
4. The Fundamental Realisations of the Integral Yoga

The texts of all the letters have been checked against the available manuscripts, typescripts and printed versions.

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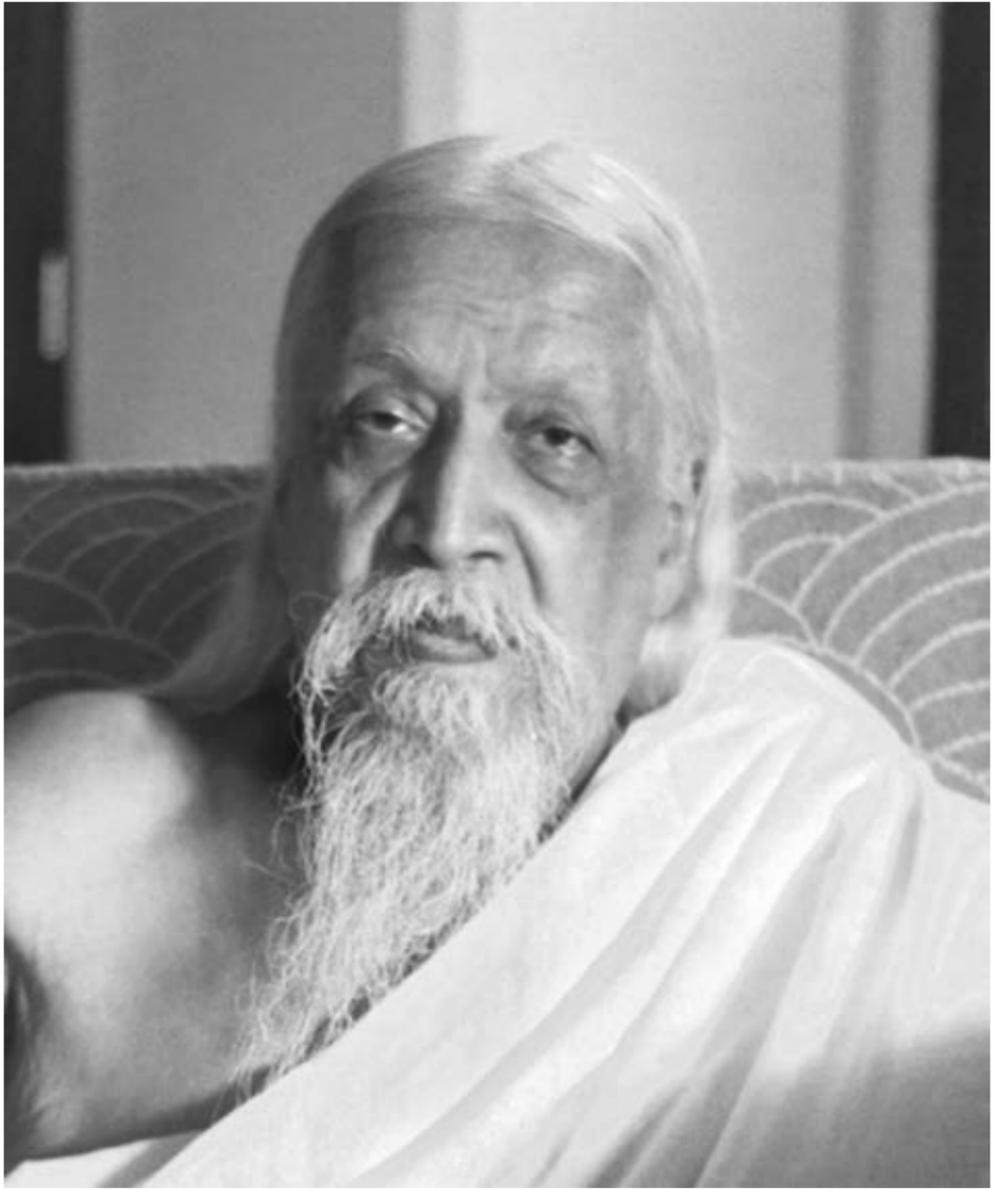
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Sri Aurobindo, 1950

Part One

The Place of Experiences in the Practice of Yoga

Section One

The Nature and Value of Experiences

Chapter One

Experiences and Realisations

The Difference between Experience and Realisation

Experience is a word that covers almost all the happenings in Yoga; only when something gets settled, then it is no longer an experience but part of the siddhi. E.g. peace when it comes and goes is an experience — when it is settled and goes no more it is a siddhi. Realisation is different — it is when something for which you are aspiring becomes real to you. E.g. you have the idea of the Divine in all, but it is only an idea, a belief; when you feel or see the Divine in all, it becomes a realisation.

*

Experience of Truth is an isolated or repeated descent of the Truth into the consciousness or ascent of the consciousness into it. Realisation is when the Truth becomes a settled part of the consciousness.

*

An experience of a truth in the substance of mind, in the vital or the physical, wherever it may be, is the beginning of realisation. When I experience peace, I begin to realise what it is. Repetition of the experience leads to a fuller and more permanent realisation. When it is settled anywhere, that is the full realisation of it in that plane or in that part of the being.

*

Your going up to a higher plane is an experience — the descent of the higher plane into you, if temporary, is an experience.

If you become fully aware of the nature of the higher plane and if that becomes part of your consciousness, it is a realisation.

These are the two words usually used, realisation and experience.

*

There is a fundamental realisation in which one can say, “I have now realised the Divine” and there is no longer any anxiety or straining after something unachieved. But after that even there is a development of this consciousness of realisation into which more and more of the Divine Truth comes into the fundamental experience.

The Yogi and the Sadhak

The Yogi is one who is already established in realisation — the sadhak is one who is getting or still trying to get realisation.

*

A sadhaka is one who is doing sadhana to attain union with the divine consciousness. A Yogi is one who is already living in some kind of oneness with the Divine, not in the ordinary consciousness.

Subordinate and Great Experiences

One who lives in the spiritual consciousness is a spiritual man, just as one who lives in thinking mind is an intellectual man. The spiritual consciousness is that in which you realise the Divine, the Self, the cosmic oneness as the constant living contact with these things. I do not know what you mean by abnormal experiences. There are many abnormal experiences that are not spiritual. There are two kinds of experiences: (1) subordinate things (like visions etc.) that help to open or build up or furnish a new (Yogic) consciousness; (2) the great experiences of Self, Peace, Light, Ananda, etc., also the perception of a deeper knowledge which shows us the truths of Soul and Nature and of the aspects of the Divine. This class of experiences are the beginning of realisation and it is when they settle and become part of the consciousness that realisation is complete.

*

One develops by spiritual knowledge and experience which

comes from above the mind or one develops by psychic perception and experience which comes from within — these are the two main things. But it is also necessary to grow by inner mental and vital experiences and visions and dream experiences play a large part here. One thing may predominate in one sadhak, others in another; each develops according to his nature.

Feelings as Experiences

There is no law that a feeling cannot be an experience; experiences are of all kinds and take all forms in the consciousness. When the consciousness undergoes, sees or feels anything spiritual or psychic or even occult, that is an experience — in the technical Yogic sense, for there are of course all sorts of experiences that are not of that character. Feelings themselves are of many kinds. The word feeling is often used for an emotion, and there can be psychic or spiritual emotions which are numbered among Yogic experiences, such as a wave of shuddha bhakti or the rising of love towards the Divine. A feeling also means a perception of something felt — a perception in the vital or psychic or in the essential substance of the consciousness. I find even often a mental perception when it is very vivid described as a feeling. If you exclude all these feelings and kindred ones and say that they are feelings, not experiences, then there is very little room left for experiences at all. Feeling and vision are the main forms of spiritual experience. One sees and feels the Brahman everywhere; one feels a force enter or go out from one; one feels or sees the presence of the Divine within or around one; one feels or sees the descent of light; one feels the descent of peace or Ananda. Kick all that out on the ground that it is only a feeling and you make a clean sweep of most of the things that we call experience. Again we feel a change in the substance of the consciousness or the state of consciousness. We feel ourselves spreading in wideness and the body only as a small thing in the wideness (this can be seen also); we feel the heart-consciousness becoming wide instead of narrow, soft instead of hard, illumined instead of obscure, the head-consciousness also, the vital, even

the physical; we feel thousands of things of all kinds and why are we not to call them experiences? Of course it is an inner sight, an inner feeling, subtle feeling, not material like the feeling of a cold wind or a stone or any other object, but as the inner consciousness deepens it is not less vivid or concrete, it is even more so.

In this case what you felt was not an emotion, though something emotional came with it. You felt a condition in the very substance or consciousness—a softness, a plasticity, even a velvety softness, an ineffable plasticity. Any fellow who knows anything about Yoga would immediately say, “What a fine experience”,—a very clear psychic and spiritual experience.

Love, Joy and Experience

Your supposition [*that one cannot love the Divine until one experiences him*] conflicts with the experience of many sadhaks. I think Ramakrishna indicated somewhere that the love and joy and ardour of seeking was much more intense than that of fulfilment. I don't agree, but that shows at least that intense love is possible before realisation.

*

My point is that there have been hundreds of Bhaktas who have the love and seeking without any concrete experience, with only a mental conception or emotional belief in the Divine to support them. The whole point is that it is untrue to say that one must have a decisive or concrete experience before one can have love for the Divine. It is contrary to the facts and the quite ordinary facts of the spiritual experience.

*

The ordinary Bhakta is not a lion heart. The lion hearts get experiences comparatively soon but the ordinary Bhakta has often to feed on his own love or yearning for years and years—and he does it.

*

I really do not know what kind of joy you want. All experiences are not accompanied by joy. Interest is another matter.

Imagined Experiences

When one is living in the physical mind, the only way to escape from it is by imagination. Incidentally, that is why poetry and art etc. have so strong a hold. But these imaginations are often really shadows of supraphysical experience and once the barrier of the physical mind is broken or even swung a little open, there come the experiences themselves if the temperament is favourable. Hence are born visions and other such phenomena — all those that are miscalled psychic phenomena.

*

Even imagined experiences (honestly imagined) can help to mental realisation and mental realisation can be a step to total realisation.

Mental Knowledge and Spiritual Experience

These disadvantages of mental knowledge no doubt exist.¹ But I doubt whether anybody could mentally simulate to himself the experience of the One everywhere or the downflow of peace. He might mistake a first mental realisation for the deeper spiritual one or think the descent was in his physical when it was in his mental influencing the body through the mental sheath of the subtle body — but those who have no mental knowledge can also make these mistakes. The disadvantage of the one who does not know mentally is that he gets the experience without understanding it and this may be a hindrance or at least retardatory to development while he would not get so easily out of a

¹ *The correspondent suggested that a mere mental knowledge of spiritual experience might lead one to concoct an experience through imagination or to exaggerate an experience by adding something to it mentally or to doubt an experience, thinking it might be a mental formation. — Ed.*

mistake as one more mentally enlightened.

*

Usually they [*persons without mental knowledge of the Self*] feel first through the psychic centre by union with the Mother and do not call it the Self — or else they simply feel a wideness and peace in the head or in the heart. Previous mental knowledge is not indispensable. I have seen in more cases than one sadhaks getting the Brahman realisation and asking “what is this?” — describing it with great vividness and exactness but without any of the known terms.

Just after writing this I read a letter from a sadhika in which she writes, “I see that my head is becoming very quiet, pure, luminous, universal, *viśvamaya*.” Well, that is the beginning of the realisation of the universal Brahman-Self in the mind, but if I put it to her in that language she would understand nothing.

*

Mental realisation is useful at the beginning and prepares spiritual experience.

It [*book-knowledge*] can help too at the beginning — but also it can hinder. It depends on the sadhak.

*

You have to learn by experience. Mental information (badly understood, as it always is without experience) might rather hamper than help. In fact there is no fixed mental knowledge for these things, which vary infinitely. You must learn to go beyond the hankering for mental information and open to the true way of knowledge.

*

All the experiences [*of the Theosophists*] are mental except with a very few. Wordsworth’s experience also was mental. Mental experiences are of course a good preparation, but to stop there leaves one far away from the real thing.

*

Yes, if one has thought much of one kind of realisation and absorbed the idea deeply — then it is quite natural that the spiritual experience of it should be one of the first to come.

Mental Realisation and Spiritual Realisation

It [*mental realisation of the Divine*] is a certain kind of living cognition — of which there are two parts — the living perception in thought rising as far as intuition or revelation, the vivid mental feeling and reproduction of what is thus known in the substance of mind. Thus the One in all is felt, seen, realised by the mind by a sort of inner mental sense. The spiritual realisation is more concrete than that — one has the Knowledge by a kind of identity in one's very substance.

*

A mental or vital sense of oneness has not the same essentiality or the same effect as a spiritual realisation of oneness — just as the mental perception of the Divine is not the same thing as the spiritual realisation. The consciousness of one plane is different from the consciousness of another. Spiritual and psychic love are different from mental, vital or physical love — so with everything else. So too with the perception of oneness and its effects. That is why the different planes have their importance; otherwise their existence would have no meaning.

*

You have to know by experience. The mental perception and mental realisation are different from each other — the first is only an idea, in the second the mind in its very substance reflects or reproduces the truth. The spiritual experience is more than the mental — it is in the very substance of the being that the experience takes place.

*

But if you have that [*peace, calm, silence, wideness*] when you concentrate, it is a true spiritual realisation — that which

accompanies or prepares the experience of the Atman. It is not merely a mental realisation.

Spiritual Experience as Substantial Experience

Your feeling [*of spiritual experience as a “substance”*] is quite correct. All spiritual experience is a substantial experience—consciousness, Ananda even are felt as something substantial. It is also true that it is felt so by something deeper than mind; it is the mind that turns concrete realities into abstractions.

*

Yes, so long as the attitude is mental it is insecure because it is something imposed on the nature—a mental direction and control. But with the spiritual experience what begins is a change in the stuff of the consciousness itself and by that, as it proceeds to settle and confirm itself, begins naturally what we call the transformation of the nature.

*

The phrase [*“stuff of consciousness”*] simply means “substance of consciousness”, the consciousness in itself.

As the Yogic experience develops, consciousness is felt as something quite concrete in which there are movements and formations which are what we call thoughts, feelings etc.

Chapter Two

The Value of Experiences

Experience and Development of Consciousness

It is only by persistent experience and development of consciousness that the veil of Ignorance can be entirely dispelled.

*

An experience is an unmistakable thing and must be given its proper value. The mind may exaggerate in thinking about it, but that does not deprive it of its value.

*

Trances and experiences have their value. There is no question of less or more important — each thing has its place.

*

It is not a question of giving an equal value to everything you do, but of recognising the value of all the different elements of the sadhana. No such rule can be made as that trances are of little value or that experiences are of inferior importance any more than it can be said that work is of no or inferior importance.

*

Your experience is the beginning of the fundamental and decisive realisation which carries the consciousness out of the limited mental into the true spiritual vision and experience in which all is one and all is the Divine. It is this constant and living experience that is the true foundation of spiritual life. There can be no doubt about its truth and value, for it is evidently something living and dynamic and goes beyond a mental realisation. It may add to itself in future different aspects, but the essential fundamental realisation you now have. When this is permanent, one can be said to have passed out of the twilight of the mind

into the light of the Spirit.

What you have now to do is to allow the realisation to grow and develop. The necessary movements will probably come of themselves as these have come — provided you keep your will single and faithful towards this Light and Truth. Already it has brought you the guidance towards the next step, cessation of the flow of thought, the inner mind's silence. Once that is won, there is likely to come a settled peace, liberation, wideness. The sense of the need of simplicity and transparency is also a true movement and comes from the same inner guidance. That is necessary for the deepest inmost divine element within behind the mind, life and body to come forward fully in you — when it does you will be able to become aware of the inner guide within you and of a Force working for the full spiritual change. This simplicity comes by a separation from the manifold devious mental and vital movements which lead one in all directions — a quiet, a detachment in the heart which turns one singly towards the one Truth and the one Light till it takes up the whole being and the whole life.

Put your trust in the grace of the One and Divine which has already touched you and opened its door and rely on it for all that is to come.

The Importance of Small Beginnings

What I meant about the experiences was simply this that you have erected your own ideas about what you want from the Yoga and have always been measuring what began to come by that standard and because it was not according to expectation or up to that standard telling yourself after a moment, "It is nothing, it is nothing." That dissatisfaction laid you open at every step to a reaction or recoil which prevented any continuous development. The Yogin who has experience knows that the small beginnings are of the greatest importance and have to be cherished and allowed with great patience to develop. He knows for instance that the neutral quiet so dissatisfying to the vital eagerness of the sadhak is the first step towards the peace that passeth all

understanding, the small current or thrill of inner delight the first trickling in of the ocean of Ananda, the play of lights or colours the key of the doors of the inner vision and experience, the descents that stiffen the body into a concentrated stillness the first touch of something at the end of which is the presence of the Divine. He is not impatient; he is rather careful not to disturb the evolution that is beginning. Certainly, some sadhaks have strong and decisive experiences at the beginning, but these are followed by a long labour in which there are many empty periods and many periods of struggle.

*

If you truly decide in all your consciousness to offer your being to the Divine to mould it as He wills, then most of your personal difficulty will disappear — I mean that which still remains, and there will be only the lesser difficulties of the transformation of the ordinary into the Yogic consciousness, normal to all sadhana. Your mental difficulty has been all along that you wanted to mould the sadhana and the reception of experience and the response of the Divine according to your own preconceived mental ideas and left no freedom to the Divine to act or manifest according to His own truth and reality and the need not of your mind and vital but of your soul and spirit. It is as if your vital were to present a coloured glass to the Divine and tell Him, “Now pour yourself into that and I will shut you up there and look at you through the colours”, or, from the mental point of view, as if you were to offer a test-tube in a similar way and say, “Get in there and I will test you and see what you are.” But the Divine is shy about such processes and His objections are not altogether unintelligible.

At any rate I am glad the experience has come back again — it has come as the result of your effort and mine for the last days and is practically a reminder that the door of entry into Yogic experience is still there and can open at the right touch. You taxed me the other day with making a mistake about your experience of breathing with the name in it and reproached me for drawing a big inference from a very small phenomenon — a

thing, by the way, which the scientists are doing daily without the least objection from your reason. You had the same idea, I believe, about my acceptance of your former experiences, this current and the descent of stillness in the body, as signs of the Yogi in you. But these ideas spring from an ignorance of the spiritual realm and its phenomena and only show the incapacity of the outer intellectual reason to play the role you want it to play, that of a supreme judge of spiritual truth and inner experience — a quite natural incapacity because it does not know even the A.B.C. of these things and it passes my comprehension how one can be a judge about a thing of which one knows nothing. I know that the “scientists” are continually doing it with supra-physical phenomena outside their province — those who never had a spiritual or occult experience laying down the law about occult phenomena and Yoga; but that does not make it any more reasonable or excusable. Any Yogi who knows something about pranayama or japa can tell you that the running of the name in the breath is not a small phenomenon but of great importance in these practices and, if it comes naturally, a sign that something in the inner being has done that kind of sadhana in the past. As for the current it is the familiar sign of a first touch of the higher consciousness flowing down in the form of a stream — like the “wave” of light of the scientist — to prepare its possession of mind, vital and physical in the body. So is the stillness and rigidity of the body in your former experience a sign of the same descent of the higher consciousness in its form or tendency of stillness and silence. It is a perfectly sound conclusion that one who gets these experiences at the beginning has the capacity of Yoga in him and can open, even if the opening is delayed by other movements belonging to his ordinary nature. These things are part of the science of Yoga, as familiar as the crucial experiences of physical Science are to the scientific seeker.

As for the impression of swooning, it is simply because you were not in sleep, as you imagined, but in a first condition of what is usually called *svapna samādhi*, dream trance. What you felt like swooning was only the tendency to go deeper in, into a more profound *svapna samādhi* or else into a *susupta* trance —

the latter being what the word *trance* usually means in English, but it can be extended to the *svapna* kind also. To the outer mind this deep loss of the surface consciousness seems like a swoon, though it is really nothing of the kind — hence the impression. Many sadhaks here get at times or sometimes for a long period this deeper *svapna samādhi* in what began as sleep — with the result that a conscious sadhana goes on in their sleeping as in their waking hours. This is different from the dream experiences that one has on the vital or mental plane which are themselves not ordinary dreams but actual experiences on the mental, vital, psychic or subtle physical planes. You have had several dreams which were vital dream experiences, those in which you met the Mother, and recently you had one such contact on the mental plane which, for those who understand these things, means that the inner consciousness is preparing in the mind as well as in the vital, which is a great advance.

You will ask why these things take place either in sleep or in an indrawn meditation and not in the waking state. There is a twofold reason. First, that usually in Yoga these things begin in an indrawn state and not in the waking condition, — it is only if or when the waking mind is ready that they come as readily in the waking state. Again in you the waking mind has been too active in its insistence on the ideas and operations of the outer consciousness to give the inner mind a chance to project itself into the waking state. But it is through the inner consciousness and primarily through the inner mind that these things come; so, if there is not a clear passage from the inner to the outer, it must be in the inner states that they first appear. If the waking mind is subject or surrendered to the inner consciousness and willing to become its instrument, then even from the beginning these openings can come through the waking consciousness. That again is a familiar law of the Yoga.

I may add that when you complain of the want of response, you are probably expecting immediately some kind of direct manifestation of the Divine which, as a rule though there are exceptions, comes only when previous experiences have prepared the consciousness so that it may feel, understand, recognise the

response. Ordinarily the spiritual or divine consciousness comes first — what I have called the higher consciousness — the presence or manifestation comes afterwards. But this descent of the higher consciousness is really the touch or influx of the Divine itself, though not at first recognised by the lower nature.

*

“I will try again” is not sufficient; what is needed is to try always — steadily, with a heart free from despondency, as the Gita says, *anirvinṇacetasā*. You speak of five and a half years as if it were a tremendous time for such an object, but a Yogi who is able in that time to change radically his nature and get the concrete decisive experience of the Divine would have to be considered as one of the rare gallopers of the spiritual Way. Nobody has ever said that the spiritual change was an easy thing; all spiritual seekers will say that it is difficult but supremely worth doing. If one’s desire for the Divine has become the master desire, then surely one can give one’s whole life to it without repining and not grudge the time, difficulty or labour.

Again you speak of your experiences as vague and dream-like. In the first place the scorn of small experiences in the inner life is no part of wisdom, reason or common sense. It is in the beginning of the sadhana and for a long time the small experiences that come on each other and, if given their full value, prepare the field, build up a preparatory consciousness and one day break open the walls to big experiences. But if you despise them with the ambitious idea that you must have either the big experiences or nothing, it is not surprising that they come once in a blue moon and cannot do their work. Moreover, all your experiences were not small. There were some like the stilling descent of a Power in the body — what you used to call numbness — which anyone with spiritual knowledge would have recognised as a first strong step towards the opening of the consciousness to the higher Peace and Light. But it was not in the line of your expectations and you gave it no special value. As for vague and dreamlike, you feel it so because you are looking at them and at everything that happens in you from the standpoint of

the outward physical mind and intellect which can take only physical things as real and important and vivid and to its inward phenomena are something unreal, vague and truthless. The spiritual experience does not even despise dreams and visions; it is known to it that many of these things are not dreams at all but experiences on an inner plane and if the experiences of the inner planes which lead to the opening of the inner self into the outer so as to influence and change it are not accepted, the experiences of the subtle consciousness and the trance consciousness, how is the waking consciousness to expand out of the narrow prison of the body and the body-mind and the senses? For, to the physical mind untouched by the inner awakened consciousness, even the experience of the cosmic consciousness or the Eternal Self might very well seem merely subjective and unconvincing. It would think, "Curious, no doubt, rather interesting, but very subjective, don't you think? Hallucinations, yes?" The first business of the spiritual seeker is to get away from the outward mind's outlook and to look at inward phenomena with an inward mind to which they soon become powerful and stimulating realities. If one does that, then one begins to see that there is here a wide field of truth and knowledge, in which one can move from discovery to discovery to reach the supreme discovery of all. But the outer physical mind, if it has any ideas about the Divine and spirituality at all, has only hasty *a priori* ideas miles away from the solid ground of inner truth and experience.

I have not left myself time to deal with other matters at any length. You speak of the Divine's stern demands and hard conditions — but what severe demands and iron conditions you are laying on the Divine! You practically say to Him, "I will doubt and deny you at every step, but you must fill me with your unmistakable Presence; I will be full of gloom and despair whenever I think of you or the Yoga, but you must flood my gloom with your rapturous irresistible Ananda; I will meet you only with my outer physical mind and consciousness, but you must give me in that the Power that will transform rapidly my whole nature." Well, I don't say that the Divine won't or can't do it, but if such a miracle is to be worked, you must give Him

some time and just a millionth part of a chance.

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There is no reason certainly for despair. The bliss always comes in drops at first, or a broken trickle. You have to go on cheerfully and in full confidence, till there is the cascade.

Chapter Three

Inner Experience and Outer Life

Subjective Experience and the Objective Existence

Experiences on the mental and vital and subtle physical planes or thought formations and vital formations are often represented as if they were concrete external happenings; true experiences are in the same way distorted by mental and vital accretions and additions. One of the first needs in our Yoga is a discrimination and a psychic tact distinguishing the false from the true, putting each thing in its place and giving it its true value or absence of value, not carried away by the excitement of the mind or the vital being.

*

What do you mean by true? You have a subjective experience belonging to a higher plane of consciousness; when you descend you come down with it into the material and the whole of existence is seen by you in the terms of that consciousness — just as when a man sees the vision of the Divine everywhere, he sees all down to the material world as the Divine.

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It happens so in the sadhak's own subjective consciousness [*that the Divine is seen everywhere and there is no sorrow or suffering in the world*]. Of course it does not mean that the whole world becomes like that in everybody's consciousness.

If your experience were objective, then that would mean that the whole world had changed, everybody became conscious, no sorrow or suffering anywhere. Needless to say, the material world has not changed objectively in that way. Only in your own consciousness, subjectively, you see the Divine

everywhere, all disharmony disappears, sorrow and suffering become impossible for the time at least—that is a subjective experience.

*

It depends on what you mean by subjective and objective. Knowledge and Ignorance are in their nature subjective. But from the personal point of view, the Force of Ignorance may manifest as something objective, outside oneself so that even when one has knowledge for oneself one cannot remove the enviroing Ignorance. If that is so, Ignorance is not merely a subjective force in oneself, it is there in the world.

*

It seems to have been a series of experiences of the different bhavas of bhakti and it came for experience only—or for a manifold development of the bhakti. These of course are purely subjective experiences meant to educate the consciousness and have no definitive value for the actual manifestation. It is merely for subjective experience and knowledge.

*

Subjective does not mean false. It only means that the Truth is experienced within but it has not yet taken hold of the dynamic relations with the outside existence. It is an inner experience of the cosmic consciousness and the overmind knowledge that you have.

*

The cosmic consciousness, the overmind knowledge and experience is an inner knowledge—but its effect is subjective. As long as one lives in it, one can be free in soul, but to transform the external nature more is needed.

*

I have told you once before that your experiences are subjective—and in the subjective sphere they are correct in substance so

far as they go. But to enter the Supermind subjective experience is not sufficient. Some sufficient application of intuition and overmind to life must first be done.

*

The difficulty of the Yoga is not in getting experiences or a subjective realisation of the Truth; it is in objectivising the Truth, that is, in making the outer consciousness down to the material an expression of the inner Truth. So long as that is not done, the attacks of the lower Nature can always continue.

Experience and the Change of One's Nature

Merely to have experiences of the higher consciousness will not change the nature. Either the higher consciousness has to make a dynamic descent into the whole being and change it — or it must establish itself in the inner being down to the inner physical so that the latter feels itself separate from the outer and is able to act freely upon it — or the psychic must come forward and change the nature — or the inner will must awake and force the nature to change. These are the four ways in which change can be brought about.

*

When you are in connection with the higher worlds above the mental, with the mental and the psychic or even with some of the higher vital planes, then there is the peace and Ananda — but connection with the lower vital worlds can easily bring disturbance and unrest, so long as your vital itself is not changed and made full of peace and strength and quiet.

*

You forget that for a long time she was often keeping much more to herself, to X's great anger. During that time she built up an inner life and made some attempt to change certain things in her outer — not in the outward appearance but in the movements governing it. There is still an enormous amount to be done before

the inward change can be outwardly visible, but still she is not insincere in her resolution. As for her not having any depression it is because she has established a fundamental calm which is only upset by clashes with X; all the rest passes on the surface ruffling it perhaps, but not breaking the calm. She has also a day or two ago had the experience of the ascent above and of the wideness of peace and joy of the Infinite (free from the bodily sense and limitation) as also the descent down to the Muladhara. She does not know the names or technicalities of these things but her description which was minute and full of details was unmistakable. There are three or four others who have had this experience recently so that we may suppose the working of the Force is not altogether in vain, as this experience is a very big affair and is supposed to be, if stabilised, the summit of the old Yogas. For us it is only a beginning of spiritual transformation. I have said this though it is personal so that you may understand that outside defects and obstacles in the nature or the appearance of unyogicness does not necessarily mean that a person can do or is doing no sadhana.

*

To change the nature is not easy and always takes time, but if there is no inner experience, no gradual emergence of the other purer consciousness that is concealed by all these things you now see, it would be almost impossible even for the strongest will. You say that first you must get rid of all these things, then have the inner experiences. But how is that to be done? These things, anger, jealousy, desire, are the very stuff of the ordinary human vital consciousness. They could not be changed if there were not a deeper consciousness within which is of quite another character. There is within you a psychic being which is divine, directly a part of the Mother, pure of all these defects. It is covered and concealed by the ordinary consciousness and nature, but when it is unveiled and able to come forward and govern the being, then it changes the ordinary consciousness, throws all these undivine things out and changes the outer nature altogether. That is why we want the sadhaks to concentrate, to open this concealed

consciousness — it is by concentration of whatever kind and the experiences it brings that one opens and becomes aware within and the new consciousness and nature begin to grow and come out. Of course we want them also to use their will and reject the desires and wrong movements of the vital, for by doing that the emergence of the true consciousness becomes possible. But rejection alone cannot succeed; it is by rejection and by inner experience and growth that it is done.

You say that all these things were hidden within you. No; they were not deep within, they were in the outer or surface nature, only you were not sufficiently conscious of them because the other true consciousness had not opened and grown within you. Now by the experiences you have had the psychic has been growing and it is because of this new psychic consciousness that you are able to see clearly all that has to go. It does not go at once because the vital had so much the habit of them in the past, but they will now have to go because your soul wants to get rid of them and your soul is growing stronger in you. So you must both use your will aided by the Mother's force to get rid of these things, and go on with your inner psychic experiences — it is by the two together that all will be done.

*

The persistence or the obstinate return of the old Adam is a common experience: it is only when there is a sufficient mass of experience and a certain progression of consciousness in the higher parts of the being that the lower can be really transmuted. It is that that one must allow to develop. It is the pressure of the Yoga shakti and the increase of the experiences that is wanted in your case, not this preoccupation with an external "grim" tapasya.

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Once these experiences [*of peace and the descent of force*] begin, they repeat themselves usually, whether the general condition is good or not. But naturally they cannot make a radical change until they settle themselves and become normal in the whole

being or at least in the inner part of it. In the latter case the old movements can still come, but they are felt as something quite superficial and the sadhana increases in spite of them. There is no question of good or wicked. If some part of the being even has been opened the experiences come.

*

The action of the higher consciousness does not usually begin by changing the outer nature — it works on the inner being, prepares that and then goes outward. Before that, whatever change is done in the outer nature has to be done by the psychic.

*

All experiences can be brought into the smallest constituents of the being.

Inner Attitude and Outward Things

You have had some experiences which are signs of a future possibility. To have more within the first one and a half years it would be necessary to have the complete attitude of the sadhak and give up that of the man of the world. It is only then that progress can be rapid from the beginning.

*

All these [*outward restraints such as moderation in eating food and drinking tea*] are external things that have their use, but what I mean [*by “the complete attitude of the sadhak”*] is something more inward. I mean not to be interested in outward things for their own sake, following after them with desire, but at all times to be intent on one’s soul, living centrally in the inner being and its progress, taking outward things and action only as a means for the inner progress.

The Power of Creative Formation

It [*feeling that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are looking at one*]

simply means you have a subjective sense of our Presence. But must a subjective sense of things be necessarily a vain imagination? If so, no Yoga is possible. One has to take it as an axiom that subjective things can be as real as objective things. No doubt there may be and are such things as mental formations — but, to begin with, mental formations are or can be very powerful things, producing concrete results; secondly whether what one sees or hears is a mental formation or a real subjective object can only be determined when one has sufficient experience in these inward things.

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You have a strong power of (subjective) creative formation, mostly, I think, on the mental but partly too on the vital plane. This kind of formative faculty can be used for objective results if accompanied by a sound knowledge of the occult forces and their workings; but by itself it results more often in one's building up an inner world of one's own in which you can live very well satisfied, so long as you live in yourself, apart from any close contact with external physical life; but it does not stand the test of objective experience.

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In each plane there is an objective as well as a subjective side. It is not the physical plane and life alone that are objective.

When you have the power of formation of which I spoke, whatever is suggested to the mind, the mind constructs and establishes a form of it in itself. But this power can cut two ways; it may tempt the mind to construct mere images of the reality and mistake them for the reality itself. It is one of the many dangers of a too active mind.

You make a formation in your mind or on the vital plane in yourself — it is a kind of creation, but subjective only; it affects only your own mental or vital being. You can create by ideas, thought-forms, images a whole world in yourself or for yourself; but it stops there.

Some have the power of making consciously formations that

go out and affect the minds, actions, vital movements, external lives of others. These formations may be destructive as well as creative.

Finally, there is the power to make formations that become effective realities in the earth-consciousness here, in its mind, life, physical existence. That is what we usually mean by creation.

Chapter Four

The Danger of the Ego and the Need of Purification

Spiritual Experiences and the Ego

A certain exaltation of the being comes naturally with the stronger experiences and the sense of marvel or miracle may go with it, but there should be no egoistic feeling in the exaltation.

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What you have to be careful about is, when the feeling of power and strength comes into you or when you have experiences, not to allow it to be seized on by any kind of egoistic or vital desire, pride, ambition, wish to dominate others — even if it takes the garb of doing the Mother's work, — for this is your great weakness which always gets in and spoils your progress. Also when you have experiences, do not allow yourself to get exalted and excited by them so as to lose discrimination; for, if you do, then even though the experiences when they begin may be of the right kind, the vital forces take advantage of the excitation and rush in with their own deformations. Remain always calm, collected, quiet within, vigilant — discriminate always. The progress so made may be more slow or seem so; but it is more sure.

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A true spiritual experience must be free from the claim of the ego. What the ego can do however is to get proud of having the experience and think, "What a great one am I." Or it may think, "I am the Self, the Divine, so let me go and do what I will, for it is the Divine who wills in me." It is only if the experience of Self imposes silence on the other parts and frees the psychic that the ego disappears. Even if not ego itself, numerous fragments and

survivals of ego-habit can remain and have to be eliminated.

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Yes, if there is the solid experience, the ego habit is much diminished, but it does not go altogether. It takes refuge in the sense of being an instrument and — if there is not the psychic turn — it may easily prefer to be the instrument of some Force that feeds the satisfaction of the ego. In such cases the ego may still remain strong although it feels itself instrumental and not the primary actor.

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Although there is no ego in the spiritual planes, yet by the spiritual experience the ego on the lower planes may get aggrandised through pride and wrong reception of the experience. Also by entering into the larger mental and vital planes one may aggrandise the ego. These things are always possible so long as the higher consciousness and the lower are not harmonised in the being and the lower transformed into the nature of the higher.

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The first result of the downflow of the overmind forces is very often to exaggerate the ego, which feels itself strong, almost irresistible (though it is not really so), divinised, luminous. The first thing to do, after some experience of the thing, is to get rid of this magnified ego. For that you have to stand back, not allow yourself to be swept in by the movement, but to watch, understand, reject all mixture, aspire for a purer and yet purer light and action. This can only be done perfectly if the psychic comes forward. The mind and vital, especially the vital, receiving these forces, can with difficulty resist the tendency to seize on and use them for the ego's objects or, which comes practically to the same thing, they mix the demands of the ego with the service of a higher object.

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There is [*when one receives forces without a basis of peace, light and love*] more a sense of having power than real power. There are some mixed and quite relative powers — sometimes a little effective, sometimes ineffective — which could be developed into something real if put under the control of the Divine, surrendered. But the ego comes in, exaggerates these small things and represents them as something huge and unique and refuses to surrender. Then the sadhak makes no progress — he wanders about in the jungle of his own imaginations without any discrimination or critical sense or among a play of confused forces he is unable to understand or master.

Forces can come anywhere. The Asuras have their forces, but without peace, light or love — only they are forces of darkness.

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The man there [*in the correspondent's dream*] symbolises that ego-tendency in the human nature which makes a man, when some realisation comes, to think how great a realisation is this and how great a sadhak am I and to call others to see and admire — perhaps he thinks like the man in the dream, “I have seen the Divine, indeed I feel I am one with the Divine, — I will call everybody to see that.” This is a tendency which has injured the sadhana of many and sometimes ruined the sadhana altogether. In the thoughts you describe you came to see something in yourself which is there more or less in all human beings, the desire to be thought well of by others, to occupy a high place in their esteem or their affection, to have honour, position, admiration. When anybody joins this feeling to the idea of sadhana, then the disposition to do the sadhana for that and not purely and simply for the sake of the Divine comes in and there must be disturbance or else an obstruction in the sadhana itself or if in spite of it spiritual experience comes, then there is the danger of his misusing the experience to magnify his ego like the man in the dream. All these dreams are coming to you to give you a vivid and concrete knowledge and experience of what these human defects are so that you may find it easier to throw them

out, to recognise them when they come in the waking state and refuse them entrance. These things are not in yourself only but in all human nature; they are the things one has to get rid of or else to guard against so that one's consecration to the Divine may be complete, selfless, true and pure.

Purification and Preparation of the Nature

I don't think there is any cause for dissatisfaction with the progress made by you. Experiences come to many before the nature is ready to make full profit from them; to others a more or less prolonged period of purification and preparation of the stuff of the nature or the instruments comes first while experiences are held up till this process is largely or wholly over. The latter method which seems to be adopted in your case is the safer and sounder of the two. In this respect we think it is evident that you have made considerable progress, for instance in control over the violence and impatience and heat natural to the volcanic energy of your temperament, in sincerity also curbing the devious and errant impulses of an enormously active mind and temperament, in a greater quiet and harmony in the being as a whole. No doubt the process has to be completed, but something very fundamental seems to have been done. It is more important to look at the thing from the positive rather than the negative side. The things that have to be established are—*brahmacaryam śamaḥ satyam praśāntir ātmasaṁyamah: brahmacaryam*, a complete sex-purity; *śamaḥ*, quiet and harmony in the being, its forces maintained but controlled, harmonised, disciplined; *satyam*, truth and sincerity in the whole nature; *praśāntiḥ*, a general state of peace and calm; *ātmasaṁyamah*, the power and habit to control whatever needs control in the movements of the nature. When these are fairly established one has laid a foundation on which one can develop the Yogic consciousness and with the Yogic consciousness there comes an easy opening to realisation and experience.

The progress does not always come in the way that people expect. There is first a preparation within even for many years before such experiences come as people usually associate with the word progress. There has been this preparation and progress in you, but because struggle is still there you cannot recognise it.

You must put your trust in the Mother and let her Force work in you — keep the attitude of confidence and self-offering and the result will appear as soon as the consciousness is ready.

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According to the affirmation of people acquainted with the subject, the preliminary purification before getting any Yogic experiences worth the name may extend to 12 years. After that one may legitimately expect something. You are far from the limit yet — so no reason to despair.

*

Do not be over-eager for experience, — for experiences you can always get, having once broken the barrier between the physical mind and the subtle planes. What you have to aspire for most is the improved quality of the recipient consciousness in you — discrimination in the mind, the unattached impersonal Witness look on all that goes on in you and around you, purity in the vital, calm equanimity, enduring patience, absence of pride and the sense of greatness — and more especially, the development of the psychic being in you — surrender, self-giving, psychic humility, devotion. It is a consciousness made up of these things, cast in this mould that can bear without breaking, stumbling or deviation into error the rush of lights, powers and experiences from the supraphysical planes. An entire perfection in these respects is hardly possible until the whole nature from the highest mind to the subconscious physical is made one in the light that is greater than Mind; but a sufficient foundation and a consciousness always self-observant, vigilant and growing in these things is indispensable — for perfect purification is the basis of the perfect siddhi.

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You must not try to get experiences; you are not yet ready for them; instead of the right experience something abnormal comes. You must get your vital purified and calm so that these movements may not come. Nothing abnormal like not sleeping, not eating — all that is the vital trying to do extraordinary things so as to imagine it is going fast and doing high sadhana. A pure, simple, quiet, well-balanced vital is necessary for this Yoga.

*

The automatic tendency is a good sign as it shows that it is the inner being opening to the Truth which is pressing forward the necessary changes.

As you say, it is the failure of the right attitude that comes in the way of passing through ordeals to a change of nature. The pressure is becoming greater now for this change of character even more than for decisive Yoga experience — for if the experience comes it fails to be decisive because of the want of the requisite change of nature. The mind for instance gets the experience of the One in all, but the vital cannot follow because it is dominated by ego-reaction and ego-motive or the habits of the outer nature keep up a way of thinking, feeling, acting, living which is quite out of harmony with the experience. Or the psychic and part of the mind and emotional being feel frequently the closeness of the Mother, but the rest of the nature is unoffered and goes its own way prolonging division from her nearness, creating distance. It is because the sadhaks have never even tried to have the Yogic attitude in all things — they have been contented with the common ideas, common view of things, common motives of life, — only varied by inner experiences and transferred to the framework of the Asram instead of that of the world outside. It is not enough — and there is great need that this should change.

*

Quite correct. Unless the adhar is made pure, neither the higher truth (intuitive, illumined spiritual) nor the overmental nor the supramental can manifest; whatever forces come down from

them get mixed with the inferior consciousness and a half-truth takes the place of the Truth or even sometimes a dangerous error.

*

As for experiences, anybody with an occult bent can have experiences. The thing is to know what to do with them.

Mixed and Confused Experiences

I do not question at all the personal intensity or concreteness of your internal experiences, but experiences can be intense and yet be very mixed in their truth and their character. In your experience your own subjectivity, sometimes your ego-pushes interfere very much and give them their form and the impression they create on you. It is only if there is a pure psychic response that the form given to the experience is likely to be the right one and the mental and vital movements will then present themselves in their true nature. Otherwise the mind, the vital, the ego give their own colour to what happens, their own turn, very usually their own deformation. *Intensity* is not a guarantee of entire truth and correctness in an experience; it is only *purity* of the consciousness that can give an entire truth and correctness.

The Mother's presence is always there; but if you decide to act on your own — your own idea, your own notion of things, your own will and demand upon things, then it is quite likely that her presence will get veiled; it is not she who withdraws from you, but you who draw back from her. But your mind and vital don't want to admit that, because it is always their preoccupation to justify their own movements. If the psychic were allowed its full predominance, this would not happen; it would have felt the veiling, but it would at once have said, "There must have been some mistake in me, a mist has arisen in me," and it would have looked and found the cause.

It is perfectly true that so long as there is not an unreserved self-giving in both the internal and external, there will always be veilings, dark periods and difficulties. But if there is unreserved

self-giving in the internal, the unreserved self-giving in the external would naturally follow; if it does not, it means that the internal is not unreservedly surrendered; there are reservations in some part of the mind insisting on its own ideas and notions; reservations in some part of the vital insisting on its own demands, impulses, movements, ego-ideas, formations; reservations in the internal physical insisting on its own old habits of many kinds, and all claiming consciously, half-consciously or subconsciously that these should be upheld, respected, satisfied, taken as an important element in the work, the “creation” or the Yoga.

*

All this is absolutely idiotic confusion. It has come because you have persisted in disobeying and disregarding everything I wrote for you.

I told you you were not to try to decide by your mind. You persistently go on repeating, “*I must decide. I must decide. I must take a decision. I must take a resolution.*” You are always repeating this “*I, I, I must decide*” as if you knew better than myself and the Mother! “*I must understand, I must decide.*” And always you find that your mind can decide nothing and understand nothing. And yet you go on repeating the same falsehood.

I tell you plainly once again that all your so-called experiences are worth nothing, mere vital ignorance and confusion. The only experience you need is the experience of the presence of the Mother, the Mother’s light, the Mother’s force, and the change they bring in you.

You have to throw away all other influences and open yourself only to the Mother’s influence.

You have to think and talk no longer about energies flowing out and your energies and others’ energies. The only energy you have to feel is the descent and inflow and action of the Mother’s force.

These were my instructions and so long as you carried them out, you were progressing rapidly.

Throw all these incoherent false experiences away. Go back to the single rule I gave you. Open to the Mother's presence, influence, light, force — reject everything else. Only so will you get back clearness (instead of this confusion), peace, psychic perception and progress in the sadhana.

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But why be overwhelmed by any wealth of any kind of experiences? What does it amount to after all? The quality of a sadhak does not depend on that; one great spiritual realisation direct and at the centre will often make a great sadhak or Yogi, an army of intermediate Yogic experiences will not, that has been amply proved by a host of instances. You need not therefore compare that wealth to your poverty. To open yourself to the descent of the higher consciousness (the true being) is the one thing needed and that, even if that comes after long effort and many failures, is better than a hectic gallop leading nowhere.

*

You have missed my rather veiled hint about wealth of “any kind of experiences” and the reference to the intermediate zone which, I think at least, I made. I was referring to the wealth of *that* kind of experience. I do not say that these experiences are always of no value, but they are so mixed and confused that if one runs after them without any discrimination at all they end either by leading astray, sometimes tragically astray, or by bringing one into a confused nowhere. That does not mean that all such experiences are useless or without value. There are those that are sound as well as those that are unsound; those that are helpful, in the true line, sometimes signposts, sometimes stages on the way to realisation, sometimes stuff and material of the realisation. These naturally and rightly one seeks for, calls, strives after, or at least one opens oneself in the confident expectation that they will sooner or later arrive. Your own main experiences may have been few or not continuous, but I cannot recollect any that were not sound or were unhelpful. I would say that it is better to have a few of these than a multitude of

the others. My only meaning in what I wrote was not to be impressed by mere wealth of experiences or to think that that is sufficient to constitute a great sadhak or that not to have this wealth is necessarily an inferiority, a lamentable deprivation or a poverty of the one thing desirable.

There are two classes of things that happen in Yoga — realisations and experiences. Realisations are the reception in the consciousness and the establishment there of the fundamental truths of the Divine, of the Higher or Divine Nature, of the world-consciousness and the play of its forces, of one's own self and real nature and the inner nature of things, the power of these things growing in one till they are a part of one's inner life and existence, — as for instance, the realisation of the Divine Presence, the descent and settling of the higher Peace, Light, Force, Ananda in the consciousness, their workings there, the realisation of the divine or spiritual love, the perception of one's own psychic being, the discovery of one's own true mental being, true vital being, true physical being, the realisation of the overmind or the supramental consciousness, the clear perception of the relation of all these things to our present inferior nature and their action on it to change that lower nature. The list of course might be infinitely longer. These things also are often called experiences when they only come in flashes, snatches or rare visitations; they are spoken of as full realisations only when they become very positive or frequent or continuous or normal.

Then there are the experiences that help or lead towards the realisation of things spiritual or divine or bring openings or progressions in the sadhana or are supports on the way — experiences of a symbolic character, visions, contacts of one kind or another with the Divine or with the workings of the higher Truth, things like the waking of the Kundalini, the opening of the chakras, messages, intuitions, openings of the inner powers, etc. The one thing that one has to be careful about is to see that they are genuine and sincere and that depends on one's own sincerity, for if one is not sincere, if one is more concerned with the ego or being a big Yogi or becoming a superman than with meeting the Divine or getting the Divine Consciousness which enables one

to live in or with the Divine, then a flood of pseudos or mixtures comes in, one is led into the mazes of the intermediate zone or spins in the grooves of one's own formations. There is the truth of the whole matter.

Then why does Krishnaprem say that one should not hunt after experiences but only love and seek the Divine? It simply means that you have not to make experiences your main aim, but the Divine only your aim; and if you do that, you are more likely to get the true helpful experiences and avoid the wrong ones. If one seeks mainly after experiences, his Yoga may become a mere self-indulgence in the lesser things of the mental, vital and subtle physical worlds or in spiritual secondaries, or it may bring down a turmoil or maelstrom of the mixed and the whole or half-pseudo and stand between the soul and the Divine. That is a very sound rule of sadhana. But all these rules and statements must be taken with a sense of measure and in their proper limits, — it does not mean that one should not welcome helpful experiences or that they have no value. Also when a sound line of experience opens, it is perfectly permissible to follow it out, keeping always the central aim in view. All helpful or supporting contacts in dream or vision, such as those you speak of, are to be welcomed and accepted. I had no intention of discouraging such things at all. Experiences of the right kind are a support and help towards the realisation; they are in every way acceptable.

Purification and Positive Experience

It is a mistake to dwell too much on the lower nature and its obstacles, which is the negative side of the sadhana. They have to be seen and purified, but preoccupation with them as the one important thing is not helpful. The positive side of experience of the descent is the more important thing. If one waits for the lower nature to be purified entirely and for all time before calling down the positive experience, one might have to wait for ever. It is true that the more the lower nature is purified, the easier is the descent of the higher Nature, but it is also and more true that the more the higher Nature descends, the more the lower is purified.

Neither the complete purification nor the permanent and perfect manifestation can come all at once, it is a matter of time and patient progress. The two (purification and manifestation) go on progressing side by side and become more and more strong to play into each other's hands — that is the usual course of the sadhana.

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I do not know what Krishnaprem said or in which article, I do not have it with me. But if the statement is that nobody can have a successful meditation or realise anything till he is pure and perfect, I fail to follow it; it contradicts my own experience. I have always had realisation by meditation first and the purification started afterwards as a result. I have seen many get important, even fundamental realisations by meditation who could not be said to have a great inner development. Are all Yogis who have meditated with effect and had great realisations in their inner consciousness perfect in their nature? It does not look like it to me. I am unable to believe in absolute generalisations in this field, because the development of spiritual consciousness is an exceedingly vast and complex affair in which all sorts of things can happen and one might almost say that for each man it is different according to his nature and that the one thing that is essential is the inner call and aspiration and the perseverance to follow always after it no matter how long it takes or what are the difficulties or impediments — because nothing else will satisfy the soul within us.

It is quite true that a certain amount of purification is indispensable for going on, that the more complete the purification the better because then when the realisations begin they can continue without big difficulties or relapses and without any possibility of fall or failure. It is also true that with many purification is the first need, — certain things have to be got out of the way before one can begin any consecutive inner experience. But the main need is a certain preparation of the consciousness so that it may be able to respond more and more freely to the higher Force. In this preparation many things are useful — the poetry

and music you are doing can help, for it acts as a sort of *śravaṇa* and *manana*, even, if the feeling roused is intense, a sort of natural *nididhyāsana*. Psychic preparation, clearing out of the grosser forms of mental and vital ego, opening mind and heart to the Guru and many other things help greatly — it is not perfection or a complete freedom from the dualities or ego that is the indispensable preliminary, but preparedness, a fineness of the inner being which makes spiritual responses and receiving possible.

There is no reason therefore to take as gospel truth these demands which may have been right for Krishnaprem on the way he has trod, but cannot be imposed on all. There is no ground for despondency on that ground — the law of the spirit is not so exacting and inexorable.

Purification and Consecration

What Krishnaprem writes (I have not read it yet) is perfectly true that purification of the heart is necessary before there can be the spiritual attainment. All ways of spiritual seeking are agreed on that. Purification and consecration are two great necessities of sadhana. It is not a fact that one must be pure in heart before one can have *any* Yogic experience at all, but those who have experiences before purification is done run a great risk. It is much better to have the heart pure first, for then the way becomes safe. Nor can the Divine dwell in one's consciousness, if that consciousness is obscure with impurity. It is for the same reason that I advocate the psychic change of the nature first — for that means the purification of the heart, the turning of it wholly to the Divine, the subjection of the mind, of the vital passions, desires, demands, of the physical instincts to the control of the inner being, the soul. What Krishnaprem calls intuitions I would describe as psychic intimations or, as some experience it, the voice of the soul showing the outer members what is the true thing to be done. Always when the soul is in front, one gets the right guidance from within what is to be done, what avoided, what is the wrong thing or the true thing in thought, feeling, action. But this inner intimation emerges in proportion as the

consciousness grows more and more pure.

I never intended that X should stay here; he came for darshan and sat down here without a “by your leave”. I allowed him to remain for a while to see if he got any profit out of it; afterwards came his repeated illness and he somehow stuck on till now. What I meant by some concrete method was things like repetition of a mantra, pranayama, asana etc. He has been doing these things even here or some of them at least; it is the only thing he really understands (or misunderstands?); but purification of the heart he has not been capable of doing. What I mean by subtle methods is psychological, non-mechanical processes — e.g. concentration in the heart, surrender, self-purification, working out by inner means the change of the consciousness. This does not mean that there is no outer change, — the outer change is necessary but as a part of the inner change. If there is impurity and insincerity within, the outer change will not be effective; but if there is a sincere inner working, the outer change will help it and accelerate the process. What use is X’s eating less except for his body’s health? But if a man seeks to restrain and get rid of his greed for food or attachment, (not by starvation, though), then he is doing something useful to his sadhana.

Y’s case is different. His main stumbling block was ambition, pride, vanity, the desire to be a big Yogi with occult powers. To try to bring down occult powers into an unpurified mind, heart and body — well, you can do it if you want to dance on the edge of a precipice. Or you can do it if your aim is not to be spiritual but to be an occultist, for then you can follow the necessary methods and get the help of the occult powers. But the occult spiritual forces and masteries can be called down or come down without calling only if that is quite secondary to the true thing, the seeking for the Divine, and if it is part of the Divine plan in you. Occult powers can only be for the spiritual man an instrumentation of the Divine Power that uses him, they cannot be the aim or an aim of his sadhana. I don’t know who started Y on this false path or whether he hit on it himself; many people here have a habit of doing Yoga according to their own ideas without caring for the guidance of the Guru — from whom

however they expect an entire protection and success in sadhana even if they prance or gambol into the wrongest paths possible.

Of course, renunciation of sex is indispensable for the purification you seek,—the heart must be pure and consecrated to the Divine. There must be no turn left that side. As for food, well, that is not so much a purification of the heart as of the vital in the physical, but it is of course very helpful to get control there. The purification of the heart is the central necessity, but a purification of the mind, vital and physical is also called for. But the most important thing for purification of the heart is an absolute sincerity. No pretence with oneself, no concealment from the Divine or oneself or the Guru, a straight look at one's nature and one's movements, a straight will to make them straight. It does not so much matter if it takes time; one must be prepared to make it one's whole life-task to seek the Divine. Purifying the heart means after all a pretty considerable achievement and it is no use getting despondent, despairful etc. because one finds things in oneself that still need to be changed. If one keeps the true will and true attitude, then the intuitions or intimations from within will begin to grow, become clear, precise, unmistakable and the strength to follow them will grow also. And then before even you are satisfied with yourself, the Divine will be satisfied with you and begin to withdraw the veil by which he protects himself and his seeker against a premature and perilous grasping of the greatest thing to which humanity can aspire.

Purification and Transformation

Transformation is made possible by purification.

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If you remain in a fully conscious state, the clearing of the outer nature ought not to be difficult — afterwards the positive work of its transformation into a perfect instrument can be undertaken.

Conditions for the Coming of Experience

If you make your mind quiet, the experience will come. If you cannot make your mind quiet, work and pray and wait. Those who are able to open to the Divine receive him — but also to those who can wait for the Divine, the Divine comes.

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If one feels [*the Mother's Force working while in a state of quietness*] it is all right — but it does not always happen. The quietness, silence or peace is a basis for the extension of consciousness, the coming of higher experiences or realisations etc. In what way or order they come differs according to the individual nature.

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Visions and experiences will come; but the most important thing is to get in the peace, Ananda, confidence and establish it. When that is fixed, afterwards the consciousness can open to the working of the Mother's Force — its coming down into the body and its working will bring all the experience and change that is needed.

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To fix the calm and strength is the main thing now — more important than fresh experiences; these will come fast enough if the calm and strength become durable, are made the habit and stuff of the consciousness.

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As for sadhana what is necessary is to arrive at a certain quiet of the inner mind which makes meditation fruitful or a quietude of the heart which creates the psychic opening. It is only by regular concentration, constant aspiration and a will to purify the mind and heart of the things that disquiet and agitate them that this can be done. When a certain basis has been established in these two centres the experiences come of themselves. Many,

no doubt, get some kind of experiences such as visions etc. before the basis is well laid by a sort of mental or vital aptitude for these things, but such experiences do not of themselves lead to transformation or realisation — it is by the quietude of the mind and the psychic opening that these greater things can come.

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Experience in the sadhana is bound to begin with the mental plane, — all that is necessary is that the experience should be sound and genuine. The pressure of understanding and will in the mind and the Godward emotional urge in the heart are the two first agents of Yoga, and peace, purity and calm (with a lulling of the lower unrest) are precisely the first basis that has to be laid; to get that is much more important in the beginning than to get a glimpse of the supraphysical worlds or to have visions, voices and powers. Purification and calm are the first needs in the Yoga. One may have a great wealth of experiences of that kind (worlds, visions, voices etc.) without them, but these experiences occurring in an unpurified and troubled consciousness are usually full of disorder and mixture.

At first the peace and calm are not continuous, they come and go, and it usually takes a long time to get them settled in the nature. It is better therefore to avoid impatience and to go on steadily with what is being done. If you wish to have something beyond the peace and calm, let it be the full opening of the inner being and the consciousness of the Divine Power working in you. Aspire for that sincerely and with a great intensity but without impatience and it will come.

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It is necessary to lay stress on three things — (1) an entire quietness and calm of the mind and the whole being, (2) a continuance of the movement of purification so that the psychic being (the soul) may govern the whole nature, (3) the maintenance in all conditions and through all experiences of the attitude of adoration and bhakti for the Mother. These are the conditions in which one can grow through all experiences with security and

have the right development of the complete realisation without disturbance to the system or being carried away by the intensity of the experiences. Calm, psychic purity, bhakti and spiritual humility before the Divine are the three conditions.

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The special experiences you are having are glimpses of what is to be and what is growing and preparing and are helping to make the consciousness ready for it. It is not therefore surprising that they change and are replaced by others — that is what usually happens; for it is not these forms that are to be perpetuated, but the essence of the thing which they are bringing. Thus the one thing that has to grow most now is the silence, the quietude, the peace, the free emptiness into which experiences can come, the sense of coolness and release. When that is in possession of the consciousness fully, then something else will come into it which is also essential to the true consciousness and fix itself — it proceeds usually like that. There is nothing strange therefore in the special forms of experience ceasing and being followed by others after you have written about or brought them to the Mother. When the more permanent forms of realisation begin to come, it will no longer be like that.

Chapter Five

Suggestions for Dealing with Experiences

Letting the Experiences Develop Naturally

It is better to let the experiences develop naturally. It is not necessary, when they come freely, to determine with the mind which is to be remembered or sought after.

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An experience should be allowed its full time to develop or have its full effect. It should not be interrupted except in case of necessity or, of course, if it is not a good experience.

*

You have to watch and see how they [*experiences*] develop. For the most part they carry their own meaning and if you go on observing them with a silent and vigilant mind you will understand more than if you were in a constant turmoil of thought about them.

*

When an experience begins, you should not interfere with it by either questioning or by disturbing movements.

Thinking about Experiences

To think and question about an experience when it is happening is the wrong thing to do; it stops it or diminishes it. Let the experience have its full play — if it is something like this “new life force” or peace or Force or anything else helpful. When it is over, you can think about it — not while it is proceeding. For these experiences are spiritual and not mental and the mind has

to be quiet and not interfere.

*

During the experience the mind should be quiet. After the experience is over it can be active. If it is active while it is there, the experience may stop altogether.

*

It was not an imagination, but an experience. When such an experience occurs, the attempt to take hold of it mentally and continue it may on the contrary interrupt it. It is best to let it continue of itself; if it ceases, it is likely to recur.

*

There are two centres or parts of the consciousness — one is a witness, *sākṣī*, and observes, the other consciousness is active and it is this active consciousness that you felt going down deep into the vital being. If your mind had not become active, you would have known where it went and what it went there to experience or do. When there is an experience, you should not begin to think about it, for that is of no use at all and it only stops the experience — you should remain silent, observe and let it go on to its end.

*

There is something in you that does want to stick to the habit of mentalising about everything. So long as you were not having real experiences, it did not matter. But once real experiences begin you have to learn to approach them in the right way.

Observing Experiences without Attachment

At a certain stage of the sadhana, in the beginning (or near it) of the more intense experiences, it sometimes happens that there is the intense realisation of some aspect of the Divine, a sort of communion with it, and that is seen everywhere and all as that. It is a transitory phase and afterwards one gets the

larger experience of the Divine in all its aspects and beyond all aspects. Throughout the experience there should be one part of the being that observes and understands — for sometimes ignorant sadhaks are carried away by their experience and stop short there or fall into extravagance. It must be taken as an experience through which you are passing.

Observing Experiences without Fear or Alarm

It is always dangerous to allow fear to come in like that and associate itself with experiences in the sadhana. There is nothing in the experiences themselves as you describe them that are at all alarming. A burning in the head or a creeping or ticklish sensation or a sense of something moving and working in the head has often been felt by many when there was an opening and the Force was working there. The other things also are in themselves usual enough, the sense of something separate from oneself and the opening and connection made between the head and the centre above. But where the anomaly comes in is that with the connection comes the fear and nervous physical upsetting. So long as there is fear it is no use going on with these experiences — you have to stop and get back to the normal consciousness. Besides that, as I have already said, you must realise what it is in you that has come across and created this upsetting. It is not the descent and the experiences, for many have had them or similar things without being any the worse. It is something in you, probably in your lower vital and physical, that does not want the Higher Consciousness because it will have to change and it has no intention of changing. When this pressure acts, it gets at once a fear and shakes the physical mind and system by its fear. You will have then to get rid of this — till then it will not be safe for you to go farther.

*

These experiences are symbolic in their character, so there is no reason to be horrified by the green waters even if you did drown in a well in the last life. All such experiences should be observed

quietly without alarm or depression or other such feelings. One can look at them and try to see or feel their meaning, but too active a speculation in the mind rather hinders than helps the seeing.

If you sink down into an unopened part and open it to the light or empty and clear it, that is a quite salutary and necessary operation and there is no reason for alarm. As for self-preservation, one does not drown in these inner wells—it is only a bath or a plunge. And if it happens to be the well of the psychic, nothing more salutary than to plunge into it.

Speaking about Experiences

The usual rule given by Yogis is that one should not speak of one's experience to others except of course the Guru while the sadhana is going on because it wastes the experience, there is what they call *kṣaya* of the tapasya. It is only long past experiences that they speak of and even that not too freely.

*

The Light left you because you spoke of it to someone who was not an *adhikārī*. It is safest not to speak of these experiences except to a guru or to one who can help you. The passing away of an experience as soon as it is spoken of is a frequent happening and for that reason many Yogis make it a rule never to speak of what happens within them unless it is a thing of the past or a settled realisation that nothing can take away. A settled permanent realisation abides, but these were rather things that come to make possible an opening in the consciousness to something more complete—to prepare it for realisation.

*

I thought it was understood that what I wrote to you about persons was private. Experiences one's own or others' if one comes to know of them, should not be talked about or made a matter of gossip. It is only if there can be some spiritual profit to others and even then if they are experiences of the past that one

can speak of them. Otherwise it becomes like news of Abyssinia or Spain, something common and trivial for the vital mass-mind to chew or gobble.

*

To show what is written about experiences or to speak about one's experiences to others is always risky. They are much better kept to oneself.

*

I rather doubt whether it should be done.¹ There is a privacy about experiences which stands in the way of their being dealt with like that, at least until the sadhak has got into siddhi. They can be spoken of to a few, if one wishes, but to make public like that in a general way, even without names, is a little difficult. People besides might begin to speculate on these experiences, gossip and ask questions. What might be useful is some experiences with explanation, if the answer gives one, which would make clear certain sides of the sadhana. But they would have to be carefully chosen.

*

General knowledge is another matter, it is intellectual and the intellect gains by the intellectual activity of teaching. Also if in Yoga it were only a matter of imparting intellectually one's mental knowledge of the subject, that rule² would perhaps hold; but this mental aspect is only a small part of Yoga. There is something more complex which forms the bigger part of it. In teaching Yoga to another one becomes to some extent a master with disciples. The Yogis have always said that one who takes disciples, takes upon himself the difficulties of his disciples as well as one's own — that is why it is recommended not to take

¹ *The correspondent wished to compile a "Journal of Experiences" containing the letters of sadhaks who had written about their experiences to Sri Aurobindo and he had commented on them. This collection of letters would be kept in the Ashram library for sadhaks to read. — Ed.*

² *The rule that one understands something better by teaching it. — Ed.*

disciples unless and until one is siddha and even then only if one receives the Divine authority to do it — what Ramakrishna called getting the *cāprās*. Secondly, there is the danger of egoism — when one is free from that, then the objection no longer holds. There is a separate question and that is the telling of one's own experiences to others. That too is very much discouraged by most Yogis — they say it is harmful to the sadhana. I have certainly seen and heard of any number of instances in which people were having a flow of experiences and, when they told it, the flow was lost — so there must be something in this objection. I suppose however it ceases to apply after one has reached a certain long-established stability in the experience, that is to say, when the experience amounts to a definite and permanent realisation, something finally and irrevocably added to the consciousness. I notice that those who keep their experiences to themselves and do not put themselves out on others seem to have a more steady sadhana than others, but I don't know whether it is an invariable rule. It would probably not apply any longer after a certain stage of realisation.

*

It is true that experiences often disappear when spoken or written about to others. But that does not always happen, nor does it happen to everybody.

*

It is not good to talk too much to others about the sadhana and its experiences. There can be exceptions to the rule, but that depends on the person and circumstances.

*

If you want to keep the joy, it will be wise not to speak of it to others. Things spoken about get wings and try to escape.

The Difficulty of Keeping Experiences

The rush of the experience at the beginning is often very powerful, so powerful that the resisting elements remain quiescent —

afterwards they rise up. The experience has then to be brought down and settled in these parts also.

*

Yes, that is the truth of the working. At first what has to be established comes with difficulty and is felt as if abnormal, an experience that one loses easily — afterwards it comes of itself, but does not yet stay; finally it becomes a frequent and intimate state of the being and makes itself constant and normal. On the other hand all the confusions and errors once habitual to the nature are pushed out; at first they return frequently, but afterwards they in their turn become abnormal and foreign to the nature and lose frequency and finally disappear.

*

One can speak of a condition as coming freely and spontaneously when it comes of itself or as soon as it is remembered after an interruption. One can speak of it as coming at will, when it comes back at a slight pressure of the will and nothing more is necessary. Yours comes by an effort of the will which has to be sustained and is kept at the price of a constant vigilance. But this effort and vigilance are quite the right thing and must be done until the condition either becomes stable or comes automatically or at will, as described above. This is not pulling, so you need not hesitate to go on with it fully. It is the necessary *tapasya*.

What prevents it from remaining is the natural lapse to a lower consciousness which comes either from the mind's or vital's inclination to indulge in accustomed occupations or by sleep or by losing oneself in some outer action such as talking — because these things are associated with the ordinary mental consciousness and still need it to be done. At a later stage it will be possible to do these things with the surface mind only while the new consciousness remains intact and is either found there immediately as soon as the surface occupation ceases or else remains even during the occupation upholding the surface action or enveloping it as a small movement in itself.

*

All that you have written is quite correct; but the smallness is a general characteristic of the human instrument before it has the spiritual change. When the quietude comes, then the wideness also begins to come. The state you feel in which things go right, is the psychic and spiritual condition of the being; it is true that at first it is there only at times, but that is usual in the sadhana. All new states and realisations come like that at first; they are there for a short time, then seem to cease and other things come up from below and cover and hide the new condition. This is because of the habit of the past nature. But the true condition goes on returning till it and not the old things establishes itself as the habit and rule of a new nature.

The inward condition and its new outlook on things without the eagerness of the old consciousness in work is simply a passage through which you are going towards the new nature in which you will remain unmoved and undisturbed by things, but with a new and freer power of action which comes from within and from above.

*

It is more difficult at this stage for the experiences of Ananda (this felicity seems from your description to be an intense psychic Ananda) to be kept permanently than for peace to remain abidingly. The difficulty of keeping up these states in work or reading is more a matter of habit than anything else, because the mind is accustomed to absorb in the reading or work and forget all else for the time being. But once one gets the right poise and can keep in the inner being during work, that difficulty disappears.

Section Two

Vicissitudes on the Way to Realisation

Chapter One

Variations in the Intensity of Experience

The Up and Down Movement in Yoga

The up and down movement which you speak of is common to all ways of Yoga. It is there in the path of bhakti, but there are equally alternations of states of light and states of darkness, sometimes sheer and prolonged darkness, when one follows the path of knowledge. Those who have occult experiences come to periods when all experiences cease and even seem finished for ever. Even when there have been many and permanent realisations, these seem to go behind the veil and leave nothing in front except a dull blank, filled, if at all, only with recurrent attacks and difficulties. These alternations are the result of the nature of human consciousness and are not a proof of unfitness or of predestined failure. One has to be prepared for them and pass through. They are the “day and night” of the Vedic mystics.

As for surrender, everyone has his own first way of approach towards it; but if it is due to fear, “form” or sense of duty, then certainly that is not surrender at all; these things have nothing to do with surrender. Also, complete and total surrender is not so easy as some seem to imagine. There are always many and large reservations; even if one is not conscious of them, they are there. Complete surrender can best come by a complete love and bhakti. Bhakti on the other hand can begin without surrender, but it naturally leads, as it forms itself, to surrender.

You are surely mistaken in thinking that the difficulty of giving up intellectual convictions is a special stumbling-block in you more than in others. The attachment to one’s own ideas and convictions, the insistence on them is a common characteristic and here it seems to manifest itself with an especial vehemence. It can be removed by a light of knowledge from above which

gives one the direct touch of Truth or the luminous experience of it and takes away all value from mere intellectual opinion, ideas or conviction and removes the necessity for it, or by a right consciousness which brings with it right ideas, right feeling, right action and right everything else. Or else it must come by a spiritual and mental humility which is rare in human nature — especially the mental, for the mind is always apt to think its own ideas, true or false, are the right ideas. Eventually it is the psychic growth that makes this surrender too possible and that again comes most easily by bhakti. In any case, the existence of this difficulty is not in itself a good cause for forecasting failure in Yoga.

*

The rhythm of up and down is fairly general — it is only a few who keep an even course and even these have slight though comparatively rare drops of the consciousness. But the times vary — although it is true that it comes upon a few at the same time, and occasionally there is a massed general attack and shaking. It seems difficult as yet to eliminate these vicissitudes of the sadhana.

*

Everything once gained is there and can be regained. Yoga is not a thing that goes by one decisive rush one way or the other — it is a building up of a new consciousness and is full of ups and downs. But if one keeps to it the ups have a habit of resulting by accumulation in a decisive change — therefore the one thing to do is to keep at it. After a fall don't wail and say, "I'm done for," but get up, dust yourself and proceed farther on the right path.

*

After one has got to a certain stage the things gained are never lost — they may be covered over but they return — they have only gone inside and come back to the surface.

Alternations, Oscillations, Fluctuations of Consciousness

It is always like that — some days of experience, some days of no experience (or only experience of peace and quietude) alternating. It is only later on that the consciousness becomes capable of continuous experience and even then there are alternations of the level.

*

The reason why there are these alternations of which you complain is that the nature of the consciousness is like that; after a little spell of wakefulness it feels the need of a little sleep. Very often in the beginning the wakings are brief, the sleeps long; afterwards it becomes more equal and later on the sleep periods are shorter and shorter. Another cause of these alternations, when one is receiving, is the nature's need of closing up to assimilate. It can take perhaps a great deal, but while the experience is going on it cannot absorb properly what it brings, so it closes down for assimilation. A third cause comes in in the period of transformation, — one part of the nature changes and one feels for a time as if there had been a complete and permanent change. But one is disappointed to find it cease and a period of barrenness or lowered consciousness follows. This is because another part of the consciousness comes up for change and a period of preparation and veiled working follows which seems to be one of unenlightenment or worse. These things alarm, disappoint or perplex the eagerness and impatience of the sadhak; but if one takes them quietly and knows how to use them or adopt the right attitude, one can make these unenlightened periods also a part of the conscious sadhana. So the Vedic Rishis speak of the alternation of "Day and Night both suckling the divine Child".

*

Everyone has these alternations because the total consciousness is not able to remain always in the above experience [*of the higher force working powerfully*]. The point is that in the intervals there should be quietude, at least in the inner being, no

restlessness, dissatisfaction or struggle. If that point is attained, then the sadhana can go on smoothly — not that there will be no difficulties, but there will be no disquietude or dissatisfaction etc. etc.

*

The impermanence of the better condition is a fairly general phenomenon. There is an oscillation always, a coming and going till the change that is trying to take place is strong enough to fix itself. This is due to two reasons, first the inability of the vital and physical to give up their old movements at once and accommodate themselves to the new and secondly to the habit of things hiding in the nature somewhere under the pressure from above and turning up as soon as they get an opportunity.

*

These slight oscillations always happen until everything is open. They are due to one of two causes, — either

(1) Some small part or movement of the being comes up which is not quite open and needs to have the Influence brought into it, or

(2) A shadow is thrown by the outside force, bringing back, not the old disturbance, but some temporary obscuration or appearance of obscuration.

Do not be disturbed, but immediately become quite quiet and open yourself.

The important thing is not to allow the old strong disturbance and confusion to come back and, secondly, not to allow a long obscuration, even if the obscuration be without a serious disturbance. To keep hold on quiet persistently will prevent the serious disturbance; to keep quiet and steadily open yourself will prevent any long obscuration.

*

These oscillations [*of consciousness*] always come. The universal lower Nature tries to come back and resume its hold — the lower vital or the physical consciousness responds, not always because

it wants or likes to do so but because the old habit of response is still so strong that it cannot help it.

The first necessity is to detach yourself, not to regard it as your own, to learn to feel it as something foreign and refuse to be touched or upset. Then it will become easier for the lower vital or physical itself to reject and refuse to admit it.

*

These fluctuations in the force of the aspiration and the power of the sadhana are unavoidable and common to all sadhaks until the whole being has been made ready for the transformation. When the psychic is in front or active and the mind and vital consent, then there is the intensity. When the psychic is less prominent and the lower vital has its ordinary movements or the mind its ignorant action, then the opposing forces can come in unless the sadhak is very vigilant. Inertia comes usually from the ordinary physical consciousness, especially when the vital is not actively supporting the sadhana. These things can only be cured by a persistent bringing down of the higher spiritual consciousness into all the parts of the being.

*

These fluctuations always take place. By insistence and practice it becomes finally possible to keep the aspiration and the open consciousness above continuously, but even then periods of active progress and periods of assimilation alternate.

*

Fluctuations of this kind cannot but come and when they come, one has to remain very quiet and detach oneself from the surface condition and wait for it to pass while calling the Mother's Force. A neutral condition of this kind serves a certain purpose in the economy of the purification and change — it brings up things that have to be transformed or rejected, lifts up some part of the being in order to expose it to the transforming force. If one can understand, remain quiet and detached from the surface movements, not identified, then it goes sooner, the Force can

quickly clear out what rises and afterwards it is found that something has been gained and a progress made.

*

Yes, indeed, to keep the fixed consciousness of the soul, even when there are fluctuations in the outer nature, is a great victory. If one can do that, it means that the capacity to arrive is there fixed in the being and only the firm will is needed for the entire certitude.

Fluctuations in the Working of the Force

There are no fixed rules [*about fluctuations in the working of the Force*]. There are simply a mass of tendencies and forces with which one has to become familiar. It is not a fixed machinery which one can manage by devices or by pulling this or that button. It is only by the inner Will, the constant aspiration, by detachment and rejection, by bringing down the true consciousness, force etc. that it can be done.

*

I can only say as before, that there is no specific reason [*for fluctuations in the working of the Force*] which the mind can determine. It depends on the total condition and interaction of the forces. One has to hold on to the aspiration and look steadily towards the goal without being disturbed by these inequalities and fluctuations.

*

I don't know.¹ Times and seasons vary according to the poise and flux and reflux of the forces in the consciousness. It is not a thing to which you can affix a rationalised and systematised explanation. One can feel it and understand in the essence of the consciousness, but not formulate precise cause and effect.

¹ *The correspondent asked why he felt an emptiness in the morning, a suspension of sadhana. — Ed.*

Lulls, Pauses, Interim Periods

There are always lulls of this kind. One must not get upset — otherwise they are prolonged and disturbances come in. One must remain quiet, aspire steadily but without vehemence or, if one presses for a change, then too with a quiet steady pressure.

*

There are always periods when all one can do is to remain quiet and aspire. A continuous activity of the light and power is only possible when the whole being has been prepared and the psychic is constantly in front.

*

Everyone has periods when the consciousness is covered up. One has to go on in spite of that, and if you persist in aspiration and keep turned to the Mother, then these periods will diminish and the consciousness more and more open to her.

At such periods instead of allowing these things to hold you, you should separate yourself from them and regard them as something foreign which you have to reject.

*

There are always long periods of this kind at the beginning when the first openings of experience are covered up by the restless mind and vital; but with perseverance they diminish — the experience always returns and takes up more and more of the consciousness till it becomes its normal state.

*

There are always pauses of preparation and assimilation between two movements. You must not regard these with fretfulness or impatience as if they were untoward gaps in the sadhana. Besides, the Force rises up lifting part of the nature on a higher level and then comes down to a lower layer to raise it; this motion of ascent and descent is often extremely trying because the mind partial to an ascent in a straight line and the vital eager

for rapid fulfilment cannot understand or follow this intricate movement and are apt to be distressed by it or resent it. But the transformation of the whole nature is not an easy thing to accomplish and the Force that does it knows better than our mental ignorance or our vital impatience.

*

There is nothing wrong in having intervals of passive peace without anything happening — they come naturally in the sadhana as a basis for fresh action when the nature is ready for it. It is only the vital attitude that turns it into a disharmony, because somewhere in its being there is not the assent to or participation in the peace and passivity. To be able often to rest, repose in all the being outspread in the silent Brahman is an indispensable thing for the Yogi. But the vital wants always fuss, action, to feel that it is somebody doing something, getting on, having progress, on the move. The counterpart to this rajasic fuss is inertia. If the whole being can widen itself out, rest satisfied in the silence, then progressively inertia fades out and gives place to *śama*.

*

In the interim periods, if any come, to maintain the calm observing consciousness is the one great necessity.

The dynamic activity of the higher consciousness may be suspended but once manifested its presence is always there.

*

They [*certain experiences*] are first indications of an opening — but the opening has to be stabilised and enlarged. Also so long as the external mind is very much on the top they come at intervals only. Continuous experience is only possible when one gets inside and stays there.

*

There are always variations in the intensity of experience, due to the necessity of assimilation in the consciousness. It is only at

a much later stage that the consciousness remains always at its highest level.

*

These variations are inevitable. They go on until three things are sufficiently and unfluctuatingly established: (1) A fixed peace and gladness. (2) A clear light and understanding. (3) A complete selfless love and surrender.

Drops or Falls of Consciousness

These drops [*of consciousness*] happen to all sadhaks; their causes are various; sometimes it is a pull from below, sometimes an invasion from outside, sometimes a less ascertainable cause. When it happens, one must always remain as quiet as possible behind and call back the better condition.

*

A drop of consciousness need not be so serious or take as long a time to repair. A few hours or, if there is much disturbance or mental obstruction, a few days should be sufficient to recover. Sometimes it takes longer if the sadhak continues to be too troubled or agitated or otherwise stands in his own way by dwelling too much on the obstacle. But years are taken only when there is, not a mere dropping of the consciousness, but a strong fall of the whole nature from the path or other very serious accident etc. There is nothing of this kind here or anything that could cause it.

*

You must have allowed the consciousness to fall — there may have been some tamasic movement or it may merely be the habit of oscillation between the two conditions [*obscure and luminous*] that still persists.

The speedy removal of the difficulties depends on the continuance of the experiences. Otherwise the consciousness oscillates between the higher and the lower condition — which does not

prevent the ultimate liberation, but does cause delay.

*

Yes — if the peace is established, then the falls [*of consciousness*] are only on the surface and do not affect the inner consciousness.

*

Fall of the concentration happens to everybody — it has not to be taken as if it were something tragic or allowed to be the cause of depression.

Fatigue, Inertia and Lowering of the Consciousness

The falling down [*of the consciousness*] comes usually by some inertia coming in the consciousness through fatigue or through mere habit of relaxation or it comes through some vital reaction which one may or may not notice or it comes through a wrong movement of the mind. These are the positive lowering causes, but at the back of them is the fact that these alternations are almost inevitable so long as the consciousness is in any way subject to the old nature. The intervals of non-sadhana may however be long or short according to inner circumstances (mainly the power of the will or the psychic or the higher being to restore quickly the true poise).

*

An occasional sinking of the consciousness happens to everybody. The causes are various, some touch from outside, something not yet changed or not sufficiently changed in the vital, especially the lower vital, some inertia or obscurity rising up from the physical parts of nature. When it comes, remain quiet, open yourself to the Mother and call back the true condition, and aspire for a clear and undisturbed discrimination showing you from within yourself the cause or the thing that needs to be set right.

*

Yes, the ordinary physical consciousness is not able to hold the

contact and it does get tired — also it cannot assimilate much at a time. But it is not always the Divine who takes away the pressure; the lower consciousness itself loses it or gives it up.

*

An always intense aspiration, an unswerving and unwavering will turned to the one thing only, help to get through the difficulties without discouragement or falling into depression — they give an impetus for a rapid development. But the difficulties come all the same because they are inherent in human nature. Even the best sadhaks have these periods of suspension of the sadhana, of nothing happening, of the absence of the urge of the inner being. It is when some difficulty arises in the physical nature that has to be dealt with or when a pause has to be made for a veiled preparation, or for some similar reason. Even when the working of the sadhana is in the mind or vital which are more plastic such periods are frequent — when the physical is concerned they must necessarily come and are usually marked not so much by any apparent struggle but by an immobility and an inertia of the energies that were at work before. This is very troublesome to the mind because it suggests entire cessation, incapacity to progress or unfitness. But it is not really so. One must be quiet and go on opening oneself to the working or keeping the will to do so — afterwards there will be a greater progress. Many sadhaks indulge in such a period a spirit of despondency and loss of faith in the future which delays the renewal, but this should be avoided.

*

It is difficult to say [*why the veiling of consciousness persists*] — usually it is when something in the mind and vital accepts and indulges the lower forces that this inability to re-enter the true consciousness remains so obstinate. Physical *tamas* can produce long interregnums of obscure consciousness, but not usually with such a violent obstruction — usually only dull and obstinate.

*

The depression is not the only cause of suspension of experiences. There are others such as inertia etc. If one can have experiences continuously in spite of these things, that means that a part of the consciousness has definitely separated from the rest and is able to go on in spite of the outer resistance.

*

Even if there is physical fatigue sometimes it is not inevitable that it should interfere with the sadhana. The inner movement can always go on.

*

When the physical consciousness prevails, often one does not feel any sign or effect [*of inner or higher experiences*] even if they are there.

*

How do you expect anything so obtuse and forgetful as the physical consciousness to have the effect if the experiences are not repeated? It is as when you learn a lesson, you have to repeat it till the physical mind gets hold of it — otherwise it does not become a part of consciousness.

Variations during the Day

It happens to most sadhaks that in particular parts of the day they feel concentrated and get results, and in others that condition is not there. This is especially in the earlier stages of the progress. It is only after the higher consciousness, peace etc. have settled in the being that one can usually be at all times in the active condition of sadhana.

*

It is often like that — the period of intense activity is limited to a particular part of the day and then the rest of the time there is a lull.

*

It is quite usual to have such periods in the day. The consciousness needs time for rest and assimilation, it cannot be at the same pitch of intensity at all times. During the assimilation a calm quietude is the proper condition.

*

These variations in the consciousness during the day are a thing that is common to almost everybody in the sadhana. The principle of constant oscillation, relaxation, relapse to a normal or a past lower condition from a higher state that is experienced but not yet fixed in realisation or else realised but not yet perfectly stable, becomes very strong and marked when the working of the sadhana is in the physical consciousness. For there is an inertia in the physical nature that does not easily allow the intensity natural to the higher consciousness to remain constant, — the physical is always sinking back to something more ordinary; the higher consciousness and its force have to work long and come again and again before they can become constant and normal in the physical nature. Do not be disturbed or discouraged by these variations or this delay, however long and tedious; remain careful only to be quiet always with an inner quietude and as open as possible to the higher Power, not allowing any really adverse condition to get hold of you. If there is no adverse wave, then the rest is only a persistence of imperfections which all have in abundance; that imperfection and persistence the Force must work out and eliminate, but for the elimination time is needed.

*

There is no mentally definite and rigidly effective reason for the thing [*a fall into inertia*] coming in the evening rather than at 2 p.m. or in the midnight or in the morning. For some people the fall comes in the evening, for some in the morning, for some at other times, and so too with the rise. But the alternations happen to most people in one kind of rhythm or another. The times vary with people and even can vary with the same men. There is no definable reason for it being at a particular time except that it has made itself habitual at that time. The rest is a question of

the play of forces which is observable but the reasons of which escape mental definition.

*

That is a frequent experience (though I suppose it is not general) — not only with peace, but other things; there is a tendency towards a lowering of the consciousness in the evening. On the other hand with some it is the opposite. I don't know that it actually depends on work and mixing, though these may have a wearing effect — I find more often that it is a sort of rhythm of rise and fall in the consciousness during the day. Even when peace is perfectly established, there may be this rhythm for other things that are being developed.

The Need for Periods of Assimilation

Intensities like that do not remain so long as the consciousness is not transformed — there has to be a period of assimilation. When the being is unconscious, the assimilation goes on behind the veil or below the surface and meanwhile the surface consciousness sees only dullness and loss of what it had got; but when one is conscious, then one can see the assimilation going on and one sees that nothing is lost, it is only a quiet settling in of what has come down.

*

Yes — the system has to take rest so as to assimilate and renew its receptive power.

*

When one is assimilating, one is not receiving.

*

The periods of assimilation continue really till all that has to be done is fundamentally done. Only they have a different character in the later stages of sadhana. If they cease altogether at an early stage (you are still in a very early stage), it is because all the

nature was capable of has been done and that would mean it was not capable of much.

*

What I have written is perfectly clear. The periods of assimilation continue till all that has to be done is fundamentally done. If they stop early, it means that all has been done that could be done and nothing more is possible, the later and more advanced developments of the sadhana are not possible, — if they were, the assimilation periods would continue until all was developed and not cease. The only reason for such a premature end of the sadhana would be that the sadhaka is not capable of going farther.

*

The only change in the assimilation periods afterwards is that certain things remain settled while the assimilation applies to others that are not yet settled in the system. E.g. one feels always a constant peace in the inner being, but disturbances go on on the surface, till the surface also has assimilated peace. Or perhaps peace is settled everywhere and always there but knowledge comes and goes or strength comes and goes. Or all these are there but Ananda comes and goes etc. etc.

*

There is always a gain or progress at some point after these periods of assimilation if one takes them rightly — however dull or troublesome they may be.

*

If your faith is getting firmer day by day, you are certainly progressing in your sadhana and there can have been no fall. An interruption of definite experiences may be only a period of assimilation in which one prepares for a new range of experience. Keep yourself open and aspire.

Chapter Two

Emptiness, Voidness, Blankness and Silence

Periods of Emptiness

If it is only emptiness, there is nothing wrong. Alternations of emptiness and fullness are a quite normal feature of experience in sadhana.

*

Emptiness usually comes as a clearance of the consciousness or some part of it. The consciousness or part becomes like an empty cup into which something new can be poured. The highest emptiness is the pure existence of the Self in which all manifestation can take place.

*

To be an empty vessel is a very good thing if one knows how to make use of the emptiness.

*

Keep the quiet and do not mind if it is for a time empty; the consciousness at times is like a vessel which has to be emptied of its mixed and undesirable contents; it has to be kept vacant for a while till it can be filled with the right contents. The one thing to be avoided is the refilling of the cup with the old contents. Meanwhile wait, open yourself upwards, call very quietly and steadily, not with a too restless eagerness for the peace to come into the silence and, once the peace is there, for the joy and the presence.

*

You have written of the Force coming down [*during a period of*

emptiness] — even sometimes of its filling all parts — so what is this “never”? I did not at all mean that there is a mechanical process by which every time there is emptiness afterwards there comes an entire filling up. It depends on the stage of the sadhana. The emptiness may come often or stay long before there is any descent — what fills may be silence and peace or Force or Knowledge and they may fill only the mind or mind and heart or mind and heart and vital or all. But there is nothing fixed and mechanically regular about these two processes.

*

Usually such feelings of emptiness [*in the body*] come when the identification with the body is lessening and the consciousness is preparing to take its seat either above or in a cosmic wideness or in some beginning of that wideness.

*

An emptiness in the mind or vital may be spiritual without emptiness being an essential characteristic of the higher consciousness. If it were, there could be no Force, Light or Ananda in the higher consciousness. Emptiness is only a result produced by a certain action of the higher Force on the system in order that the higher consciousness may be able to come into it. It is a spiritual emptiness as opposed to the dull and inert emptiness of complete *tamas* which is not spiritual.

*

If it is the spiritual emptiness then it will not be felt as interfering with the sadhana.

*

If it is real emptiness, one can last in it for years together, — it is because the vital is restless and full of desires (not empty) that it is like that [*difficult to remain empty*]. Also the physical mind is by no means at rest. If the desires were thrown out and the ego less active and the physical mind at rest knowledge would come from above; in place of the physical mind’s stupidities,

the vital mind could be calm and quiet and the Mother's Force take up the action and the higher consciousness begin to come down. That is the proper sequel of emptiness. But nothing of this has happened because the "emptiness" could not complete itself, that is to say, the true silence and peace.

Emptiness — A Transitional State

The emptiness that you described in your letter yesterday was not a bad thing — it is this emptiness inward and outward that often in Yoga becomes the first step towards a new consciousness. Man's nature is like a cup of dirty water — the water has to be thrown out, the cup left clean and empty for the divine liquor to be poured into it. The difficulty is that the human physical consciousness feels it difficult to bear this emptiness — it is accustomed to be occupied by all sorts of little mental and vital movements which keep it interested and amused or even if in trouble and sorrow still active. The cessation of these things is hard to bear for it. It begins to feel dull and restless and eager for the old interests and movements. But by this restlessness it disturbs the quietude and brings back the things that had been thrown out. It is this that is creating the difficulty and the obstruction for the moment. If you can accept emptiness as a passage to the true consciousness and true movements, then it will be easier to get rid of the obstacle.

All in the Asram are not suffering from the sense of dullness and want of interest, but many are because the Force that is descending is discouraging the old movements of the physical and vital mind which they call life and they are not accustomed to accept the renunciation of these things, or to admit the peace or joy of silence.

*

There is a certain truth in what you say about the empty cup — a certain emptying of the consciousness of old things is necessary before anything positive can settle itself. It is what is happening in your physical consciousness, the old movements are being

emptied out and you fall quiet, but they press in again and the cup has to be repeatedly emptied. If there is a firm and persistent rejection, then this repeated return of these old movements will cease to be so persistent; the periods of quiet and its intensity will increase until the peace and quietude can be established and permanent.

It is not however a fact that the whole nature has to be emptied of the old things before there can be the Light and Grace. It is done usually in different parts of the nature at different times. You had your former experiences because the mind and higher vital were sufficiently emptied and quiet to receive some experiences of a new consciousness. Now it is the physical mind, physical vital and body that have to be emptied — these always take longer than the others because the physical is more full of old habits, more obstinate in keeping and always repeating them, more slow to receive anything new or to change. But by the detachment and steady rejection and reliance on the Mother's force, this obstinacy can be overcome and the cup emptied for filling with the Divine Light.

*

There is nothing out of the normal in what you describe — it happens in the course of the change of consciousness. What has to be remedied is that you feel the stillness, emptiness, but seem to have no joy of it or the satisfied peace of the self or sense of wideness or quiet release and freedom. Usually the cessation of the lower activities brings a sense of freedom, release, repose. The inner consciousness does not miss the mental jumpings or the vital swirl — it feels as if the silence were its native element.

*

Emptiness is not in itself a bad condition, only if it is a sad and restless emptiness of the dissatisfied vital. In sadhana emptiness is very usually a necessary transition from one state to another. When mind and vital fall quiet and their restless movements, thoughts and desires cease, then one feels empty. This is at first often a neutral emptiness with nothing in it, nothing in it either

good or bad, happy or unhappy, no impulse or movement. This neutral state is often or even usually followed by the opening to inner experience. There is also an emptiness made of peace and silence, when the peace and silence come out from the psychic within or descend from the higher consciousness above. This is not neutral, for in it there is the sense of peace, often also of wideness and freedom. There is also a happy emptiness with the sense of something close or drawing near which is not yet there, e.g. the closeness of the Mother or some other preparing experience. What you describe is the neutral quiet. There is no need for anxiety. When it comes, one has only to remain quiet and open and turned to the Mother till something develops from within.

*

What you describe is the same neutral condition that you had before. It is a transitional state in which the old consciousness has ceased to be active, the new is preparing behind a neutral quietude. One must take it quietly and wait for it to turn into the spiritual peace and the psychic happiness which is quite different from vital joy and grief. To have neither vital joy nor vital grief is considered by the Yogins to be a very desirable release,—it makes it possible to pass from the ordinary human vital feelings to the true and constant inner peace, joy or happiness. I suppose you have no time just now for sitting in meditation. The pressure of sleep is a pressure to go inside and the habit of meditation makes it possible to turn the sleep that comes into a kind of sleep-samadhi in which one is conscious of various experiences and progresses in the inner being.

*

If you mean that after this kind of samadhi [*during the afternoon rest*], you feel a greater emptiness or voidness, it is quite natural. To void the being of the old consciousness and its movements and to fill the mind from above are the two main processes now by the Force from above.

*

When you feel empty like that, you have only to remain very still and open yourself to receive the Light and Force. Emptiness is a bad condition only when it is dull or when you receive into it wrong movements. But often one has to be empty in order to receive what is to be given.

*

In itself this emptiness and quietude free from all anxiety or trouble or thought about people or things is not a bad sign or an undesirable state. It is a state of what the Yogis call *udāsīnatā*, a separateness from all things and indifference, an untroubled neutral quietude. In many Yogas it is considered a very advanced and desirable condition — a state of liberation from the world, though not yet of realisation of the Divine, — but they consider it a necessary passage to the realisation. In our Yoga it is only a passage through which one arrives at a more positive spiritual calm consciousness in which all experiences and all realisations become possible. The feeling of dullness is due probably not to this state which is in itself a condition of ease and release, but to the depressed condition of the bodily health and strength. That also is probably the cause why the more positive state does not come quickly. The forgetfulness you speak of comes sometimes in the period of change, but passes away afterwards; a new force of memory comes.

Voidness

The voidness is the best condition for a full receptivity.

*

The voidness (if by that you mean silence and emptiness of thoughts, movements etc.) is the basic condition into which the higher consciousness can flow.

*

The usual result of voidness is to quiet down any vital tumult although it does not, unless it is complete, stop the mechanical

recurrent action of the mind.

*

Yes, it becomes like that.¹ In the end you feel as if you had no body, but were spread out in the vastness of space as an infinite consciousness and existence — or as if the body were only a dot in that consciousness.

*

There is no reason why the void should be a dull or unhappy condition. It is usually the habit of the mind and vital to associate happiness or interest only with activity, but the spiritual consciousness has no such limitations.

*

Voidness can come from anywhere, mind, vital or from above.

*

Voidness may be of different kinds — a certain kind of spiritual voidness or the emptiness that is a preparation for new experience. But an exhaustion of life energy is a very different thing. It may arise from fatigue, from somebody or something drawing away the vital force or from an invasion of tamas.

Blankness

In the course of the sadhana a state of blankness, of “neutral quiet” like this often comes — especially when the sadhana is in the physical consciousness. It is not that the aspiration is gone, but that it does not manifest for the time being, because all has become neutrally quiet. This condition is trying for the human mind and vital which are accustomed to be in some kind of activity always and regard this as a lifeless state. But one must not feel disturbed or disappointed when this comes, but remain calm in the full confidence that it is a stage only, a ground that

¹ *The correspondent wrote that in the state of voidness his body felt as light as cotton.*
— Ed.

has to be crossed in the sadhana. In whatever condition, the faith and the fixed idea of surrender must be kept before the mind. As for the brief movements of restlessness, they will still down if this is kept and the quiet mind and vital reassert themselves quickly.

*

The physical does not get tired of the blankness. It may feel tamasic because of its own tendency to inertia, but it does not usually object to voidness. Of course it may be the vital physical — you have only to reject it as a remnant of the old movements.

*

Blankness is only a condition in which realisation has to come. If aspiration is needed for that, it has to be used; if the realisation comes of itself, then of course aspiration is not necessary.

Emptiness, Blankness and Silence

Silence of the being is the first natural aim of the Yoga. You and some others do not find satisfaction in it because you have not overcome the vital mind which wants always some kind of activity, change, doing something, making something happen. The eternal immobility of the silent Brahman is a thing it does not relish. So when emptiness comes, it finds it dull, inert, monotonous.

*

I do not quite gather what is the nature of this silence and this heat which makes you feel like that. An inner silence is a condition favourable to the sadhana even if for a time it means the cessation of all activity within, all thoughts, emotions or mental perceptions. But it is possible and it does happen that the unaccustomed physical consciousness feels the silence to be dull and a deprivation of intelligence rather than a release and repose, and the strangeness of this inactive condition causes it apprehension and an alarmed perplexity. As for the heat that also may be troublesome and difficult to bear to the physical

consciousness because it is unaccustomed and gets alarmed and troubled. If it is that we must try to slow down and diminish the intensity of the force that is acting.

But in any case try to dismiss any alarm that may be suggested to you and keep the faith which you express in the last part of the letter.

*

I cannot have written that it is only you who feel the silence as empty, as there are plenty who do so feel it at first. One feels it empty because one is accustomed to associate existence with thought, feeling and movement or with forms and objects, and there are none of these there. But it is not really empty.

*

Certainly, the vital cannot take an interest in a blank condition. If you depend on your vital you cannot prolong it. It is the spirit that feels a release in the silence empty of all mental or other activities, for in that silence it becomes self-aware. For the blankness to be real one must have got into the Purusha or Witness consciousness. If you are looking at it with your mind or vital, then there is not blankness, — for even if there are no distinct thoughts then there must be a mental attitude or mental vibrations — e.g. the not feeling interest.

*

The silence can remain when the blankness has gone. All sorts of things can pour in and yet the silence still remains, but if you become full of force, light, Ananda, knowledge etc. you can't call yourself blank any longer.

*

Every kind of realisation — infinite self, cosmic consciousness, the Mother's Presence, Light, Force, Ananda, Knowledge, Sachchidananda realisation, the different layers of consciousness up to the Supermind — all these can come in the silence which remains but ceases to be blank.

*

The emptiness, silence and peace are the basic condition for the spiritual siddhi—it is the first step towards it. It enables the Purusha to be free from the movements of Prakriti, to see and know where they come from since they no longer rise from within the mind, heart etc., these being in a state of quietude, and to reject the lower movements and to call in the knowledge, will etc. of the higher Consciousness which is above.

Emptiness, Voidness and the Self

Emptiness is a state of quietude of the mental or vital or all the consciousness not visited by any mind or vital movements, but open to the Pure Existence and ready or tending to be that or already that but not yet realised in its full power of being. Which of these conditions it happens to be depends on the particular case. The Self state or the state of pure Existence is sometimes also called emptiness, but only in the sense that it is a state of sheer static rest of being without any contacts of mobile Nature.

*

Emptiness as such is not a character of the higher consciousness, though it often looks like that to the human vital when one has the pure realisation of the Self, because all is immobile, and for the vital all that is not full of action appears empty. But the emptiness that comes to the mind, vital or physical is a special thing intended to clear the room for the things from above.

*

The void is the condition of the Self—free, wide and silent. It seems void to the mind, but in reality is simply a state of pure existence and consciousness, Sat and Chit with Shanti.

*

There is no such thing as *néant*. By “void” is meant emptiness clear of all contents except existence pure and simple. Without that one cannot realise the silent Brahman.

Part Two

The Opening of the Inner Senses

Section One

Visions, Sounds, Smells and Tastes

Chapter One

The Value of Visions

Vision, Experience and Realisation

When you see Light, that is vision; when you feel Light entering into you, that is experience; when Light settles in you and brings illumination and knowledge, that is a realisation. But ordinarily visions are also called experiences.

*

Sometimes a vision accompanies an experience and is as it were a visual rendering of it or accompaniment to it, but the experience itself is a separate thing.

*

Vision is something *seen* in the conscious state (whether with closed or open eyes) which is not of the physical plane. In “conscious state” I include the consciousness of Samadhi when one is unaware of outward things but conscious of things going on within.

Experience is a wide term which covers almost everything that happens in the inner consciousness — usually it indicates either a spiritual happening, e.g. the descent of peace, the feeling of the presence of the Mother, or an occult experience, e.g. a going into the other worlds in dream and seeing and doing things there. There are thousands of different kinds of experience. Visions are a special kind of experience in which the inner eye is active.

*

Visions do not come from the spiritual plane — they come from the subtle physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic or from planes above the Mind. What comes from the spiritual planes are experiences of the Divine, e.g. the experience of self

everywhere, of the Divine in all etc.

*

The Infinite is in all things and can be seen through them when the vision opens.

*

By going deep [*in meditation*] one person may see visions; another may fall in deeper consciousness but see no vision — and so on. The result varies with the nature.

*

Yes, it [*the higher consciousness*] can come down into the mind planes bringing peace, wideness, the cosmic consciousness, the realisation of the Divine, the sense of the cosmic forces and other things — without any breaking of the veil through vision. Ordinarily, however, with most people the inner vision comes first.

*

I said [*in the preceding letter*] the realisation of the Divine in the mind. If there is to be the total realisation, the breaking of the veil is indispensable.

*

Usually the visions precede realisation, in a way they prepare it.

*

Visions and voices have their place when they are the genuine visions and the true voices. Naturally, they are not the realisation but only a step on the way and one has not to get shut up in them or take all as of value.

*

The vision of the higher planes or the idea of what they are can be had long before the transformation. If that were not possible, how could the transformation take place — the lower

nature cannot change of itself, it changes by the growing vision, perception, descent of the higher consciousness belonging to the higher planes? It is through aspiration, through an increasing opening that these visions and perceptions begin to come — the realisation comes afterwards.

Sensing Supraphysical Things

No, it was neither optical illusion nor hallucination nor coincidence nor auto-suggestion nor any of the other ponderous and vacant polysyllables by which physical science tries to explain away or rather avoid explaining the scientifically inexplicable. In these matters the scientist is always doing what he is always blaming the layman for doing when the latter lays down the law on things about which he is profoundly ignorant, without investigation or experiment, without ascertained knowledge — simply by evolving a theory or *a priori* idea out of his own mind and plastering it as a label on the unexplained phenomena.

There is, as I have told you, a whole range or many inexhaustible ranges of sensory phenomena other than the outward physical which one can become conscious of, see, hear, feel, smell, touch, mentally contact — to use the new established Americanism — either in trance or sleep or an inward state mis-called sleep or simply and easily in the waking state. This faculty of sensing supraphysical things internally or externalising them, so to speak, so that they become visible, audible, sensible to the outward eye, ear, even touch, just as are gross physical objects, this power or gift is not a freak or an abnormality; it is a universal faculty present in all human beings, but latent in most, in some rarely or intermittently active, occurring as if by accident in others, frequent or normally active in a few. But just as anyone can with some training learn science and do things which would have seemed miracles to his forefathers, so almost anyone, if he wants, can with a little concentration and training develop the faculty of supraphysical vision. When one starts Yoga, this power is often though not invariably — for some find it difficult — one of the first to come out from its latent condition and

manifest itself, most often without any effort, intention or previous knowledge on the part of the sadhak. It comes more easily with the eyes shut than with the eyes open, but it does come in both ways. The first sign of its opening in the externalised way is very often that seeing of “sparkles” or small luminous dots, shapes etc. which was your first introduction to the matter; a second is, often enough, the seeing of circles of light or colour round objects, most easily round luminous objects like a star; seeing of colours is a third initial experience — but they do not always come in that order. The Yogis in India very often in order to develop the power use the method of *trāṭak*, concentrating the vision on a single point or object — preferably a luminous object. Your looking at the star was precisely an exercise in *trāṭak* and had the effect which any Yogi in India would have told you is normal. For all this is not fancy or delusion; it is part of an occult science which has been practised throughout the historic and prehistoric ages in all countries and it has always been known to be not merely auto-suggestive or hallucinatory in its results, but, if one can get the key, veridical and verifiable. Your first scepticism may be natural in a “modern” man plunging into these lasting things of the past, present and future, — natural but not justifiable because very obviously inadequate to the facts observed; but once you have seen, the first thing you should do is to throw all this vapid pseudo-science behind you, this vain attempt to stick physical explanations on supraphysical things, and take the only rational course. Develop the power, get more and more experience — develop the consciousness by which these things come: as the consciousness develops, you will begin to understand and get the intuition of the significances. Or if you want their science too, then learn and apply the occult science which can alone deal with supraphysical phenomena. As for what showed itself to you, it was not mere curious phenomena, not even merely symbolic colours, but things that have a considerable importance.

Develop this power of inner sense and all that it brings you. These first seeings are only an outer fringe — behind lie whole worlds of experience which fill what seems to the material

man the gap (your Russell's inner void) between the earth-consciousness and the Eternal and Infinite.

The Importance of Visions

All visions have a significance of one kind or another. This power of vision is very important for the Yoga and should not be rejected although it is not the most important thing — for the most important thing is the change of the consciousness. All other powers like this of vision should be developed without attachment as parts and aids of the Yoga.

*

The particular things seen may be of no importance, but the power of seeing is of importance and can be of great help in the Yoga. It enables you to see things belonging to other planes (other than the physical) and get knowledge that is useful for sadhana — also to have concrete contact with the Mother in those planes (mental, vital, psychic worlds) etc.

*

Visions come from all planes and are of all kinds and different values. Some are of very great value and importance, others are a play of the mind or vital and are good only for their own special purpose, others are formations of the mind and vital plane, some of which may have truth, while others are false and misleading, or they may be a sort of artistry of that plane. They can have considerable importance in the development of the first Yogic consciousness, that of the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical or for an occult understanding of the universe. Visions which are real can help the spiritual progress, I mean, those which show us inner realities: one can for instance meet Krishna, speak with him and hear his voice in an inner "real" vision, quite as real as anything on the outer plane. Merely seeing his image is not the same thing, any more than seeing his picture on the wall is the same thing as meeting him in person. But the picture on the wall need not be useless for the spiritual life. All one can say is that

one must not attach oneself too much to this gift and what it shows us, but neither is it necessary to belittle it. It has its value and sometimes a considerable spiritual utility. But, naturally, it is not supreme, — the supreme thing is the realisation, the contact, the union with the Divine, bhakti, change of the nature etc.

*

Visions and experiences (especially experiences) are all right; but you cannot expect every vision to translate itself in a corresponding physical fact. Some do, the majority don't, others belong to the supraphysical entirely and indicate realities, possibilities or tendencies that have their seat there. How far these will influence the life or realise themselves in it or whether they will do so at all depends upon the nature of the vision, the power in it, sometimes on the will or formative power of the seer.

People value visions for one thing because they are one key (there are others) to contact with the other worlds or with the inner worlds and all that is there and these are regions of immense riches which far surpass the physical plane as it is at present. One enters into a larger freer self and a larger more plastic world; of course individual visions only give a contact, not an actual entrance, but the power of vision accompanied with the power of the other subtle senses (hearing, touch, etc.) as it expands does give this entrance. These things have not the effect of a mere imagination (as a poet's or artist's, though that can be strong enough) but if fully followed out bring a constant growth of the being and the consciousness and its richness of experience and its scope.

People also value the power of vision for a greater reason than that: it can give a first contact with the Divine in his forms and powers; it can be the opening of a communion with the Divine, of the hearing of the Voice that guides, of the Presence as well as the Image in the heart, of many other things that bring what man seeks through religion or Yoga.

Farther, vision is of value because it is often a first key to inner planes of one's own being and one's own consciousness as distinguished from worlds or planes of the cosmic consciousness.

Yoga experience often begins with some opening of the third eye in the forehead (the centre of vision in the brows) or with some kind of beginning and extension of subtle seeing which may seem unimportant at first, but is the vestibule to deeper experience. Even when it is not that, — for one can go to experience direct, — it can come in afterwards as a powerful aid to experience; it can be full of indications which help to self-knowledge or knowledge of things or knowledge of people; it can be veridical and lead to prevision, premonition and other openings of less importance but very useful to a Yogi.

In short, vision is a great instrument though not absolutely indispensable.

But, as I have suggested, there are visions and visions just as there are dreams and dreams, and one has to develop discrimination and a sense of values and kinds and know how to understand and make use of these powers. But that is too big and intricate a matter to be pursued now.

*

The visions he has between the eyebrows are not imaginations — they could be so only if he thought them first and his thoughts took shape, but as they came independent of his thoughts, they are not visual imagination but vision. This faculty is a useful one in Yoga and it can be allowed to develop; it should not be discouraged. I do not know what he means by not having *śraddhā* in them. What he sees now are probably only images of subtle (*sūkṣma*) scenes and objects; but, when developed, this can become a power of symbolic, representative or real vision, showing the truths of things or realities of this or other worlds or representations of the past, present or future.

If the concentration goes naturally to the centre between the eyebrows which is the centre of inner mind and its thought, will and vision, there is no harm in that.

*

These lights and visions are not hallucinations. They indicate an opening of the inner vision whose centre is in the forehead

between the eyebrows. Lights are very often the first thing seen. Lights indicate the action or movement of subtle forces belonging to the different planes of being, — the nature of the force depending on the colour and shade of the light. The sun is the symbol and power of the inner or higher Truth — to see it in meditation is a good sign. The sea is also often symbolic, indicating usually the vital nature, sometimes the expanse of consciousness in movement. The opening of vision must be allowed to develop, but too much importance need not be given to the individual visions unless or until they become evidently symbolic or significant or shed light on things in the sadhana etc.

*

What was developed in you is a power of true inner vision — this will help you to enter through it into touch with the Divine; you have only to let it develop. Two other things have to develop — the feeling of the Divine Presence and power and inspiration behind your actions, and the inner contact with myself and the Mother. Aspire with faith and sincerity and these will come. I do not wish to give any more precise instructions until I see what happens in you during your stay here; for although the path is common to all, each man has his own way of following it.

*

The frequent seeing of lights such as those he writes of in his letter is usually a sign that the seer is not limited by his outward surface or waking consciousness but has a latent capacity (which can be perfected by training and practice) for entering into the experiences of the inner consciousness of which most people are unaware but which opens by the practice of Yoga. By this opening one becomes aware of subtle planes of experience and worlds of existence other than the material. For the spiritual life a still farther opening is required into an inmost consciousness by which one becomes aware of the Self and Spirit, the Eternal and the Divine.

*

From what he writes it is apparent that he has a capacity [*for Yoga*], and it is probable that he would have made more progress if he had not shut the door that was opening. Evidently, he made a mistake when he stopped the visions that were coming. Vision and hallucination are not the same thing. The inner vision is an open door on higher planes of consciousness beyond the physical mind which gives room for a wider truth and experience to enter and act upon the mind. It is not the only or the most important door, but it is one which comes readiest to very many if not most and can be a very powerful help. It does not come easily to intellectuals as it does to men with a strong life-power or the emotional and the imaginative. It is true that the field of vision, like every other field of activity of the human mind, is a mixed world and there is in it not only truth but much half-truth and error. It is also true that for the rash and unwary to enter into it may bring confusion and misleading inspirations and false voices, and it is safer to have some sure guidance from those who know and have spiritual and psychic experience. One must look at this field calmly and with discrimination, but to shut the gates and reject this or other supraphysical experiences is to limit oneself and arrest the inner development.

*

Visions and voices are not meant for creating faith; they are effective only if one has faith already.

Visions Not the Most Important Thing

Visions are not indispensable — they are a help, that is all, when they are of the right kind.

*

Anybody with a predisposition can develop the power of seeing visions like that. People are mistaken in thinking it is a sign of great Yogashakti. Apposite and effective visions, those that reveal movements in the occult workings of the nature or help the spiritual growth, are another matter.

*

Well, it is difficult to explain [*what kind of visions help one's spiritual growth*]. I might give the example of St. Paul's vision on the way to Damascus as an example of a vision which really meant business. You have yourself given the Kurukshetra example. But all visions need not be so stupendous as that—small ones can also be useful.

But the predisposition I spoke of was for visionary display, not for spiritual growth. There are people who can see visions by the hundred and there are those who cannot. But it does not follow that the non-visionary cannot have decisive spiritual experiences or the realisation.

*

The kind of vision you want comes only if the general visual power opens and develops. It is not the greatest form of experience; many advance very far and have high experiences and change of consciousness without it. The important thing is to feel the Presence of the Mother with one and in one, her Light, her Power working, her Ananda. The form can be there, if the vision develops, but only as one element of the experience.

*

I did not quite understand from your letter what is the nature of these sights and objects that pass like a cinema film before you. If they are things seen by the inner vision, then there is no need to drive them away—one has only to let them pass. When one does sadhana an inner mind which is within us awakes and sees by an inner vision images of all things in this world and other worlds—this power of vision has its use, though one has not to be attached to it; one can let them pass with a quiet mind, neither fixing on them nor driving them away.

*

This kind of vision [*seeing water, a rose, a tiger*] almost anybody can have except those who live too much in the mind. For others it is very near to the surface, this faculty of vision. Many have it in this elementary way without doing any Yoga at all.

*

The power of occult seeing is there in everyone, mostly latent, often near the surface, sometimes but much more rarely already on the surface. If one practises *trāṭak*, it is pretty certain to come out sooner or later, — though some have a difficulty and with them it takes time; those in whom it comes out at once have had all the time this power of occult vision near the surface and it emerges at the first direct pressure.

No Reason to Fear Visions

Such visions [*of human figures*] often happen when the inner sight is open. These were evidently two powers of the supra-physical world. One has to see quietly whatever comes of this kind — there is no reason to fear them, any more than if you saw a picture or moving figures in the cinema.

Wrong Visions and Voices

When the sadhana progresses, one almost always gets the power of vision; what one sees is true if one remains in the right consciousness. There are also wrong voices and experiences. The people who have gone mad, went mad because they were egoistic, began to think themselves great sadhaks and attach an exaggerated importance to themselves and their experiences; this made them get a wrong consciousness and wrong voices and visions and inspirations. They attached so much importance to them that they refused to listen to the Mother and finally became hostile to her because she told them they were in error and checked their delusions. Your visions and experiences are very true and good and I have explained to you what they signify — the wrong ones tried to come but you threw them away, because you are not attached to them and are fixed on the true aim of sadhana. One must not get attached to these things, but observe them simply and go on; then they become a help and cannot be a danger.

Chapter Two

Kinds of Vision

The Inner Vision

There is an inner vision that opens when one does sadhana and all sorts of images rise before it or pass. Their coming does not depend upon your thought or will; it is real and automatic. Just as your physical eyes see things in the physical world, so the inner eye sees things and images that belong to the other worlds and subtle images of things of this physical world also.

*

Everything not physical is seen by an inner vision.

*

When the inner vision opens, there can come before it all that ever was or is now in the world, even it can open to things that will be hereafter — so there is nothing impossible in seeing thus the figures and the things of the past.

*

The inner vision can see objects — but it can also see instead the vibration of the forces which act through the object.

*

This realm (whose centre is between the eyebrows) is the realm of inner thought, will, vision — the motor-car indicates a rapid progress in this part of the consciousness. The motor-car is a symbolic image, these images do not refer to anything physical.

These things take place in the inner mind or inner vital and usually there is a truth behind them, but the form in which they come into the mind may be imperfect — i.e. the meaning may be something not perfectly revealed in the words.

*

Things inside can be seen as distinctly as outward things whether in an image by the subtle vision or in their essence by a still more subtle and powerful way of seeing; but all these things have to develop in order to get their full power and intensity.

Stages in the Development of the Inner Vision

It is the inner vision that is opened or opening in you. When that opens, the first thing that you see is colours or lights moving or small or vague shapes or objects — afterwards flowers etc., then figures of people, scenes, landscapes, things happening etc. Often by the power of this subtle vision the sadhak can see the image of the Divine he worships in his heart and so feel more concretely the presence.

*

The seeing of colours is the beginning of inner vision, what is called *sūkṣmadṛṣṭi*. Afterwards this vision opens and one begins to see figures and scenes and people. It is good that the seeing began with an image of the Mother.

*

When one tries to meditate, the first obstacle in the beginning is sleep. When you get over this obstacle, there comes a condition in which, with the eyes closed, you begin to see things, people, scenes of all kinds. This is not a bad thing, it is a good sign and means that you are making progress in the Yoga. There is, besides the outer physical sight which sees external objects, an inner sight in us which can see things yet unseen and unknown, things at a distance, things belonging to another place or time or to other worlds; it is the inner sight which is opening in you. It is the working of the Mother's force which is opening it in you, and you should not try to stop it. Remember the Mother always, call on her and aspire to feel her presence and her power working in you; but you do not need, for that, to reject this or other developments that may come in you by her working hereafter. It is only desire, egoism, restlessness and other wrong movements

that have to be rejected.

*

The visions you describe are those which come in the earliest stages of sadhana. At this stage most of the things seen are formations of the mental plane and it is not always possible to put on them a precise significance, for they depend on the individual mind of the sadhak. At a later stage the power of vision becomes important for the sadhana, but at first one has to go on without attaching excessive importance to the details — until the consciousness develops more. The opening of the consciousness to the Divine Light and Truth and Presence is always the one important thing in the Yoga.

The Diverse Nature and Significance of Visions

Your visions are not mental images but significant symbols. The white dove is the higher divine or spiritual Consciousness above the mental surrounded by the golden lightnings of the Truth. The lamb is the psychic aspiring to the Truth. When one has a thought or feeling and creates a mental form of it, that is a mental image — or when not so positively or consciously self-created forms arise either in meditation or sleep, which correspond to mental thoughts or vital feelings, one's own or those of others, those also are simply mental images or vital formations. The true significant ones are those that come of themselves and correspond to things, states of consciousness or a play of forces that are actual and not determined mainly by one's ideas, will or feelings.

*

Visions are of all kinds — some are merely suggestions of what wants to be or is trying to be, some indicate some approach of the thing or movement towards it, some indicate that the thing is being done.

*

Nothing has to be done to develop them [*images seen in vision*]. They develop of themselves by the growing practice of seeing, — what was faint becomes clear, what was incomplete becomes complete. One cannot say in a general way that they are real or unreal. Some are formations of the mind, some are images that come to the sight of themselves, some are images of real things that show themselves directly to the sight — others are true pictures, not merely images.

*

No rule of a general character can be given. Each vision or dream has to be taken by itself; some are mental constructions, symbols or indications, some are vital possibilities truly or falsely represented, some are representations of physical facts — but this last is more rare.

*

The seeing of the body (at least one's own) in its internal parts is a Yogic power developed by the Raja and Hathayogins — I suppose it could be extended to the body of others. There is also the sense of subtle smells and I have noticed that sometimes one smell persists.

*

Subtle images can be images of all things in all worlds.

*

There is no criterion [*for distinguishing visions from dreams of a deeper origin*], but one can easily distinguish if one is in the inward condition, not sleep, in which most visions take place by the nature of the impression made. A vision in dream is more difficult to distinguish from a vivid dream-experience, but one gets to feel the difference.

*

Vision in trance is vision no less than vision in the waking state. It is only the condition of the recipient consciousness that varies

—in one the waking consciousness shares in the vision, in the other it is excluded for the sake of greater facility and range in the inner experience. But in both it is the inner vision that sees.

*

The physical things¹ are simply an occasion or starting-point for the inner vision to work through the open eyes and bring in the significant inner things.

Representative and Dynamic Visions

It depends on the nature of the symbolic vision whether it is merely representative, offering to the inner vision and nature (even though the outer mind has not the understanding, the inner can receive its effect) the thing symbolised in its figure or whether it is dynamic. The Sun symbol, for instance, is usually dynamic. Again among the dynamic symbols some may bring simply an influence of the thing symbolised, some indicate what is being done but not yet finished, some a formative experience that visits the consciousness, some a prophecy of something that may or will or is soon about to happen. There are others that are not merely symbols but present actualities seen by the vision in a symbolic figure.

*

When the colours begin to take definite shapes [*in one's visions*], it is a sign of some dynamic work of formation in the consciousness — a square for instance means that some kind of creation is in process in some field of the being; the square indicates that the creation is to be complete in itself while the rectangle indicates something partial and preliminary. The waves of colour mean a dynamic rush of forces and the star may in such a context indicate the promise of the new being that is to be formed. The blue colour must here be the Krishna light — so it is a creation under the stress of the Krishna light. All these are symbols of what is

¹ *The correspondent saw the lights on a pier at night as sparkling diamonds. — Ed.*

going on in the inner being, in the consciousness behind, and the results well up from time to time in the external or surface consciousness in such feelings as the awareness of a softening and opening which you had, devotion, joy, peace, Ananda etc. When the opening is complete, there is likely to be a more direct consciousness of the working that is going on behind till it is no longer behind but in the front of the nature.

*

When you see a square, that is a symbol of complete creation; when you see a buffalo rushing upon you and missing and feel you have escaped a great danger, that is a transcription. Something actually happened of which the buffalo's ineffectual rush was your mind's transcription — the rush of some hostile force represented by the buffalo.

Seeing Forms of the Divine and Other Beings

Subjective visions can be as real as objective sight — the only difference is that one is of real things in material space, while the others are of real things belonging to other planes down to the subtle physical; even symbolic visions are real insofar as they are symbols of realities. Even dreams can have a reality in the subtle domain. Visions are unreal only when these are merely imaginative mental formations not representing anything that is true or was true or is going to be true.

In this case the thing seen [*a vision of Krishna, silvery blue in colour, standing in a dance pose playing the flute*] can be taken as true since it has been seen by many and always in the same relation and still more because it has been confirmed by what was seen by Yashodabai and Krishnaprem. It means obviously that your singing by the power of the bhakti it expresses can and does bring the presence of Krishna there. It is not that Krishna “shows himself”, but simply that he is there and some who have the power of vision catch sight of him and others who have not the power fail to do so. This power of vision is sometimes inborn and habitual even without any effort of development,

sometimes it wakes up of itself and becomes abundant or needs only a little practice to develop; it is not necessarily a sign of spiritual attainment, but usually when by practice of Yoga one begins to go inside or live within, the power of subtle vision awakes to a greater or less extent; but this does not always happen easily, especially if one has been habituated to live much in the intellect or in an outward vital consciousness.

I suppose what you are thinking of is “darshan”, the self-revelation of the Deity to the devotee; but that is different, it is an unveiling of his presence, temporary or permanent, and may come as a vision or may come as a close feeling of his presence which is more intimate than sight and a frequent or constant communication with him; that happens by deepening of the being into its inner self and growth of consciousness or by growth of the intensity of bhakti. When the crust of the external consciousness is sufficiently broken by the pressure of increasing and engrossing bhakti, the contact comes.

*

It is quite usual at a certain stage of the sadhana for people who have the faculty to see or hear the Devata of their worship and to receive constant directions from him or her with regard either to action or to sadhana. Defects and difficulties may remain, but that does not prevent the direct guidance from being a fact. The necessity of the Guru in such cases is to see that it is the right experience, the right voice or vision—for it is possible for a false guidance to come as it did with X and Y.

*

These things [*the seeing of Buddha, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Shankaracharya in vision*] are the result of past thoughts and influences. They are of various kinds—sometimes merely thought-forms created by one’s own thought-force to act as a vehicle for some mental realisation—sometimes Powers of different planes that take these forms as a support for their work through the individual,—but sometimes one is actually in communion with that which had the name and form and personality

of Buddha or Ramakrishna or Vivekananda or Shankara.

It is not necessary to have an element akin to these personalities — a thought, an aspiration, a formation of the mind or vital are enough to create the connection — it is sufficient for a vibration of response anywhere to what these Powers represent.

Cosmic, Inner and Psychic Vision

Cosmic vision is the seeing of the universal movements — it has nothing to do with the psychic necessarily. It can be in the universal mind, the universal vital, the universal physical or anywhere.

What do you mean here by psychic vision? Inner vision means the vision with the inner seeing as opposed to outer vision, the external sight with the surface mind or the surface eyes. Psychic in the language of this Yoga is confined to the soul, the psychic being — it is not as in the ordinary language in which if you see a ghost it is called a psychic “vision”: we speak of the inner vision or the subtle sight or the occult sight — not the psychic vision.

*

The “sight” spoken of [*in passages of the Upanishads*] is not a sense vision but an experience in the inner consciousness which is more true and living and dynamic than the experiences given to the external consciousness by the material senses.

There is also a psychic vision by which one can see the forms of the Gods or one of the many forms in which the Ishwara reveals himself to the Bhakta.

There is too an inner or subtle sense and sight by which one can see and experience forms and happenings which are not present to the physical eye and also those which belong to other planes than that of the physical world. There are many supraphysical worlds and one can get into contact with these worlds and their beings only by an awakening or developing of this inner sense.

Mental Visions

The mental visions are meant to bring in the mind the influence of the things they represent.

*

Inner vision is vivid like actual sight, always precise and contains a truth in it. In mental vision the images are invented by the mind and are partly true, partly a play of possibilities. Or a mental vision like the vital may be only a suggestion, — that is a formation of some possibility on the mental or vital plane which presents itself to the sadhak in the hope of being accepted and helped to realise itself.

*

The visions and experiences you have described are all of the mental plane and show a great openness and purity of the inner mental being free from unfavourable influences. But it is difficult to tell the precise significance of those that are in the nature of colours, lights, a star etc., because they depend on contacts which are personal to the sadhaka. The first five are of this kind and appear to indicate contact with powers, influences, personalities (godheads), etc. of the higher mental plane. E.g. the light of pink colour might be that of some influence or godhead of love or bhakti in contact with the mental being. In some cases it may be the figure of a formation of the mental being itself. The flowers, diamonds and gems etc. would seem to indicate contact with Radha, Mahalakshmi and Mahakali influences. The vision of writing is also frequent on the mental plane — it is known by us as the *lipi*, and if it organises itself so as to be legible and intelligible, it can embody many things such as intuitions, messages from one or other of the mental planes — the voice you heard was probably one of these messages. There is no necessity to explain the vision of the form of the Mother and mine — for that is clear.

Vital Visions

The dream was on the vital plane. Dreams or visions on the vital plane are usually either

(1) symbolic vital visions

(2) actual occurrences on the vital plane

(3) formations of the vital mind, either of the dreamer or of someone else with whom he contacts in sleep or of powers or beings of that plane. No great reliance can be put on this kind of experience.

*

These are visions of the vital world and the vital planes and one sees hundreds of them there.² Those of the type of the first have no significance; they are only things seen just as on earth you may see a man bathing in water. The other seems to indicate a being or else simply a Force given form entering into the consciousness. All the parts of the consciousness are like fields into which forces from the same planes of consciousness in the universal Nature are constantly entering or passing. The best thing is to observe without getting affected in either way or without attaching too much importance — for these are minor experiences and one's concentration must call the major ones.

*

Most of these visions are the result of your getting into contact with a certain field of forces in the vital world which are at present creating the pressure for war and revolution and all catastrophic things in Europe. It was from here that these menacing visions were coming. There is no coherence or reality in them. Chhinnamasta is a symbol of this kind of force, feeding as it were the world with her own blood.

They have to be at once rejected. It was not meant that you should be inactive, but that there was sufficient Force gathering

² *The correspondent had two visions in dream — one of a young lad standing waist deep in water, another of a woman's face which looked at the correspondent and then entered his chest. — Ed.*

to carry on the sadhana as if by an automatic action. But the consent of the sadhak, his rejection of all that comes against is always necessary.

*

It is the vital plane — probably the vital physical. It is mostly there that the beings of the vital world appear with animal heads or features. A human figure with a dog's face means a very coarse and material sexual energy. Of course, all such energies can be transformed and cease to be sexual — turned into material strength of some kind, just as the seminal force can be turned by brahmacharya into ojas.

*

This gazing on a flame or a bright spot is the traditional means used by Yogis for concentration or for awakening of the inner consciousness and vision. You seem to have gone by the gazing into a kind of surface (not deep) trance, which is indeed one of its first results, and begun to see things probably on the vital plane. I do not know what were the “dreadful objects” you saw but that dreadfulness is the character of many things first seen on that plane, especially when crossing its threshold by such means. You should not employ these means, I think, for they are quite unnecessary and besides, they may lead to a passive concentration in which one is open to all sorts of things and cannot choose the right ones.

Subtle Physical Visions

All that can be seen with closed eyes can be seen with open eyes also; it is sufficient that the inner sight should extend to the subtle physical consciousness for that to happen.

*

One can see [*visions*] either with open or closed eyes or both. It is a matter of temperament or idiosyncrasy which one starts with.

*

The world you see is in some subtle physical plane where men see the gods according to their own ideas and images of them.

*

As you were concentrating your attention on the electric light, it may have been the god of electricity you saw, Vaidyuta Agni. There is no reason why he should have many faces — the many-headed or many-armed figures belong usually to the vital plane — and it may not have been in his vital form that he was manifesting. As for the colours, colours are symbols of forces and Agni need not be pure red — the principle of Fire can manifest all the colours and the pure white fire is that which contains in itself all the colours.

*

The gods in the overmental plane have not many heads and arms — this is a vital symbolism, it is not necessary in other planes. This figure [*of Vaidyuta Agni, mentioned in the preceding letter*] may have belonged to the subtle physical plane.

*

(1) It [*the vision of a flower*] was seen through the physical eyes but by the subtle physical consciousness; in other words there was an imposition of one consciousness upon another. After a certain stage of development, this capacity of living in the ordinary physical consciousness and yet having superadded to it another and more subtle sense, vision, experience becomes quite normal. A little concentration is enough to bring it; or, even, it happens automatically without any concentration.

As the flower was a subtle physical object, not entirely material in the ordinary sense of the word (though quite substantial and material in its own plane, not an illusion), a camera would not be able to detect it — except in the case of one of those abnormal interventions by which a subtle form has been thrown upon the material plate.

It could be sensed in a dark room, though not so easily, and it would not then have so vivid an appearance — unless you are

able to bring out something of the light of the subtle physical plane to surround it and give it its natural medium.

If seen with the eyes shut, it would be no longer a subtle physical form, but an object or formation of the vital, mental or other plane. Unless, indeed, the inner consciousness had progressed so far as to be able to project itself into the physical planes; but this is a rare and, in most cases, a late development.

(2) It is not, usually, the object that vanishes; it is the consciousness that changes. Owing to lack of sustained capacity or lack of training, one is not able to keep the subtle physical vision which is what was really seeing the object. This subtle physical vision comes easiest in the moment between light sleep and waking—either when one just comes out of the sleep or when one is just going into it. But one can train oneself to have it when one is quite wide awake.

At first when one begins to see, it is quite usual for the more ill-defined and imprecise figures to last longer while those which are successful, complete, precise in detail and outline are apt to be quite momentary and disappear in an instant. It is only when the subtle vision is well developed that the precise and full seeing lasts for a long time. This results from the difficulty of keeping what is still an abnormal consciousness and also, in this case, from the difficulty of keeping the two momentarily superimposed consciousnesses together.

(3) There are all kinds in the experiences of each plane—symbolic forms, figures of suggestion, thought-figures, desire-formations or will-formations, constructions of all kinds, things real and lasting in the plane to which they belong and things fictitious and misleading. The haphazardness belongs to the consciousness that sees with its limited and imperfect way of cognizing the other worlds, not to the phenomena themselves. Each plane is a world or a conglomeration or series of worlds, each organised in its own way, but organised, not haphazard; only, of course, the subtler planes are more plastic and less rigid in their organisation than the material plane.

Chapter Three

Subtle Sights, Sounds, Smells and Tastes

Sights and Sounds of Other Planes

The sounds of bells and the seeing of lights and colours are signs of the opening of the inner consciousness which brings with it an opening also to sights and sounds of other planes than the physical. Some of these things, like the sound of bells, crickets etc., seem even to help the opening. The Upanishad speaks of them as *brahmavyaktikarāṇi yoge*. The lights represent forces — or sometimes a formed light like that you saw may be the Light of a being of the supraphysical planes.

*

When the inner senses open, or any of them, one sees or hears things belonging to the other planes automatically. What one sees or hears depends on the development of the inner sense. It depends on what you hear whether these are the symbol sounds only which have a connection with the sadhana or simply other-plane sounds of an ordinary character.

*

It depends on the nature of the sounds. Some have a connection [*with sadhana*], others are merely sounds of the other planes.

Subtle Sounds

When the mind becomes quiet, there are certain sounds that are heard, which are supposed to be signs of the awakening of the subtle senses and the inner consciousness.

*

Sounds in the ear indicate a pressure to open the inner consciousness.

*

The sound is a very good sign. It comes when the inner consciousness is opening or preparing to open to the Yoga-force and the deeper experiences it brings.

*

They [*subtle sounds*] are the signs of a working going on to prepare something — but as that is a general thing, it cannot be said from the sounds themselves what the preparation is.

*

The sounds or voices you hear are like the sights (persons, objects) you see. As there is an inner sight other than the physical, so there is an inner hearing other than that of the external ear, and it can listen to voices and sounds and words of other worlds, other times and places, or those which come from supraphysical beings. But here you must be careful. If conflicting voices try to tell you what to do or not to do, you should not listen to them or reply. It is only myself and the Mother who can tell you what you should or should not do or guide or advise you.

*

Such sounds (bells, bees, crickets etc.) are stated in the Upanishad to be signs of realisation approaching. They come very commonly when the inner or subtle consciousness is awake.

*

The hearing of the bells has always been considered a sign or a premonition of the opening of the inner being to spiritual experience.

*

It [*the sound of the conch*] is one of the many symbol sounds one hears in Yoga. The conch shell is the sound of victory.

*

Both of these [*the sound of OM and of church bells*] are usually sounds that indicate the opening or attempt to open to the cosmic consciousness.

*

The music you heard was the music of the divine call to the soul — like the flute of Krishna.

Subtle Smells and Tastes

It [*experiencing subtle smells and tastes*] was not an opening of occult knowledge and powers, but simply an opening of the inner consciousness.

*

Subtle smells of that kind [*sweet smells*] are a common feature of occult experience. Their exact nature and *provenance* varies, but they have no gross physical cause.

*

The smell [*coming from a person*] is due to something in the person's vital-physical. That something may not be prominent at all times. When it is, the smell is there.

*

I wrote [*in the preceding letter*] that the something may be of different kinds in different cases and one cannot give a rule that it is this or it is that. What has the dirtiest smell is sex.

*

Every man has a different smell; also there is a particular smell that goes with different states of the vital-physical. Animals (like the dogs) recognise a man and his character by the smell. The human sense has lost this acuteness, but it can be recovered by a development in the sense consciousness. That is what probably has happened in your case. There are others in the Asram who have the same experience.

Section Two

Lights and Colours

Chapter One

Light

Seeing Light

Light is always seen in Yoga with the inner eye and even with the outer eye, but there are many lights; all are not and all do not come from the *param jyotiḥ*.

*

Lights of various colours are one of the first things people see when they meditate.

*

There is no imagination in the seeing of these lights — it is when the inner vision is open or active that one sees them — for they themselves are subtle and not physical lights.

*

A concentrated mind is not always necessary for seeing the light — if there is an opening anywhere in the consciousness, that is sufficient.

*

It is not necessary to have the mind quiet in order to see the lights — that depends only on the opening of the subtle vision in the centre which is in the forehead between the eyebrows. Many people get that as soon as they start sadhana. It can even be developed by effort and concentration without sadhana by some who have it to a small extent as an inborn faculty. The quietude of the mind is needed for other things, such as the feeling of the presence of the Mother etc.

*

Light between the eyebrows indicates some opening of the Ajna-

chakra, which is there — it is the centre of the inner mind, inner will and occult vision.

*

The light outside means a touch or influence of the Force indicated by the light (golden is truth-light, blue is some spiritual force from the upper planes), while within means that it has penetrated and is established or is frequently active in the nature itself. Light above means a Force descending upon the mind, light around a general enveloping influence.

*

The golden and blue lights are both of them lights of Krishna. It was intimated to you by your seeing them once that they are there within you waiting to manifest. But it is by a psychic and spiritual, not a physical pressure that it must be done. If the mind can become silent and not interfere and if the nature can become more pure and both open to what is above the mind, these lights descend into the body and with them the divine influence.

Light and the Illumination of the Consciousness

Light or rays of light are always light of the higher consciousness working in the being to illumine or to purify or to awaken the consciousness or attune it to the Truth.

*

It [*Light*] is the power that enlightens whatever it falls upon — the result may be vision, memory, knowledge, right will, right impulse etc.

*

There are many lights of various planes — there is also the Divine Light that comes down from the higher planes and illumines the Adhar.

*

It is not necessary or possible to define [*the Divine Light*].

Light is light just like the light you see, only subtle — it clarifies the consciousness and works as a force and makes knowledge possible.

*

It [*the Divine Light*] has no function — it is just Light of Divine Consciousness. If you mean the result, it is supposed to illumine, to remove darkness and obscurity, to make the nature fit for true consciousness, Knowledge etc.

*

Light is a general term. Light is not knowledge but the illumination that comes from above and liberates the being from obscurity and darkness. But this Light also assumes different forms such as the white light of the Mother, the pale blue light of Sri Aurobindo, the golden light of Truth, the psychic light (pink and rose) etc.

*

The light, colours, flowers are always seen when there is a working of the forces within at a certain stage of the sadhana. The light of course indicates an illumination of the consciousness, the colour the play of forces mental (yellow), physical and vital, but forces making for enlightenment of these parts of the being. The flowers usually indicate a psychic activity.

Different Forms of Light

One sometimes sees the Light in masses, sometimes in forms — and the most common forms are sun, moon, star or fire.

*

The Light is often seen in front before the centre of inner vision, mind and will which is between the eyebrows in the forehead. The Sun means the formed Light of the Divine Truth, the starry light is the same Light acting as a diffused Power on the ordinary consciousness which is seen as the night of Ignorance. The call

brought the Light etc. streaming down into the inner being.

*

It is not balls or flashes of light [*seen around the Mother*], but a flow or sea of Light entering into the body and surrounding it and illumining the whole field of consciousness. There can also be a vivid sense of Light and illumination without the vision. It can be seen or felt usually as an intense white or diamond or golden Light or something like sunlight or, for many, a blue or bluish white light.

*

What you saw was the procession of the chariots of the gods (Divine Powers) bringing light flashes into the air and the other was the corresponding movement of lightning flashes of the Truth in the heart lighting up the consciousness. These lightning flashes do not as yet bring knowledge — as the sunlight from above the mind does, — but they prepare the consciousness for realisation and knowledge.

*

Sparks or movements of light indicate the play of forces in the consciousness or around it.

*

Any well-formed illumined thought can be seen as a spark of light.

*

A glow means a subdued but rich light or else a sort of warm exhilaration of a luminous kind.

Two Visions Explained

(1) The lid of the skull opening means that the mental being has opened to the Divine Light and the flames indicate aspiration filled with the Light arising to join the mental part to what is above Mind.

(2) The Divine Light from above is of various colours. White is the Divine Power of purity, blue the light of the spiritual consciousness, gold the hue of the supramental knowledge or of knowledge from the intermediate planes.

(3) OM golden rising to the sky = the cosmic consciousness supramentalised and rising towards the Transcendent consciousness.

(1) and (2) indicate either something that is happening at present or a potentiality that is trying to materialise. (3) symbolises the process of the Yoga which will be followed if this potentiality is realised and pursued to its natural goal.

*

About your vision. It came as an answer to your call for the removal of ugly things in your own nature and you were shown how it would be effectively done.

First a vivid realisation was given of what the lower nature is, its terrible darkness and ugliness in which men contentedly live. But having realised its true nature a cry came from your lower nature itself for the change.

You were then shown the light of the higher nature by whose descent the change could come — the white light of the Mother's consciousness and a flame of it descended into you by the usual path and filled you with the light. From there it descended into the subconscious and brought the light there. As a result the consciousness (it was the inner consciousness) became like a crystal pillar connecting the heights with the depths, the superconscious with the subconscious. In it the image of the Mother filled with the light in her.

You were then shown a symbol of the *rūpāntar*, the change in the universal Nature. This change was only in seed and in symbol. Afterwards this part of the vision disappeared and you saw again the darkness of the lower Nature. But in you the light was there still and the assurance that it brings. For it is in the individual that the change must first come and it is with the light and the faith in the individual as a support that the wider change can be made.

Chapter Two

Colours

The Symbolism of Colours

Colour and light are always close to each other — colour being more indicative, light more dynamic. Colour incandescent becomes light.

*

As for the exact symbolism of colours, it is not always easy to define exactly, because it is not rigid and precise, but complex, the meaning varying with the field, the combinations, the character and shades of the colour, the play of forces. A certain kind of yellow, for instance, is supposed by many occultists to indicate the *buddhi*, the intellect, and it often has that sense, but occurring among a play of vital forces it could not always be so interpreted — that would be too rigid. Here all one can say is that the blue (the particular blue seen, not every blue) indicated the response to the Truth; the green — or *this* green — is very usually associated with Life and a generous emanation or action of forces — often of emotional life-force, and it is probably this that it would indicate here.

*

The rays which you saw the trees giving out are there always, only they are veiled to the ordinary material vision. I said the blue and gold together indicated the combined presence of Krishna and Durga-Mahakali; but gold and yellow have different significances. Yellow in the indication of forces signifies the thinking mind, *buddhi*, and the pink (modified here into a light vermilion) is a psychic colour; the combination probably meant the psychic in the mental.

In interpreting these phenomena you must remember that all depends on the order of things which the colours indicate in

any particular case. There is an order of significances in which they indicate various psychological dynamisms, e.g., faith, love, protection, etc. There is another order of significances in which they indicate the aura or the activity of divine beings, Krishna, Mahakali, Radha or else of other superhuman beings; there is another in which they indicate the aura around objects or living persons — and that does not exhaust the list of possibilities. A certain knowledge, experiences, growing intuition are necessary to perceive in each case the true significance. Observation and exact description are also very necessary; for sometimes people say, for instance, yellow when they mean gold or *vice versa*; there are besides different possible meanings for different shades of the same colour. Again, if you see colour near or round a person or by looking at him or her, it does not necessarily indicate that person's aura; it may be something else near him or around him. In some cases it may have nothing to do with the person or object you look at, which may serve merely the purpose of a background or a point of concentration — as when you see colours on a wall or by looking at a bright object.

*

There are no separate colours of the beings. There is a characteristic colour of mind, yellow, of the psychic, pink or pale rose, of the vital, purple; but these are colours corresponding to the forces of mind, psychic, vital — they are not the colours of the beings. Also other colours can play, e.g. in the vital, green and deep red as well as purple and there are other colours for the hostile vital forces.

*

The lights one sees in concentration are the lights of various powers or beings or forces and often lights that come down from the higher consciousness.

The violet light is that of the Divine Compassion (*karuṇā* — Grace) — the white light is the light of the Mother (the Divine Consciousness) in which all others are contained and from which they can be manifested.

Purple is the colour of vital power. “Red” depends on the character of the colour, for there are many reds — this may be the colour of the physical consciousness.

*

As for the tricoloured ball of energy, I am not quite sure, but it may mean the triple force, Love, Light, Life which are contained and constrained in the inconscient sleep of the Shakti in the Muladhara. Possibly an observation of the colours might determine the significance; but this is not sure, as the colours on these lower planes have various meanings.

*

The four lights were the lights of the Truth, — white the purity and power of the divine Truth, green its active energy for work, blue the spiritual consciousness of the divine Truth, the gold its knowledge.

*

The silver temple is that of the spiritualised mind — the golden is that of the divine Truth. Yellow is the colour of the light of the thinking mind — white is that of the divine consciousness.

White Light

White light indicates the divine consciousness.

*

White indicates a force of purity.

*

The forces that come with white light are usually those of purity and peace.

*

The important experience is that of the white ray in the heart — for that is a ray of the Mother’s light, the white light, and the

illuminating of the heart by this light is a thing of great power for this sadhana.

*

The white light is, as you know, the Mother's light — it is the light of the Force of the Divine Consciousness; the sun of white light is symbolic of that Force in its origin and fullness of manifestation. It is a very good sign and if one feels its power in the being or mind or body it can have a strong influence.

*

What you saw was the Light (the white Light is the Mother's) which is always there in a mass; but it is seen only when the inner (Yogic) eye is open and the consciousness in some part of it at least can enter into touch with the Light.

*

The diamond light is the Mother's own light (that of divine Consciousness) at its most intense.

White Light with Light of Other Colours

The white light is that of the Pure Conscious Force from which all the rest come. The golden light is that of the Divine Truth on the higher planes.

*

The pale blue light is mine — the white light is the Mother's. The world you saw above the head was the plane of the illumined Mind which is a level of consciousness much higher than the human intelligence. It is there that the Divine Light and Power come down to be transmitted to the human consciousness and from there they work and prepare the transformation of the human consciousness and even the physical nature.

*

The two first [*bright white and whitish blue*] are the Mother's

light and mine — the golden red is the touch of the Truth in the physical.

Whitish Blue Light

The pale whitish blue light is “Sri Aurobindo’s light” — it is the blue light modified by the white light of the Mother.

*

The snake form is a symbol of Energy and the white blue light may be that of the Mother’s consciousness in the higher mind, or if it is not two separate colours but whitish blue then it is Sri Aurobindo’s light. The light is a manifestation of Force, the nature of the force being indicated by the colour of the Light.

*

The lights indicate the action of certain forces, usually indicated by the colour of the light. Whitish blue is known as Sri Aurobindo’s light or sometimes Sri Krishna’s light.

*

Whitish blue is Krishna’s light or mine; deeper blues often indicate light from the higher consciousness.

*

There are two pale blues, one which is whitish blue and is known as Sri Aurobindo’s light, the other quite blue which is that of the higher consciousness just above mind.

*

The meaning of blue light depends on the exact character of the colour, its shade and nature. A whitish blue like moonlight is known as Krishna’s light or Sri Aurobindo’s light — light blue is often that of the Illumined Mind — there is another deeper blue that is of the Higher Mind; another, near to purple, which is the light of a power in the vital.

Blue Light

Blue light, according to the shades, means several different things.

*

If the blue lights [*seen in vision*] were of different shades it might mean the overhead planes, Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind, Higher Mind.

*

The light from the higher planes of consciousness just above the mind is blue.

*

The light indicates an action of force (bluish probably indicates the spiritual-mind-force), the rest was a working to open the higher spiritual centre (*sahasradala*).

*

Blue is the normal colour of the spiritual planes; moonlight indicates the spiritual mind and its light.

*

Moonlight indicates spirituality — the blue light may be that of the higher or illumined mind.

*

The plane with the blue light is the Higher Mind which is just above the ordinary human intelligence, the first of several planes of higher consciousness through which one has to pass in order to reach the Divine Truth. Something from your mind (thinking willing mind) is trying to rise up into the blue light of the Higher Mind so as to join and become one with it.

*

There is one blue that is the higher mind, a deeper blue that

belongs to the mind — Krishna's light in the mind.

*

There are different Krishna lights — pale diamond blue, lavender blue, deep blue etc. It depends on the plane in which it manifests.

*

Diamond blue is Krishna's light in the overmind — lavender blue in intuitive mind.

*

There is the whitish moonlight blue of Krishna's light — lavender blue of devotion, deep blue of the physical mind, sapphire blue of the higher mind and many others.

*

All blue is not Krishna's light.

*

Blue is also the Radha colour.

Violet Light

The violet is the light of the Divine grace and compassion.

*

“Violet” is the colour of benevolence or compassion, but also more vividly of the Divine Grace — represented in the vision as flowing from the heights of the spiritual consciousness down on the earth. The golden cup is I suppose the Truth consciousness.

*

Violet is indeed the colour or light of Divine Compassion, so also of Krishna's grace.

Golden Light

Golden Light is the light of the divine Truth descending from above.

*

The golden light is the light of the Divine Truth which comes out from the supramental sunlight and, modified according to the level it crosses, creates the ranges from Overmind to higher Mind.

*

The golden light is usually a light from the supermind — a light of Truth-Knowledge (it may sometimes be the supramental Truth-Knowledge turned into overmind or intuitive Truth).

*

It [*golden light*] always means the light of Truth — but the nature of the Truth varies according to the plane to which it belongs. Light is the light of consciousness, truth, knowledge — the Sun is the concentration or source of the Light.

*

The sunlight is the light of the Truth itself — whatever power of Truth it may be — while the other lights derive from the Truth.

*

The Light of the Sun descending into the heart (the Sun of the Knowledge) turns upon the physical and purifies it.

*

The golden light is the promise of the higher knowledge. For the coming of that knowledge the silence of the frontal exterior mind is necessary.

*

Gold is always the symbol of the higher Truth.

*

The hand with the gold pen writing golden letters was perhaps an indication of the Mother writing the things of the Divine Truth in you,— for gold in these visions is the symbol of the Divine Truth.

*

The spiritual Power is naturally more free on its own level than in the body. The golden colour indicates here Mahakali force which is the strongest for the working in the body.

*

The different parts [*mind, life and body*] are naturally coloured by the lights of the powers that come down (golden of Overmind and Intuition, blue of higher, illumined and intuitive mind) while keeping their own characteristic shade as an element.

Gold-Green Light

Gold-green: gold indicates at its most intense something from the supramental, otherwise overmind truth or intuitive truth deriving ultimately from the supramental Truth consciousness. Green has much to do with the vital and indicates here, I think, the emotional forces in their outpouring. The play of the emotional forces in the divine Truth is, obviously, very pertinent to the working of the Krishna lights.

*

Sunlight is the direct light of the Truth; when it gets fused into the vital, it takes the mixed colour — here gold and green — just as in the physical it becomes golden red or in the mental golden yellow.

Golden Red or Red Gold Light

Golden red is the colour of the supramental physical light — so this yellow red may indicate some plane of the Overmind in which there is a nearer special connection with that. The golden

red light has a strong transforming power.

*

The golden Light is that of the modified (overmentalised) Supramental, i.e., the Supramental Light passing through the Overmind, intuition etc. and becoming the Light of Truth in each of these planes. When it is golden red it means the same modified supramental-physical Light — the Light of divine Truth in the physical.

*

“Red gold” is rather the light of the Truth in the physical.

*

Orange or red gold is supposed by the way to be the light of the supramental in the physical.

Orange Light

Orange is the true light manifested in the physical consciousness and being.

*

Orange is the colour of occult knowledge or occult experience.

Yellow Light

Yellow is the thinking mind. The shades indicate different intensities of mental light.

*

Yellow is light of the mind — golden is light from above the mind.

*

It is again the ascent into one of the higher planes of mind illumined with the light of the Divine Truth. Yellow is the light

of mind growing brighter as one goes higher till it meets the golden light of the Divine Truth.

Pink or Rose Light

The rosy light is that of love—so probably you entered the psychic worlds—or at least one of them.

*

The colour of the psychic light is according to what it manifests—e.g., psychic love is pink or rose, the psychic purity is white etc.

Green Light

Green is the higher light in the vital, especially the emotional vital.

*

The green light is a vital force, a dynamic force of the emotional vital which has the power to purify, harmonise or cure.

*

Green is a vital energy of work and action.

*

Green light can signify various things according to the context—in the emotional vital it is the colour of a certain form of emotional generosity, in the vital proper an activity with vital abundance or vital generosity behind it—in the vital physical it signifies a force of health.

Purple and Crimson Light

It [*purple light*] is a light of vital power.

*

Purple is the colour of the vital force — crimson is usually physical.

*

Both [*purple and crimson*] are vital lights, but when seen above they represent the original forces of which the vital are the derivations.

*

The crimson colour is the light of Love in the vital and physical.

Red Light

Red is the colour of the physical, — touched by the higher Light it becomes golden red.

*

It seems to be an opening of various powers and the peace, light and wideness of the spiritual consciousness. The red Purusha may be the power of the true physical — red being the colour of the physical.

*

It depends on the nature of the red. Red (when it does not mean the light of the physical consciousness) indicates always some kind of Force or Power, but what power it is depends on the shade.

*

Deep red is the Divine Love — rosy is the psychic love.

*

The deep red is the light of the Power that descended before the 24th [*November 1933*] for the transformation of the physical.

*

The deep red light is a Light that came down into the physical for

its change just before the 24th [*November 1933*]. It is associated with the sunlight and the golden Light.

Red and Black

Red is the colour of rajas, black is the colour of tamas.

Section Three

Symbols

Chapter One

Symbols and Symbolic Visions

Different Kinds of Symbols

A symbol, as I understand it, is the form on one plane that represents a truth of another. For instance, a flag is the symbol of a nation. But generally all forms are symbols. This body of ours is a symbol of our real being and everything is a symbol of some higher reality. There are, however, different kinds of symbols:

(1) Conventional symbols, such as the Vedic Rishis formed with objects taken from their surroundings. The cow stood for light because the same word *go* meant both ray and cow, and because the cow was their most precious possession which maintained their life and was constantly in danger of being robbed and concealed. But once created, such a symbol becomes alive. The Rishis vitalised it and it became a part of their realisation. It appeared in their visions as an image of spiritual light. The horse also was one of their favourite symbols, and a more easily adaptable one, since its force and energy were quite evident.

(2) What we might call Life-symbols, such as are not artificially chosen or mentally interpreted in a conscious deliberate way, but derive naturally from our day-to-day life and grow out of the surroundings which condition our normal path of living. To the ancients the mountain was a symbol of the path of Yoga, level above level, peak upon peak. A journey involving the crossing of rivers and the facing of lurking enemies, both animal and human, conveyed a similar idea. Nowadays I dare say we would liken Yoga to a motor ride or a railway trip.

(3) Symbols that have an inherent appositeness and power of their own. Akasha or etheric space is a symbol of the infinite all-pervading eternal Brahman. In any nationality it would convey the same meaning. Also, the Sun stands universally for the

supramental Light, the divine Gnosis.

(4) Mental symbols, instances of which are numbers or alphabets. Once they are accepted, they too become active and may be useful. Thus geometrical figures have been variously interpreted. In my experience the square symbolises the Supermind. I cannot say how it came to do so. Somebody or some force may have built it before it came to my mind. Of the triangle, too, there are different explanations. In one position it can symbolise the three lower planes, in another the symbol is of the three higher ones: so both can be combined together in a single sign. The ancients liked to indulge in similar speculations concerning numbers, but their systems were mostly mental. It is no doubt true that supramental realities exist which we translate into mental formulas such as Karma, psychic evolution etc. But they are, so to speak, infinite realities which cannot be limited by these symbolic forms, though they may be somewhat expressed by them; they might be expressed as well by other symbols, and the same symbol may also express many different ideas.

The Effect of Symbolic Visions

It is the same with the symbols in Yoga [*as with images in mystic poetry*]. One puts an intellectual label on the “White Light” and the mind is satisfied and says, “Now I know all about it; it is the pure divine Consciousness light,” and really it knows nothing. But if one allows the Divine White Light to manifest and pour through the being, then one comes to know it and get all its results. Even if there is no labelled knowledge there is the luminous experience of all its significance.

*

The vision of the moon and the rain of flowers means always the falling of the light of spirituality on the consciousness (the moon) and the descent of a psychic influence (flowers). These things are symbols to the mind, but in the inner experience they have a reality and can produce a tangible effect.

Some Symbolic Visions and Dreams Interpreted

The depth of the sleep in your experience was intended to make you go deep inside and, as soon as you did so, you entered into the psychic and spiritual state which takes the figure of the beautiful *maidān* and the flow of white light and the coolness and peace. The staircase was a symbol of the ascent from this psychic and spiritual state into higher and higher levels of the spiritual consciousness where is the source of the light. The Mother's hand was the symbol of her presence and help which will draw you up and lead you to the top of the ladder.

*

The separate images [*in a mystic poem submitted by the correspondent*] are very usual symbols of the inner experience, but they have been combined together here in a rather difficult way. The fire of course is the psychic fire which wells up from the veiled psychic source. The bird is the soul and the flower is the rose of love and surrender. The moon is the symbol of spirituality. As the star is within it is described as piercing through the knots of the inner darkness and worsting the vital growths that are like clouds enwrapping it. The boat also is a usual symbol in the inner visions. The elephant is the spiritual strength that removes obstacles and the horse the force of tapasya that gallops to the summits of the spiritual realisation. The sun is the symbol of the higher Truth. The lotus is the symbol of the inner consciousness.

*

The vision you saw was a symbol of the outward physical consciousness obscured by the ordinary movements (clouds), but with the spirituality (the moon) still spreading its light everywhere from behind the ordinary human ignorance. The dog indicates something in the physical (the part that is faithful, obedient etc.) waiting confidently for the Light to come.

The fire you felt was the fire of purification and the heat came because it was burning up some resistance, — after that was burnt out there was coolness and peace and quietude. The

voices and sounds and impression of X being there indicate a confused activity of the occult sense in the vital which hears things other than the physical. When this kind of thing comes, there has to be a quiet rejection in the being and the thing will pass away. Some people get interested and have a lot of trouble because they get into the habit of hearing voices and seeing and feeling things which are only partly or sometimes true but mixed with much that is false and misleading. It is good that there was something in your vital being which rejected it.

*

The dream is evidently an indication of the difficulty you are experiencing. The sea is the sea of the vital nature whose flood is pursuing you (desires are the sea water) on your road of sadhana. The Mother is there in your heart but sleeping — i.e. her power has not become conscious in your inner consciousness because she is surrounded by the thin curtain of skin (the obscurity of the physical nature). It is this (it is not thick any longer but still effective to veil her from you) which has to go so that she may awake. It is a matter of persistence in the will and the endeavour — the response from within, the awaking of the Mother in the heart will come.

*

It is probably a symbol of three stages or developments or planes of spiritualised life. A star means creation, the triangle a triple principle. The tree is life in a new creation. Green is the colour of the emotional vital, the moon governs a spiritualised emotional life; blue is the colour of the higher mind, the moon there governs a spiritualised higher mind life; the gold colour is that of the Divine Truth, whether intuitive or overmind — the moon here is the spiritualised Truth-life. As the star is *sphaṭika*-coloured, the triangle may indicate Sachchidananda principle. The butterflies and birds are of course life forces and soul forces, powers or beings. Probably it indicates three stages of transformation before the supramental can reign altogether or else three that will exist as the steps towards the supramental.

*

Your dreams were very beautiful and, symbolically, very true. By the way, let me repeat, they were not really dreams; the state between sleep and waking or which is neither sleep nor waking is not a dozing but an inward gathered consciousness, quite as much awake as the waking mind, but awake in a different plane of experience.

As for the dream of the cobras it could be taken as an answer to your complaints against the Divine being grim and solemn and refusing to play and your remark that if you could have the faith that the troubles were a part of the Divine plan leading you through them to the Divine, you would be more at ease. The answer of the symbolic experience was that the Divine can play if you know how to play with him — and bear his play on your shoulders; the cobras and the bite indicate that what seems to you in the vital painful and dangerous may be the very means of bringing you the ecstasy of the Divine Presence.

Less generally the cobras are the forces of the evolution, the evolution towards the Divine. Their taking the place of the legs means that their action here takes place in the physical or external consciousness, in the evolution of the external mind, vital, physical towards the experience of the Divine and of the Divine Nature. The bite of the cobras (Shiva's cobras!) does not kill, or it only kills the "old Adam" in the being; their bite brings the ecstasy of the presence of the Divine — that which you felt coming upon your head as trance waves. It is this trance ecstasy that has descended upon you each time you went inside or were even on the point of going inside in meditation. It is the universal experience of sadhaks that a force or consciousness or Ananda like this first comes from above — or around — and presses on or surrounds the head, then it pierces the skull as it were and fills first the brain and forehead, then the whole head and descends occupying each centre till the whole system is full and replete. (Of course there are or can be preliminary rushes occupying the whole body for a time or some other part of the system most open and least resistant to the influence.)

Chapter Two

Sun, Moon, Star, Fire

Sun

Fire, lights, sun, moon are usual symbols and seen by most in sadhana. They indicate movement or action of inner forces. The Sun means the inner truth.

*

The sun is the symbol of the concentrated light of Truth.

*

The Sun is the Truth-Light of the One Existence and the flame the dynamic power of action (Yogic) of that Truth-Light.

*

The Sun is the divine Truth-Light on whatever plane of consciousness. It is, I suppose, the original cosmic Truth that is here indicated.

*

The Sun is the Truth from above, in the last resort the Supramental Truth.

*

The sun is the symbol of the Supermind.

*

The sun in the Yoga is the symbol of the supermind and the supermind is the first power of the Supreme which one meets across the border where the experience of spiritualised mind ceases and the unmodified divine Consciousness begins the domain of the supreme Nature, *parā prakṛti*. It is that Light of which the Vedic mystics got a glimpse and it is the opposite of the intervening

darkness of the Christian mystics, for the supermind is all light and no darkness. To the mind the Supreme is *avyaktāt param avyaktam* but if we follow the line leading to the supermind, it is an increasing affirmation rather than an increasing negation through which we move.

*

Supermind is not mind at all, it is something different. The Sun indicates Truth directly perceived in whatever plane it may be. It is the symbol of Supermind but the Truth may come down into the other planes and then that is no longer supramental but modified to the substance of the other planes — still it is the direct Light of Truth.

*

The sun rising on the horizon is the direct light of the Divine Truth rising in the being — the ray upwards opens the being to the Truth as it is above mind, the ray in front opens it to what we call the cosmic consciousness, it becomes released from the personal limitation and opens and becomes aware of the universal mind, universal physical, universal vital. The action on the heart was the pressure of this Sun on it to have this direct opening, so that the consciousness may become free, wide and wholly at peace.

*

There are different suns in the different planes, each with its own colour. But there are also suns of a similar colour above, only more bright, from which these minor suns derive their light and power.

*

The golden [*Sun*] is the Light of the Truth on the higher planes. The white [*Sun*] is the Sun of the Mother's consciousness (the Divine Consciousness) which manifests on all the planes.

*

The white sun indicates the purity and peace of the Divine Consciousness.

*

The red sun is a symbol of the true, illumined physical consciousness which is to replace the obscure and ignorant physical consciousness in which men now live. Red is the colour of the physical; the red diamond is the Mother's consciousness in the physical.

*

In the experience the disc of the sun indicates the supramental consciousness with the Divine Being in it (the supramental Divine who can bridge by his light the gulf between the higher and the lower consciousness and unify them). But the smoky appearance, the veil etc. indicated that there was something in the (human) nature that made rapid realisation difficult. This was what was also said by the voice that the time was not yet. Obviously the supramental cannot be achieved except by a long sadhana — the experience should not be taken as meaning anything more than that.

Moon

The moon signifies the light of spirituality or of the spiritual consciousness.

*

The moonlight indicates the light of the spiritual consciousness.

*

The moonlit *maidān* is the spiritual consciousness at the doors of which you are standing as it were and feeling its peace and ease.

*

The moon generally indicates spiritual realisation in the mind.

*

The moon indicates different things according to circumstances — most often spiritual consciousness in the mind.

*

The light above the head is never an imagination in Yoga; if it is felt, it is because it is there. If it is the moon, it means the light of the spiritual consciousness in the mind.

*

The moon as a symbol in vision signifies usually spirituality in the mind or, simply, the spiritual consciousness. It can also indicate the flow of spiritual Ananda (nectar is in the moon according to the old tradition).

*

The moon indicates spirituality, sometimes also spiritual Ananda.

*

It [*spiritual mind, symbolised by the moon*] is Mind in contact with truths of the spirit and reflecting them. The Sun is the light of the Truth, the Moon only reflects the light of the Truth — that is the difference.

*

Golden light means the light of the higher Truth — the moon is the symbol of spirituality. A golden moon means a power of spirituality full of the light of the higher Truth.

*

The moon, as I have already written, indicates spirituality — the crescent form means a commencement of the spiritual light. The position near the knee would indicate an action on the physical consciousness — for all below the Muladhara down to the feet is the physical province.

*

The moon is sometimes a symbol of the Light in the mind, — if

it is a full moon. The crescent moon may be a symbol of growing spirituality of the mind centre.

Star

The star signifies a creation or formation or the promise or power of a creation or formation.

*

The star is always a promise of the Light to come; the star changes into a sun when there is the descent of the Light. It is not possible to fix the actual value of these signs for the future; they indicate a turn or a possibility, but everything depends on herself and the future orientation she gives to her being.

*

Stars in such visions¹ indicate points of light or of higher experience in the consciousness. The earth means the physical consciousness.

*

Stars indicate points of light in the ignorant mental consciousness.

Moon = spiritual light

Sun = the higher Truth light

*

They [*gold stars in the sky*] are simply indications of divine Truth in the mind — the sky is a symbol of mind very often.

*

The sky is always some mental plane. The stars indicate beginnings or promises of Light — the various lights indicating various powers of the consciousness: gold = Truth, blue = higher

¹ *In one vision the correspondent saw stars in the sky, in another stars upon earth. — Ed.*

spiritualised mind, violet = sympathy, unity or universal compassion.

Fire and Burning

The fire indicates a dynamic action.

*

The white fire is the fire of aspiration, the red fire is the fire of renunciation and tapasya, the blue fire is the fire of spirituality and spiritual knowledge which purifies and dispels the Ignorance.

*

The fire is always the fire of purification — it is very red when it is acting on the vital; when the vital no longer covers the psychic, then the rose colour of the psychic comes out more and more.

*

It is the purification of the physical that is usually indicated in the symbol of burning.

Chapter Three

Sky, Weather, Night and Dawn

Sky

The sky usually symbolises a plane of consciousness mental or higher than the ordinary mental — stars are formations of light on that plane.

*

The sky is a symbol of the mental consciousness (or the psychic) or other consciousnesses above the mind — e.g. the higher mind, intuition, overmind etc. Akasha as the ether indicates also the infinite.

*

The sky in the heart is the chidakash. It is seen usually above the head, but when it is seen in the heart, that means the opening of the heart to the higher consciousness.

*

The blue sky is that of the Higher Mind — the nearest of the planes between human mentality and the Supermind. The moon here [*in a vision*] is the symbol of spirituality in the mental planes. The world of the Higher Mind is above those directly connected with the body consciousness.

*

The higher consciousness on any of its levels is seen usually as a sky or ether, but when felt through the vital it is often perceived as a sea.

*

Sat, Chit, Ananda, Supermind, Mind, Life, Matter are the seven [*seas of consciousness mentioned in the Veda*]. But in this Yoga

one sees many levels of consciousness which appear as skies or else as seas.

Rain, Snow, Clouds, Lightning, Rainbow

The rain is the symbol of the descent of Grace or of the higher consciousness which is the cause of the riches—the spiritual plenty.

*

The vision you saw of the snow is probably a symbol of the consciousness in a condition of purity, silence and peace like a snowy ground; in that a new life (psychic, spiritual as indicated by the flowers) appears in place of the old mental and vital life which has been covered by that mantle of snowy whiteness.

*

Clouds are a symbol of obscurity.

*

The lightning is a symbol of the dynamic force of the higher consciousness acting at intervals to enlighten the rest of the being.

*

The rainbow is the sign of peace and deliverance.

Night and Dawn

The Night is the symbol of the Ignorance or Avidya in which men live just as Light is the symbol of Truth and Knowledge.

*

Dawn always means an opening of some kind—the coming of something that is not yet fully there.

Chapter Four

Water and Bodies of Water

Water

Water is the symbol of a state of consciousness or a plane.

Sea or Ocean

The sea with the sun over it is a plane of consciousness lit by the Truth. To enter into the rays is to be no longer merely lit by it, but in one's own conscious being to begin to become part of the Truth.

*

A sea in tumult usually indicates a vital upheaval or a period of strain and stress and struggle.

*

The blue ocean is often a symbol of the spiritual consciousness in higher Mind one and indivisible.

*

Normally, the ocean of higher consciousness is above the head (mind) and all below is that of the lower consciousness. Your seeing of the two oceans rather means that in the descent the influence of the higher consciousness reaches down to the heart (emotional being with the psychic behind it), but does not yet reach below in the lower vital and physical — but it is dissolving the knot in the heart centre which prevents the descent into the lower vital and physical centres. The joy in the *śānta svarūpa* is indeed a sign of the release of the heart centre. But the phrase in the Upanishads refers more particularly to the breaking of the knots of desire, attachment, *sanskara*, ego in the heart, which stand in the way of spiritual liberation and ascension — not to

the knot which prevents the descent.

Pond, Lake, River

When the water is symbolic [*it is a plane of consciousness*] and here it is a big expanse of water—but a river or a pond are not large enough to symbolise a plane. It may be an actual experience in another world—or it may be the symbol of a particular movement in the sadhana.

It is not from dreams that you can know what plane of consciousness you are living in; it is by an observation of your condition.

*

Sometimes a part of the consciousness is seen in the image of a pond, lake or sea. The fish must be the vital mind.

*

The lake is the being in its individual consciousness, the sea is the same being with a universalised consciousness which can hold the universe and its cosmic forces in itself—the one (individual) merges into the other (the universal). The boat is the formation of the Mother's consciousness in you in which you are preparing to sail on this sea.

*

The river represents some movement of the consciousness. All these are images of the vital plane.

Chapter Five

Earth

Mountain

The mountain is the symbol of the embodied consciousness based upon earth but rising up towards the Divine.

*

The mountain always represents the ascending hill of existence with the Divine to be reached on the summits.

*

The mountain always means the same thing — it is the ascending consciousness.

*

The mountain is an image of the ascending consciousness.

*

The mountain is a very usual symbol of the consciousness with its ascending levels. The flowing of water from the peak indicates some flow from the higher consciousness above.

*

The mountain represents the ascending planes of the higher consciousness. The journey in the train is the passage from one consciousness to another.

*

The bucket is the physical consciousness; milk is always a symbol of the flow of consciousness from Above; the mountain is the Adhar with its ascending levels from the physical to the Above.¹

¹ *In a vision during meditation, the correspondent saw a stream of milk flowing down a mountain and filling a bucket at its base. — Ed.*

The golden mountain is a symbol of the ascent to the Truth.

*

The Golden Mountain is always the mountain of the Divine Truth which one has to ascend — at its summit is the dwelling place of the Divine.

*

The experience of the great expanse of golden light on a mountain-top came because I had asked X to aspire for the higher experiences of the consciousness from above. The symbolic image of the mountain with the light on its top comes to most sadhaks who have the power of vision at all. The mountain is the consciousness rising from earth (the physical) through the successive heights (vital, mental, above-mental) towards the spiritual heaven. The golden light is always the light of the higher Truth (Supermind, Overmind or a little lower down the pure Intuition) and it is represented as a great luminous expanse on the summits of the being. X by concentrating on the light entered into contact with the higher reaches and that always gives these results, peace, joy, strength, a consciousness secure in the power of the Divine. It is of course through the psychic that she got into this contact, but in itself it is more an experience of the higher spiritual consciousness above mind than a psychic experience.

*

The silvery narrow way upward is the path of the spiritual consciousness.

Earth and Patala

Patala simply means the subconscious below the Earth — the Earth being the conscious physical plane.

*

You had asked the other day about the subconscious, what it was. In the vision you describe you were shown the universal

subconscious in the figure of Patala, a place without light of consciousness and, because universal, therefore without bounds or end — the dark unconscious infinite out of which this material universe has arisen — it is walled with darkness on all sides, it seems also to have no bottom. The Light comes from above from the higher consciousness and coming down through the mind and heart and vital and physical has to pour down into this subconscious and make it luminous.

*

“Patala” is a name for the subconscious — the beings there [*in a dream*] had no heads, that is to say, there is there no mental consciousness; men have all of them such a subconscious plane in their own being and from there rise all sorts of irrational and ignorant (headless) instincts, impulsions, memories etc. which have an effect upon their acts and feelings without their detecting the real source. At night many incoherent dreams come from this world or plane. The world above is the superconscious plane of being — above the human consciousness — there are many worlds of that kind; they are divine worlds.

Chapter Six

Gods, Goddesses and Semi-Divine Beings

Agni

There are many forms of Agni, — the solar fire, the vaidyuta fire and the nether fire are one Trinity — the fivefold fire is part of the Vedic symbolism of sacrifice.

*

The vision you saw of the man and the fire at his feet was probably a vision of the God Agni from whom flows the fire of tapasya and purification in the sadhana.

Shiva

The vision you had was of the way to the goal. Shiva on the way is the Power that pours the light but also scrutinises the sadhak to see whether he is ready for the farther advance. When he lets him pass, then is the rush of new and higher experiences, the march and progress of the divine forces, the Gods and their powers, the transformation of the nature into a higher consciousness. It was these powers that you saw passing in your vision.

Parvati-Shankara

It is probably the realm of the dynamic creative Spirit on the highest mental plane which you saw as the world of Parvati-Shankara.

Narayana, Vishnu, Brahma, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Ananta

Narayana is usually taken as a name of Vishnu — to the Vaishnavas he is the Supreme as Shiva is to the Shaivas. Both are

cosmic Personalities of the Divine and both like Brahma have their original plane in the Overmind, although they take different forms to the human consciousness in the mental, vital and subtle physical planes.

Lakshmi is usually golden, not white. Saraswati is white.

The snake is simply a symbol of Energy or Power. Narayana in your dream is clearly Vishnu as is shown by the presence of Lakshmi and the single many-hooded snake.

Vishnu or Narayana in this image which is a normal Puranic image is the Lord of the waters of Space and Time — the Preserver of the principle of the Universe which he maintains as a seed in himself even in the intervals between one creation and another. Out of that seed in his navel (the navel is the central seat of the Vital, the Life-Principle) Brahma the Creator arises in the Lotus (cosmic consciousness) which grows from it when Vishnu awakens from the inter-cyclic sleep. The Snake Ananta is the Energy of the cosmic manifestation of the Infinite in Space-Time.

Krishna

This is the Krishna of the Gita¹ (the boy Krishna is the Krishna of Brindavan), — Krishna bringing the spiritual knowledge, will, bhakti — and not love and bhakti alone.

The eye indicates the vision of the higher spiritual consciousness and the blue expanse indicates that consciousness.

*

The boy with the flute is Sri Krishna, the Lord descended into the world-play from the divine Ananda; his flute is the music of the call which seeks to transform the lower ignorant play of mortal life and bring into it and establish in its place the lila of his divine Ananda. It was the psychic being in you that heard the call and followed after it.

*

¹ *In a dream the correspondent saw Sri Krishna in the prime of manhood. This image disappeared and gave way to a large eye seen in a vast expanse of blue. — Ed.*

It is, I suppose, the image of Sri Krishna as Lord of the divine Love and Ananda — and his flute calls the physical being to awake out of the attachments of the physical world and turn to that Love and Ananda.

*

Krishna with Radha is the symbol of the Divine Love. The flute is the call of the Divine Love; the peacock is victory.

*

The green circular disc you saw round Venus must indeed have been the aura of Venus which is of that colour; but this was only an introduction, a first application of the suddenly developed power of vision. Afterwards what came, the blue and the violet, were another kind of seeing more important for your Yoga; both are closely associated with Krishna. Blue is his especial and significant colour, the colour of his aura when he manifests, — that is why he is called *Nil Krishna*; the adjective does not mean that he was blue or dark in his physical body whether in Brindavan or Mathura or Dwarka! Violet is the radiance of Krishna's protection, — that was why, very naturally, it brought to you a sense of peace. The Mother says that she always saw it when she was in communion with Krishna and now too constantly sees it enveloping the Asram. That this should be the first thing shown when the power of vision broke through its state of latency is very significant; it proves that you are in contact, the touch already there in your inner being and this force of presence and protection is already around you or over you as an enviroing influence.

Hanuman

Hanuman stands for Bhakti.

*

Hanuman = complete bhakti.

*

Hanuman is a symbol of Shakti and devotion.

Narada

Narada stands for the expression of the Divine Love and Knowledge.

Mahakali and Kali

Mahakali and Kali are not the same, Kali is a lesser form. Mahakali in the higher planes appears usually with the golden colour.

*

These — Kali, Shyama, etc. — are ordinary forms seen through the vital; the real Mahakali form whose origin is in the Overmind is not black or dark or terrible, but golden of colour and full of beauty, even when formidable to the Asuras.

Durga on a Lion

The lion with Durga on it is the symbol of the Divine Consciousness acting through a divinised physical-vital and vital-material force.

*

The lion is the attribute of the Goddess Durga, the conquering and protecting aspect of the Universal Mother.

The Death's Head is the symbol of the Asura (the adversary of the gods) vanquished and killed by the Divine Power.

Ganesh

It is according to the need or else the condition of the consciousness that these figures [*of the Gods*] appear in sadhana. Ganesh is at once the god of wisdom and the remover of obstacles.

*

Ganesh (among other things) is the devata of spiritual Knowledge — so as you are getting this knowledge, you saw yourself in this form, identified with Ganesh.

Kartikeya

The peacock is the bird of victory and Kartikeya the leader of the divine forces.

Sanatkumar

Sanatkumar is, I believe, one of the four mind-born sons of Brahma; he cannot therefore be identical with Skanda who is a son of Shiva.

Buddha

Buddha stands for the conquest over the Ignorance of the lower Nature.

Apsaras

Apsaras generally indicate sexual desire.

Chapter Seven

The Human World

Child

The child is usually the symbol of the psychic being.

*

A dream like this of a child — especially a newborn child — usually signifies the birth (i.e. the awakening) of the soul or psychic being in the outward nature.

*

The child usually signifies the psychic being — newborn in the sense that it at last comes to the surface. The colour of the cloth [*bright yellow*] would mean that it comes with health (internal or external or both) and the spiritual riches.

*

The infant in the Mother's arms is the symbol of the psychic being.

*

It is not a fact that the psychic being always appears as a baby — it is sometimes seen symbolically as a newborn baby; many see it as a child of varying ages — it is a very common and usual experience; it is not peculiar to emotional natures. It has several significances such as the new birth of the consciousness into the true psychic nature, the still young growth of this new being, the trust, reliance, dependence of the child on the Mother.

*

The child (when it does not mean the psychic being) is usually the symbol of something newborn in some part of the consciousness.

*

I suppose the golden child is the Truth-Soul which follows after the silver light of the spiritual. When it plunges into the black waters of the subconscious, it releases from it the spiritual light and the sevenfold streams of the Divine Energy and, clearing itself of the stains of the subconscious, it prepares its flight towards the supreme Divine (the Mother).

Parents and Relatives

In these dreams the parents or relatives mean the ordinary forces of the physical consciousness (the old nature).

*

A relative is generally a symbol of some element of the hereditary nature (the external being so far as it is created by heredity).

*

Mother, sister or other relatives are usually in such dreams symbols of forces of ordinary nature. The exact meaning depends on the context. But all such dreams are not symbolical — a sex dream for instance may bring up the form of any woman known or unknown.

*

These vital dreams are not interpretable unless there is an evident clue. Aunt or mother usually indicates the ordinary physical nature, a closed room would be some part of the physical nature that was not open to the light, bats would mean forces of the night, i.e. ignorant movements finding a lodging in the obscurity of the unenlightened nature.

*

It [*seeing relatives in dreams*] is the impression left by the past life and its sanskaras that come up in these dreams from the subconscious. They have to be rejected till the impressions are rooted out.

Robbers

The robbers are, as in the Veda, vital beings who come to steal away the good condition or else to steal the gains of the sadhana.

Journeying

The image of journeying always signifies a movement in life or a progress in sadhana.

*

Journeying on a horse or in a conveyance, if symbolic, means a progress or a movement in life, work or sadhana.

*

A journey in a boat or other conveyance means always a movement in the Yoga — often an advance or progress.

*

A journey in a carriage, train, motor car, steamer, boat, aeroplane etc. indicates a movement in the sadhana. The white horse may be the sattwic mind and the red horse the vital rajas giving energy and both combining to make a progress.

*

Aeroplane, steamer and train are always symbols of a rapid progress or forward movement.

*

The railway train at full speed means rapid progress.

*

The railway line is a symbol of rapid progress and the three stars are a symbol of Divine Grace in the mind, life and body.

*

The moving on the sands—it frequently happens in these

dreams — is usually a sign of an easier movement in the sadhana.

Running Away

The running away [*in dream*] is a symbol of the inertia in part of the being which allows the forces to invade, drawing back from them and losing ground instead of facing and destroying them.

Flying

When you find yourself flying it is always the vital being in the subtle body in the vital world that is doing it.

*

Flying during sleep over houses, streets, etc. simply means that the consciousness in the vital sheaths has gone out and is moving over places in the vital or subtle physical world (even sometimes the material); it is always in the vital sheath that one flies like that.

The ascending movement is different — in that it is the consciousness that goes high up to other planes or levels and comes down again to the body.

Ears

The ears signify usually the place of inspired knowledge or else of inspired expression — red and gold mean truth and power joined together.

Teeth

Symbolically, if the dream is symbolic, the falling of teeth means the disappearance of old fixed mental habits belonging to the physical mind.

*

The breaking or falling of teeth [*in dream*] is symbolic usually of the breaking or falling off of habitual formations or *sanskaras* in the physical mind.

Flesh

The piece of flesh indicates something restless in the physical being which stands by its restlessness and excessive materiality in the way of the full flow of the Ananda. In the dream this became active and was eliminated by the pressure of the psychic.

Being Dead

The feeling of being dead in a vision or dream experience comes when something in the being is to be silenced into entire inactivity and ceases to exist as a part of the nature. It may be a very small part, but as during the process the consciousness is concentrated in it and identified with it for the purpose of the working, the feeling is that “I am dead”. When you said, “I am dead, now let me get up and go”, it simply meant, “The thing is done and the process is over. There is no need to identify myself with this part any longer.” There is no indication in the experience as to what the thing was that passed through this experience.

Chapter Eight

The Animal World

Cow

The cow in the occult symbolism indicates Light or the consciousness — white indicates the purified or spiritual consciousness — the white Light.

*

It is quite clear; it is the Vedic image. In the Veda the Cow is the Divine Light — the white Cow is the pure Consciousness in which there is the Light. The milk is the Knowledge and Power descending from the divine Consciousness.

*

The Cow usually means the Higher Consciousness. Perhaps the calf indicates the truth of the higher consciousness (white) in the physical (red).

*

The white calf is the sign of a pure and clear consciousness, — the cow or calf being the symbol of Light in the consciousness, something psychic or spiritual that you felt natural and intimate to you and inseparable.

*

The vision of the cows must have taken place in the psychic world. It has also a symbolic significance. The sun is the symbol of the Divine Truth, the cows are its powers, rays of the sun, sources of true knowledge, true feeling, true experience.

The descent you felt must have been into some depth of light, probably in the psychic nature.

*

Milk is always the symbol of the flow of the higher consciousness.

Bull

The bull is an emblem of strength and force. It is also in the Veda an image of the Gods, the male powers in Nature. Again the bull is the *vāhana* of Shiva. It may in a dream or an experience be any of these symbols — but it is probably the first here.

Horse

A horse always indicates some power.

*

The Horse is the symbol in dream or vision of a Power or Energy.

*

The Horse is Power — white is pure. It is the pure Power.

*

The Horse is Power, usually Life-Power, but also it may mean Mind-Power in Tapas if it is dynamic and mobile.

*

The Horse is the symbol of Power in motion — often of the Power that makes for rapid progress in sadhana.

*

The horse is a force acting for progress.

*

The horse is always the symbol of Power; it must be then a Power which you were trying to catch and make your own while sometimes it was trying to come up with you, perhaps to use you. This is what happens in the vital where there are these uncertain and elusive movements. The high platform was evidently the

level of a higher Consciousness which stilled this fluctuating movement and made control of the Power more possible, as it became still and near.

*

The ass is the symbol of the inertia and obstruction in the body. The horse is the symbol of force or power. The tunnel of water must be the vital physical and the arch is a passage out, by which, if the ass can cross it or rather be pulled across, then it becomes a horse. In other words, the inertia and obstruction in the physical will be changed into Power and Force of Progress.

Lion

The Lion is the vital force.

*

The lion means vital force, strength, courage — here full of the light, illumined by the spiritual consciousness.¹

*

The lion indicates force and courage, strength and power. The lower vital is not lionlike.

Tiger

It all depends on the attitude of the tiger. If fierce and hostile, it may be a form of an adverse force, otherwise it is simply a power of vital nature which may be friendly.

Elephant

The elephant is Strength — sometimes Strength illumined with Wisdom.

*

¹ *In the correspondent's vision, the lion's face was full of shining light and the hairs of its mane were like rays of spreading light. — Ed.*

The elephant is Strength — sometimes Strength removing obstacles.

*

The blue elephant is the strength of the Higher Consciousness fulfilling itself and removing obstacles.

Giraffe

The Giraffe symbolises aspiration.

Camel

[*Camel manifesting violet light*] Patient progress and endurance as a gift of the Divine Grace.

Deer and Antelope

The deer = speed in the spiritual path.

*

The deer is perhaps a symbol of speed in the spiritual progress.

*

The deer is Immortality, the antelope is Rapid Movement.

Boar

It [*the boar*] is rajasic strength and vehemence. Much however depends upon the context, — these figures have also other meanings.

*

The wild boar points to attacks of the crude vital rajas.

Buffalo

A buffalo conveys the idea often of an obscure violence in the

nature — here [*in the correspondent's dream*] it seems tied up — i.e. under control but not eliminated. But it is not clear to what it refers — if it is symbolic at all.

*

The buffalo is a symbol of unnecessary or blind anger — perhaps it meant that that was still somewhere in your nature.

*

[*Buffaloes:*] Rash and obscure vital forces.

Goat

The goat in vision is often symbolic of lust.

*

Goats usually indicate sex tendencies.

Monkey

The monkey is a symbol of the leaping restless mind; these monkeys are the doubts and suggestions that have been assailing you.

*

The monkey is a symbol of the restless vital consciousness or of one or other of its movements.

Dog

The dog is the symbol of devoted affection and obedience.

*

The dog generally signifies devoted obedience — so it² may indicate the action of a devoted obedience spiritualised in the

² *In a vision the correspondent saw a dog's face bathed in blue light, with its eyes full of white light. — Ed.*

higher consciousness.

*

The dog usually indicates fidelity and as it is yellow, it would be fidelity in the mind to the Divine — but the other black and white one is difficult to interpret — it is something in the vital, but the meaning of the black spots is not clear.

Black Cat

The black cat is usually the symbol of magic of an evil kind or of an evil influence of the vital world acting on the physical as magic does. It is effective so long as its nature and mode of action are not discovered, so long as it can act invisibly — when it is seen it can be dealt with. The others had not seen it and were not aware that it was taking the life of the sick person and that she was not dead and need not die if this force could be destroyed or prevented from acting; you saw it and were therefore able to fight and catch it and kill it. That it took long to kill shows that it was not representing a particular process of magic which can be annulled quickly and decisively, but a Force of evil magic from the vital plane.

Snake or Serpent

The serpent is the symbol of energy, it may be a bad or hostile energy — but it may also be a good, even a divine energy.

*

The snake indicates some kind of energy always — oftener bad, but also it can indicate some luminous or divine energy. It is [*in this case*] the ascent of some such force from the physical upwards. The other details are not clear.

*

About the snake you saw in your meditation — serpents indicate always energies of Nature and very often bad energies of the vital

plane; but they can also indicate luminous or divine energies like the snake of Vishnu. The one you saw was evidently of this latter type — a luminous divine energy and therefore there was no cause for alarm, it was a good sign.

*

A snake is a bad symbol only when it comes from the vital or other lower plane.

*

What you saw was not what is in yourself, but a symbol of the things that are in vital Nature. Scorpions and usually snakes also are symbols of harmful energies; the vital nature of earth is full of these energies and that is why the purification of man's outer vital nature also is so difficult and there are so many wrong movements and happenings in him, — because his vital is easily open to all these earth movements. In order to get rid of them, the inner being must wake and grow and its nature replace the outer nature. Sometimes serpents indicate energies simply, not harmful ones; but more often it is the other way. On the other hand the peacocks you saw were powers of victory, the victory of the energies of light over the energies of darkness.

*

The serpent Ananta is the infinite energy in infinite Time-Space which supports the universe.

*

It is in answer to your aspiration that the Mahakali force descended — the Serpent is the Energy from above working in the vital answering to the Serpent Kundalini which rises from below.

*

The Serpent is the symbol of energy — especially of the Kundalini Shakti which is the divine Force coiled up in the lowest (physical) centre, Muladhara — and when it rises it goes up through the spine and joins the higher consciousness above.

Energies are of all kinds and the snakes can also symbolise the evil powers of the unregenerate vital nature — but here it is not that.

*

The serpent symbolises an energy good or bad, divine or undivine according to its nature. Here, it looks as if it were the Kundalini trying to ascend to the Brahmarandhra, but it has not yet reached beyond the vital and is stopped — probably because the time has not yet come.

*

This [*vision*] is the symbol of the opening of the centres to the Light.

The swan is the Indian symbol of the individual soul, the central being, the divine part which is turned towards the Divine, descending from there and ascending to it.

The two serpents interlaced are the two channels in the spine, through which the Shakti moves upward and downward.

The serpent with the six hoods is the Kundalini Shakti, the divine Power asleep in the lowest physical centre which, awakened in the Yoga, ascends in light through the opening centres to meet the Divine in the highest centre and so connect the manifest and the unmanifested, joining Spirit and Matter.

*

The golden serpent in the Muladhara is a symbol of the energy of the transformed physical consciousness.

*

The cobra is a symbol of the Energy in Nature — the upraised hood and light indicate the illumination and victorious position of the emerged Energy.

*

The opening of the hood indicates the victorious or successful activity of the Energy indicated by the snake.

*

The serpent with the hood over the head generally indicates future siddhi.

*

Snakes and scorpions always indicate attacks or threats of attack of one kind or another, more often threats from the vital plane or hostile influences on the physical.

*

The serpent is a symbol of force, very often a hostile or evil force of the vital plane. The sea is a symbol of a plane of consciousness. The white light is a manifestation of pure divine force descending from one of the truth-planes leading to the supramental.

The indication is that of a hostile vital force being expelled and the purifying light from above descending to illumine and deliver the part of the plane formerly occupied by it.

Crocodile

The crocodile signifies greed, *lobha*, of some kind.

Frog

Frog = modest usefulness.

Fish

The fish is the always moving vital mind making all sorts of formations.

*

Fish might be formations in the vital consciousness — for water most often indicates the vital consciousness.

Bird

The bird is often a symbol of the being.

*

The bird is a symbol of the individual soul.

*

A bird is a very frequent symbol of the soul, and the tree is the standing image of the universe — the Tree of Life.

*

Birds often indicate either mind-powers or soul-powers.

*

The bird is usually a symbol of some soul power when it is not the soul itself — here it is a power (awakened in the soul) of the whitish blue light — Sri Aurobindo's light.

*

The Blue Bird is always a symbol of aspiration towards something Beyond.

*

The blue bird is the symbol of aspiration to the heights.

Swan or Hansa

The swan is a symbol of the soul on the higher plane.

*

The swan is the liberated soul.

*

Both [*the goose and the swan*] are symbols of the beings in a man — but the goose or ordinary Hansa usually refers to the *manomaya puruṣa*.

*

The Hansa is the symbol of the being — it regains its original purity as it rises until it becomes luminous in the Highest Truth.

*

The Hansa is a symbol of the soul or the self — the peacock is the bird of victory. The golden Hansa is the soul living in the Truth, the golden peacock is the victory of the Truth.

Duck

The duck is the symbol of the soul — silvery colour = the spiritual consciousness — golden wings = the power of the Divine Truth.

*

The duck is usually a symbol of the soul or inner being; perhaps it was the four beings — mental, psychic, vital and physical — that you saw.³

Crane

The crane is the messenger of happiness.

Peacock

The peacock is the Bird of Victory.

*

A peacock is the symbol of spiritual victory.

*

The peacock signifies victory — in Yoga the divine victory. The clear sky would indicate perhaps the mental part cleared of obscurities. Seeing the higher part of the bodies [*of the peacocks*] would mean a victory in the higher parts of the consciousness, in the mental (head and neck) and perhaps also in vital mind and in emotional.

³ The correspondent saw four ducks with uplifted necks, illuminated with white light, advancing in a row. — Ed.

Dove or Pigeon

The dove signifies peace. The colours indicate the vital — green would be self-giving in the vital; blue the higher consciousness in the vital. So it must be peace casting its influence from above on the vital.

*

The white pigeon must be Peace.

Crow, Eagle, Kite

The crow signifies practical cleverness, the eagle Intelligence. The kite is Krishna's *vāhana*.

Ostrich

The ostrich may mean rapidity of movement.

Spider

The image of the spider in the Upanishads is used for the Brahman creating the world out of itself, dwelling in it and withdrawing it into itself. But what matters in a symbol is what it means for you. It may mean for you success or successful formations.

White Ants

Obviously it [*white ants seen in a dream*] must have been symbolic of small but destructive forces in the lower vital or physical.

Flies

Something small in the smaller vital.

Chapter Nine

The Plant World

Aswattha or Peepul Tree

The aswattha usually symbolises the cosmic manifestation.

*

It [*the peepul tree*] is the symbol of the cosmic existence.

Jungle

The jungle must be some unregenerated part of the vital nature and the serpent a wrong force emerging from it.

Leaves

Images of leaves and plants usually indicate vital strength or energy.

*

A green leaf means vital strength or energy or vitality.

Fruits

The fruits are the results of the sadhana.

Flowers

Flowers indicate a blossoming in the consciousness, sometimes with special reference to the psychic or the psychicised vital, mental and physical consciousness.

*

The vision of flowers is a symbol usually of psychic qualities or movements whether a potentiality or promise or an actual state of development.

*

It is usually when the psychic is active that this seeing of flowers becomes abundant.

*

The flowers indicate always an opening (usually psychic) in some part of the consciousness.

*

The flowers¹ are the symbols of psychic movements. The sun is the Divine Consciousness. It is the awakening of the psychic consciousness and its activity under the Divine Influence.

*

Red flowers would ordinarily indicate an opening of the consciousness either in the physical or some part of the vital according to the shade.

Lotus

A lotus flower indicates open consciousness.

*

A lotus signifies the opening of the (true) consciousness.

*

The lotus is always the sign of the consciousness opening somewhere — when the consciousness opened from above, you became aware of a new plane of being of which you were not aware before.

*

¹ *In a vision the correspondent saw a luminous sun sending forth a multitude of flowers. — Ed.*

It [*the lotus*] means consciousness. The opening of the lotus is the opening of some part of the consciousness.

*

The opening of the lotuses² means, I suppose, the opening of the true vital and physical consciousness in which the spiritual being (the Swan) can manifest with all the consequences of that opening.

*

The lotus must represent owing to its numerous petals the “thousand petalled” lotus above the head which is the seat of the higher consciousness above the thinking intelligence. The vision may mean the opening of the consciousness there and in it the adoration of the Divine.

*

A lotus usually indicates an opening into the spiritual. The white and red are symbols of the Mother and the incarnating Divine.

*

The white lotus is the symbol of the Mother’s consciousness, — it does not indicate any part of the individual consciousness.

*

The red lotus is the flower of the Divine Presence.

*

The red lotus is the presence of the Divine on earth — the sun is the Divine Truth. It indicates the Divine manifestation on earth raising earth consciousness towards the Truth.

*

The red lotus signifies the presence of the Divine on the Earth.

*

² The correspondent wrote about a vision in which two lotuses blossomed in his body, one at the navel region, the other at the base of the spine. — Ed.

It [*the blue lotus*] can be taken as the (Avatar) incarnation on the mental plane.

Other Flowers

The red rose is the flower of love and surrender, the white is the purity of psychic love.

*

Reddish pink rose = psychic love or surrender.
White rose = pure spiritual surrender.

*

The java [*red hibiscus*] is the flower of the Divine Power.

*

The [*flower named*] eternal smile³ means the self-existent joy and gladness of the Spirit.

*

I told you saffron meant purification — so if it has any significance, it can only mean that the Mother gave you a power of purification to use.⁴

³ *Hibiscus micranthus, a very small white hibiscus.* — Ed.

⁴ *The correspondent wrote that in a dream the Mother put a large packet of saffron in her hand.* — Ed.

Chapter Ten

Constructions

Building

The building is the symbol of a new creation — the white indicating spiritual consciousness, the coloured lights the different powers.

Workshop

The workshop is probably a symbol of the activity of the ordinary nature which is so full of formations and activities of the ordinary kind that it is difficult to pass through it to the inner or the inmost being.

The walls with the spaces between indicate the different parts of the being to which the outer mind has no access — possibly, the inner vital (the women may be the occult vital nature), emotional etc. The ceiling (yellow) may be the intellect or thinking mind which walls one in and prevents from getting into the open spaces of the higher consciousness. But through all a way lies to the open way of the higher consciousness full of peace, light and Ananda.

Temple

The temple means religious feeling, worship, adoration, consecration.

*

It is a temple and the temple is the symbol of spiritual aspiration. This one being complex meant a rich and many-sided aspiration.

Pyramid and Sphinx

The pyramid is usually a symbol of aspiration — reddish perhaps

because it is in the physical.

*

The Sphinx is a symbol of the eternal quest that can only be answered by the secret knowledge.

Chapter Eleven

Objects

Cross and Shield

The cross is the sign of the triple being, transcendent, universal and individual.

*

The cross indicates the triple Divine (transcendent, universal, individual) — the shield means protection.

Crown

The crown is the sign of fulfilment (here in the intuitive consciousness) and the going up means an ascent to higher planes.

*

The crown indicates the higher consciousness in its static condition, the wheel its dynamic action. The red light is the Power sent down to change the physical.

Diamond

The diamond is the symbol of the Mother's light and energy — the diamond light is that of her consciousness at its most intense.

*

Diamonds may indicate the Mother's Light at its intensest, for that is diamond white light.

*

The diamond in your heart was a formation of the light of Mother's consciousness there, — for the Mother's light is of a white and at its most intense of a diamond radiance. The light

is a sign of the Mother's presence in your heart and that is what you saw once and felt for a moment.

Pearl

It [*a pearl*] may be a representation of the "bindu", which is a symbol of the infinite in the exceedingly small, the individual point which is yet the Universal.

Flute

The flute is the symbol of a call — usually the spiritual call.

*

The flute is the call of the Divine.

*

The flute is the call of the Divine which descends into you from above and awakes the psychic yearning (the tears) and ends by bringing a vast peace and shows to you the clear sky of the higher consciousness in which there are the Truth-formations (golden stars) some of which begin to descend in a rain upon the physical consciousness (the earth).

Conch

The conch is often the symbol of call or aspiration.

*

The conch is the symbol of the spiritual call.

*

The conch is the call to realisation.

*

The conch is perhaps the proclamation of victory.

*

The lotus is the opened consciousness — the conchshell is the call to victory.

Bells

Bells heard are usually a sign of progress in sadhana, progress to come.

Vina

Harmony.

Wheel, Disc or Chakra

The wheel is the sign of an action of Force (whatever force may be indicated by the nature of the symbol) and as it was surging upwards it must be the fire of aspiration rising from the vital (navel centre) to the Higher Consciousness above.

*

A revolving disc means a force in action on the nature. The whitish blue light is known as Krishna's light, also as Sri Aurobindo's light. White is the Mother's. Perhaps here it is a combination.

*

The [*Sudarshan*] Chakra symbolises the action of Sri Krishna's force.

*

The chakra is the energy at work and it brings the first opening of the consciousness in the gross physical plane, i.e. of the mental physical, psychic physical, vital physical and the material.

*

Yes, the circular movement and the Chakra are always signs of energy in action, generally creative action.

Bow and Arrow

The bow is a symbol of the force sent out to reach its mark.

*

The arrow is the symbol of the Force which goes to its aim. Gold = the Truth, Yellow = the mind, Green = the vital energy. The arrow of the spiritual Truth using the mind and the vital energy.

Key

Is it a key you saw?¹ If so the meaning is clear; it is the key to the divine realisation; the Mother is the key because it is her light (white is her colour) that enables us to open the gate of realisation.

Book

The book indicates some kind of knowledge.

Mirror, Square and Triangle

The mirror between the eyebrows indicates that something in the inner mind has become able to reflect the Truth from above (golden light) — a square is a symbol of the truth beyond the mind as a triangle is the symbol of mind, life, body.

Incense Stick and Tobacco

The incense stick is the symbol of self-consecration.

*

Tobacco is associated with tamas and incense sticks with adoration.

¹ *The correspondent wrote that in a vision he saw a key with the word "MOTHER" written on it in white letters, with white light around it. — Ed.*

Gramophone

The gramophone is obviously symbolic of the mechanical mind.

Chapter Twelve

Numbers and Letters

Numbers

In one form or another all these ideas [*such as the significance of numbers*] have existed in the past. The significance of numbers was one of the chief elements in the teaching of Pythagoras 5 centuries before Christ.

*

The number 7 is the number of realisation — when there are four 7's it indicates perfect realisation.

*

7 is the figure of realisation. 3 x 3 means the descent from above and the answer from below.

*

There is no unlucky number. Numbers all have their powers and why should 13 not have its chance?

Letters (Writing)

The writing [*floating before the eyes*] is often seen by sadhaks either in meditation and sleep or with the waking eyes or in both states. But if you see it only in sleep or an inward condition, it is not so easy to remember when waking unless you train yourself to remember.

OM

OM there [*above the crown of the head*] indicates the realisation of the Brahman on that level of the (higher) consciousness.

Part Three

Experiences of the Inner Consciousness and the Cosmic Consciousness

Section One

Experiences on the Inner Planes

Chapter One

Experiences on the Subtle Physical, Vital and Mental Planes

Subtle Physical Experiences

Is it [*a strong and rapid heartbeat that shakes the whole body*] the physical nerves and heart — or in the subtle body? Often one feels a shaking and vibration of the subtle body and can feel as if heartbeats there, but if not experienced, it impresses as if it were a material phenomenon.

*

It is evidently in a subtle world, not the physical that you move; that is evident from the different arrangement of things, by such details as the third arm and the book marker removed yet there; but they show also that it is a subtle world very near to the physical; it is either a subtle physical world or a very material vital domain. In all the subtle domains the physical is reproduced with a change, the change growing freer and more elastic as one gets farther away. Such details as the lameness show the same thing, — the hold of the physical is still there. It is possible to move about in the physical world, but usually that can only be done by drawing on the atmosphere of other physical beings for a stronger materialisation of the form — when that happens one moves among them and sees them and all the surroundings exactly as they are at that time in the physical world and can verify the accuracy of the details if immediately after returning to the body (which is usually done with a clear consciousness of the whole process of getting into it) one can traverse the same scene in the physical body. But this is rare; the subtle wandering is on the contrary a frequent phenomenon, only when it is near to the physical world, all seems very material and concrete and the association of physical habits and physical

mental movements with the subtle events is closer.

Vital Experiences

The place where you were [*in a dream*] is as much a world of fact and reality as is the material world and its happenings have sometimes a great effect on this world. What an ignorant lot of disciples you all are! Too much modernisation and Europeanisation by half!

These things are meetings on the vital plane, but very often in the transcription of what happened some details get in that are contributed by the subconscious mind. I rather suspect all that about X was such a contribution. The rest seems all right. The writing on the forehead means of course something that is fixed in you in the vital plane and has to come out hereafter in the physical consciousness.

*

You are too physically matter of fact. Besides you are quite ignorant of occult things. The vital is part of what European psychologists sometimes call the subliminal and the subliminal, as everybody ought to know, can do things the physical cannot do — e.g. solve a problem in a few minutes over which the physical has spent days in vain etc. etc.

What is the use of the same things happening on both planes; it would be superfluous and otiose. The vital plane is a field where things can be done which for some reason or other can't be done now on the physical.

There are of course hundreds of varieties of things in the vital as it is a much richer and more plastic field of consciousness than the physical, and all are not of equal validity and value. I am speaking above of the things that are valid. By the way, without this vital plane there would be no art, poetry or literature — these things come through the vital before they can manifest here.

*

At this stage you have only to watch the experiences and observe their significance. It is only when the experiences are in the vital realm that some are likely to be false formations. These of which you write are simply the common experiences of an opening Yogic consciousness and they have to be understood, simply.

Here it is the breaking up of the small surface vital into the largeness of the true or inner vital being which can at once open to the Higher Consciousness, its power, light and Ananda. There is also begun a similar breaking of the small physical mind and sense into the wideness of the inner physical consciousness. The inner planes are always wide and open into the Universal while the outer surface parts of the being are shut up in themselves and full of narrow and ignorant movements.

*

It is plain. The lower being (vital and physical) was receiving an influence (mental light, yellow) from the thinking mind and higher vital which was clearing it of the old habitual lower vital reactions: very often in the sadhana one feels the inner being speaking to the outer or the mind or higher vital speaking to the lower so as to enlighten it.

*

These things that come [*in dreams*] to frighten you are merely impressions thrown on you by small vital forces which want to prevent you (by making you nervous) pushing on the sadhana. They can really do nothing to you, only you must reject all fear. Keep always this thought when these things come, "The Mother's protection is with me, nothing bad can happen"; for when there is the psychic opening and one puts one's faith in the Mother, that is sufficient to ward these things off. Many sadhaks learn, when they have alarming dreams, to call the Mother's name in the dream itself and then the things that menace them become helpless or cease. You must therefore refuse to be intimidated and reject these impressions with contempt. If there is anything frightening, call down the Mother's protection.

The heat you felt was probably due to some difficulty in the

force coming down below the centre between the eyes where it has been working up till now. When such sensations or the unease you once felt or similar things come, you must not be alarmed, but remain quiet and let the difficulty pass.

What you had before that, the moonlight in the forehead, was this working in the centre there between the eyebrows, the centre of the inner mind, will and vision. The moonlight you saw is the light of spirituality and it was this that was entering into your mind through the centre, with the effect of the widening in the heart like a sky filled with moonlight. Afterwards came some endeavour to prepare the lower part of the mind whose centre is in the throat and join it with the inner mind and make it open; but there was some difficulty, as is very usually the case, which caused the heat. It was probably the fire of tapas, Agni, trying to open the way to this centre.

The experience of being taken up into the sky is a very common one and it means an ascent of the consciousness into a higher world of light and peace.

The idea that you must go more and more within and turn wholly to the Mother is quite right. It is when there is no attachment to outward things for their own sake and all is only for the Mother and the life through the inner psychic being is centred in her that the best condition is created for the spiritual realisation.

*

Your series of experiences are very interesting by the constant (though interspaced) development they illustrate. Here two new significant elements have been added to the previous substance of the experience. The first is the very precise localisation of the uprush of the consciousness from the pit of the stomach — that is to say, from above the navel, the movement itself starting from the navel or even below it. The navel-centre (*nābhi-padma*) is the main seat of the centralised vital consciousness (dynamic centre) which ranges from the heart level (emotional) to the centre below the navel (lower vital, sensational desire centre). These three mark the domain of the vital being. It is therefore

clear that it was your inner vital being which had this experience, and its intensity and vehemence was probably due to the whole vital (or most of it) being awake and sharing in it this time. The experience itself was psychic in its origin, but was given a strong emotional-vital form in its expression. I may add, for completeness, that the centre of the psychic is behind the heart and it is through the purified emotions that the psychic most easily finds an outlet. All from the heart above is connected with the mental-vital and above it is the mind with its three centres, one in the throat (the outward-going or externalising mind), one between the eyes or rather in the middle of the forehead (the centre of vision and will) and one above, communicating with the brain, which is called the thousand-petalled lotus and where are centralised the highest thought and intelligence communicating with the greater mind planes (illuminated mind, intuition, overmind) above.

The second new significant feature is the self-manifestation of the inner mind; for it was your inner mind that was watching, observing and criticising the vital being's psychic experience. You found this clear division in you curious, but it will no longer seem curious once you know the perfectly normal divisibility of the different parts of the being. In the outer surface nature mind, psychic, vital, physical are all jumbled together and it needs a strong power of introspection, self-analysis, close observation and disentanglement of the threads of thought, feeling and impulse to find out the composition of our nature and the relation and interaction of these parts upon each other. But when one goes inside as you have done, we find the sources of all this surface action and there the parts of our being are quite separate and clearly distinct from each other. We feel them indeed as different beings in us, and just as two people in a group can do, they too are seen to observe, criticise, help or oppose and restrain each other; it is as if we were a group-being, each member of the group with its separate place and function, and all directed by a central being who is sometimes in front above the others, sometimes behind the scenes. Your mental being was observing the vital and not quite easy about its vehemence,—

for the natural base of the mental being is calm, thoughtfulness, restraint, control and balance, while the natural turn of the vital is dynamism, energy thrown into emotion, sensation and action. All therefore was perfectly natural and in order.

*

As for the experience stated it was probably in the vital plane and such suddennesses and vividnesses of experience are characteristic of the vital — but they are not lasting, they only prepare. It is when one has got into contact with what is beyond mind and vital and body and risen there that the great lasting fundamental realisations usually come.

Influence or Possession by Beings of Other Planes

The case of the girl in question seems to be of a fairly common kind. In one way or another a certain subtle faculty is awakened by which there is contact with some other plane of consciousness and its beings, usually with the vital or larger “life” worlds behind the material plane. These experiences are often of little value, trivial and full of misleading conceptions, messages or suggestions; the inexperienced *voyant* or seer adds to them the formations and delusions of his own subliminal mind. It is only by training and experience that one can arrive at an elimination of these errors and establish the true use of the subtle faculties. These powers are often enough dangerous to their unexperienced or indisciplined possessor and the hysteria of the girl in question was obviously the result (a result that happens in many cases) of her allowing some being of the vital plane to delude and influence her. This kind of thing has no connection at all with the spiritual or psychic experience of the Rishis and sages; it is rather akin to the experiences of mediums and others in Europe.

*

It seems that you do not pay sufficient attention to the instructions that are sent to you from here. You were specially warned

not to allow anything to take possession of you. But in relating one of your experiences repeated for several days you speak of something that was taking possession of you, even obliging you to make incoherent noises, and yet you say you do not know whether it was good or bad or what kind of force it was! It is evident from your description that it was a vital force trying to take violent possession of the body. Nothing can be more dangerous than to allow this kind of loss of control and intrusion of an alien influence. In your present condition of ignorance, the vital being not yet sufficiently open, the psychic not yet sufficiently awake, a hostile power can easily intrude and pass itself off as the divine Force. Remember that no personality and no power is to be allowed to possess you. The divine Force will not act in this way; it will work first to purify, to widen and enlighten and transform the consciousness, to open it to Light and Truth, to awaken the heart and the psychic being. Only afterwards will it take gradual and quiet control through a pure and conscious surrender.

*

I have omitted all this time to reply to your letter forwarding your friend's statement about his experiences. I am not very sure of its significance. The "double" voice is a frequent phenomenon; it happens very often when one has been long repeating a mantra that a voice or consciousness within begins to repeat it automatically — also prayer can be taken up in the same way from within. It is usually by an awakening of the inner consciousness or by the going in of the consciousness more deeply within from its outward poise that this happens. This is supported in his case by the fact that he feels himself halfway to trance, his body seems to melt away, he does not feel the weight of the book etc.; all these are well-known signs of the inner consciousness getting awake and largely replacing the outer. The moral effects of his new condition would also indicate an awakening of the inner consciousness, the psychic or psychic-mental perhaps. But on the other hand, he seems to feel this other voice as if outside him and to have the sense of

another being than himself, an invisible presence in the room. The inner being is often felt as someone separate from or other than the ordinary self, but it is not usually felt outside. So it may be that in this state of withdrawal he comes into contact with another plane or world and attracts to himself one of its beings who wants to share in his sadhana and govern it. This last is not a very safe phenomenon, for it is difficult to say from the data what kind of being it is and the handing over of the government of one's inner development to any other than the Divine, the Guru or one's own psychic being may bring with it serious peril. That is all I can say at present.

*

All the other circumstances which you relate¹ are normal and would be the phenomena of an invasion of Ananda occupying the whole instrumental being while the silent inner being within remains separate as it does usually from all that comes from outside. The circumstance that is not clear is the Presence. There is nothing to indicate who or what it is. If it were an undesirable vital Presence producing a vital joy, there would usually be vital phenomena which would enable you to detect their origin, but these are not apparent here. In the circumstances the only course is to observe the experience without accepting any occupation of the being by what comes, taking it as only an experience which the inner being looks on as a witness, until the point that remains veiled is made clear.

P.S. There are several possible explanations but I do not speak of them as that might influence and interfere with the pure observation of the experience by bringing in a mental suggestion.

*

I have read your letter and I have also read it to the Mother. My conclusion about the experience — I had suspended judgment till now — is the same as hers.

We consider that it will be wiser for you to be on your guard

¹ *This letter and the four that follow it were written to the same person. — Ed.*

about it in future. In the first place it cannot be the Buddha — the Buddha's presence would bring peace but could never give this kind of Ananda. Next, the suggestion based on an old subjective feeling of yours seems to be thrown on you to make you more readily admit some *emprise* that the experience is a means of establishing on you. Again the feeling you have that the Ananda is more than you can bear is a sign not favourable to the experience; you suppose that it is a want of adaptation that gives you the feeling, but it is more likely that it is because it is something foreign thrown on you through the vital with which the psychic being in you does not feel at home. Finally, it is not safe to admit while you are doing the Yoga here another influence, *whatever it may be*, which is not ours or part of the movement of this sadhana. If that takes place anything might happen and we would not be able to protect you against it because you would have stepped out of the circle of protection. You have hitherto been proceeding on a very sound line of development; a diversion of this kind which seems to be on the vital level might be a serious interference. No trust can be put on the beauty of the eyes or the face. There are many Beings of the inferior planes who have a captivating beauty and can enthrall with it and they can give too an Ananda which is not of the highest and may on the contrary by its lure take away from the path altogether. When you have reached the stage of clear discernment where the highest Light is turned on all things that come, then experiences of many kinds may be safely faced, but now a strict vigilance must be exercised and all diversions rejected. It is necessary to keep one's steps firmly on the straight road to the Highest; all else must wait for the proper time.

*

For the eyes, that experience had got a certain hold and it was not to be expected that it would altogether disappear all at once. These things try to persist, but if the refusal is firm and unchanging, they fade away after a time or cease. The lessening of the intensity of the ananda is already a sign that the rejection is having its effect. You have only to persist and after a time the

vital consciousness will be free.

*

I have no doubt that the action of this force once rejected will disappear in time. It is something with which you have been brought into contact, not something intimate to yourself to which part of your being is naturally responsive. That is shown by the inability to catch what the being who manifested wanted to convey to you. It seems to have been an onslaught, as you say, an attempted invasion by force and ruse. It is quite true that when there is the opening to the Light, the adverse Forces as well as the lower forces become active when they can do so. The consciousness of the seeker has come out of its normal limits and is opening to the universal as well as upwards to the Self above and they take advantage of that to attempt an entrance. Such onslaughts however are not inevitable and you are probably right in thinking that you caught it in the atmosphere of X. He has made experiments of many kinds in the occult field and there one comes easily into contact with forces and beings of a darker nature and one needs a great power and light and purity — one's own or a helping Power's — to face them and overcome. There are also deficiencies or errors in one's own nature which can open the door to these beings. But the best is if one can have nothing to do with them; for the conquest of the forces of the lower nature is a sufficiently heavy task without that complication. If the work one has to do necessitates the contact and conflict with them, that is another matter. In your case I think this has been something of an accident and not a necessity of the development of your sadhana.

*

No, there was no special concentration or call from the Mother at that time. It was at a time when she never sees anyone, so evidently she would not have put such a force upon you, nor does she usually exercise her power in this way. You did well to resist the impulsion. It is always necessary to keep the inner perception and will clear, conscious and in perfect balance and

never to allow any force of impulsion, however it may present itself, to sweep without their discerning consent the vital or the body into action. Whatever appearance they may assume, such forces cannot be trusted; once the discriminating intelligence gives up its control, any kind of force can intervene in this way and a path is opened for unbalanced vital impulses to be used to the detriment of the sadhana. A psychic or spiritual control replacing the mental would not act in this way, but whatever intensity or ardour it may give, would maintain a clear perception of things, a perfect discrimination, a harmony between the inward and the outward reality. It is only the vital that is swept by these impulses; the vital must always be kept under the control of the intelligence, the psychic or when that becomes dynamic, the higher spiritual consciousness.

An Experience on the Mental Plane

The vision you had was of the mental plane and symbolic. It symbolised not so much your own position as the general difficulties which lie in the way of one's going deep inside into the psychic centre and living there. The *maidān* full of light was the inmost psychic centre; the dark place in between represents the veil of ignorance created by the gulf between this inmost psychic and the outer nature. The chakra turning round and round which prevents the approach from one side (the mental side) is the activity of the ordinary mind; when the mind becomes quiet, then it is easier. The serpent is the vital energy which covers up the psychic and prevents approach from another (the vital) side. Here again if the vital becomes quiet, then the approach is easier.

The blows on the forehead were perhaps the working of a force to open the centre there — for there between the eyes is the centre of the inner mind, will and vision. All these centres are closed in the ordinary consciousness or else only very slightly open on the surface. If the inner mind centre opens, then the peace etc. from above can enter easily into the mind and afterwards into the vital and both mind and vital will become quiet.

The difficulty about the two parts of the mind is one that everybody has when the tendency to go within begins. It is solved in this sadhana by a sort of harmony being established by which even in doing one's work and keeping the necessary outer activities one can still live within in the fullness of the inner life and experience.

Rely on the Mother always. These things are the first beginnings of Yogic experience and the difficulties of the mind and vital (which are not the old ones you had but simply the ordinary difficulties of the adjustment and harmonisation of the different parts of the being) will get solved of themselves.

Chapter Two

Exteriorisation or Going Out of the Body

The Experience of Exteriorisation

The experience you had was that of exteriorisation or going out of the body. The consciousness went up and remained above the body for a time. The feeling or vision of oneself in the form of an egg is frequent in such cases. It is not always so, for many go out in an individualised consciousness with an awareness of a subtle body, subtle thought, subtle sensation etc. and move about in the vital or even in the physical world till they come back to the body. But when one begins, the vital body is at first a little vague and the consciousness also with the result that all is at first dim and unorganised. The serpent must be the Kundalini force which had left its coiled sleeping position in the Muladhara and taken the lengthened one in which it joins the embodied consciousness with the consciousness above.

The power of exteriorisation is one that can be used for many purposes by the Yogi when it has been developed.

*

It was a partial exteriorisation, part of the consciousness going out to the scene and surroundings described by you while the rest remained in the body and was aware both of the normal surroundings and, by communication or indirect participation, of what the other was experiencing. This is quite possible and for that no form of trance or loss of external consciousness is necessary. As for the cause of such an experience, it does not depend at all on one's own ordinary mental or other interests; it comes by a sort of attraction or touch from someone who is there on the scene and who feels the need of sympathy, support or help of some kind, a need so strong that it forms a sort of call; it is very

usually somebody quite unknown and it just depends on whom the call happens to touch because he is open at the time and receives the vibration and has the capacity to answer. Usually there is a sort of identification of consciousness with that of the person calling so that one can see the surroundings and the things happening through him. It is the physical that becomes nervous at these experiences and this must be overcome; as the inner mental, vital, physical consciousness opens to things behind the thick physical veil all kinds of experiences may happen that are strange to the physical mind and its tendency to be apprehensive or nervous at these things must disappear. It must be able to face even formidable things without fear.

*

A feeling like that of the shock and the stopping of the breath for a second and as if of falling down comes to many when the consciousness for a moment or a longer time exteriorises itself (goes up out of the body); the shock comes from the going up of the consciousness or from the return into the body. The Mother used to have that hundreds of times. It is not anything physical (the Doctor, as you say, found nothing). When this movement of the consciousness is more normal, the feeling will probably disappear.

*

You must have gone out of your body leaving it unprotected and there was an attack which you got rid of after coming into the body. This part of the head from the ears down to the neck is the seat of the physical mind — the centre of the physical or externalising mind is in the throat joining the spine at the back. It was an attack on the physical mind.

Going Out in the Vital Body

It looks as if it were an exteriorisation¹ in which she goes out in

¹ *The correspondent reported the case of a woman who, without willing it, entered into a state of trance at any time, even while writing or talking with someone. — Ed.*

her vital body. When one does so consciously and at will, it is all right, but this unconscious exteriorisation is not always safe. The important question is what effect it has on her. If she comes out of it strong and refreshed or quite normal, there is no cause for distress or anxiety; if she comes out exhausted or depressed, then there are forces that are pulling her out into the vital world to the detriment of her vital sheath and it should not continue.

*

It is clear that when you go out of your body like that you pass into a vital plane and as you are constantly attacked there and have fear, it is not desirable.

It seems to me I have explained all that to you before. Everybody goes out into the vital world in that way, but it is not indispensable to the sadhana to have these experiences and it is better to postpone them till you have the truly helpful experiences — such as those narrated in a recent letter — and can build up a strong consciousness which can enter any plane without fear or danger.

*

As to your experience about the inkstand. When the vital being goes out, it moves on the vital plane and in the vital consciousness, and, even if it is aware of physical scenes and things, it is not with a physical vision. It is possible for one who has trained his faculties to enter into touch with physical things although he is moving about in the vital body, to see and sense them accurately, even to act on them and physically move them. But the ordinary sadhaka who has no knowledge or organised experience or training in these things cannot do it. He must understand that the vital plane is different from the physical and that things that happen there are not physical happenings, though, if they are of the right kind and properly understood and used, they may have a meaning and value for the earth life. But also the vital consciousness is full of false formations and many confusions and it is not safe to move among them without knowledge and without a direct protection and guidance.

*

Your three experiences related in your letter mean that you are going out in your vital body into the vital worlds and meeting the beings and formations of these worlds. The old man of the temple and the girls you saw are hostile beings of the vital plane.

It is better not to go out in this way, unless one has the protection of someone (physically present) who has knowledge and power over the vital world. As there is no one there who can do this for you, you should draw back from this movement. Aspire for perfect surrender, calm, peace, light, consciousness and strength in the mind and the heart. When the mental being and psychic being are thus open, luminous and surrendered, then the vital can open and receive the same illumination. Till then premature adventures on the vital plane are not advisable.

If the movement cannot be stopped, then observe the following instructions:

(1) Never allow any fear to enter into you. Face all you meet and see in this world with detachment and courage.

(2) Ask for the protection of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother before you sleep or meditate. Use their names when you are attacked or tempted.²

(3) Do not indulge in this world in any kind of sympathy such as you felt for the old man in the temple or accept such suggestions, e.g., that he was your spiritual preceptor, which was obviously false since you could have no other spiritual preceptor than Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It was because of this sympathy and the accepted suggestion that he was able to go inside you and create the pain you felt.

(4) Do not allow any foreign personality to enter into you, only the Light, Power etc. from above.

² Sri Aurobindo refers to himself in the third person here and below; he wrote this letter to be sent over the signature of his secretary. — Ed.

Section Two

Experiences of the Inner Being and the Inner Consciousness

Chapter One

The Inward Movement

The Importance of Inner Experiences

The outer work is only half the matter. There is also the consciousness within which does the work and that must develop from the mental-vital to the spiritual-psychic. How can it do that without experiences? Also one can develop an intuitive consciousness which is helpful to the work.

*

What you say about the outer being is correct; it must change and manifest what is within in the inner nature. But for that one must have experiences in the inner nature and through these the power of the inner nature grows till it can influence wholly and possess the outer being. To change the outer consciousness entirely without developing this inner consciousness would be too difficult. That is why these inner experiences are going on to prepare the growth of the inner consciousness. There is an inner mind, an inner vital, an inner physical consciousness which can more easily than the outer receive the higher consciousness above and put itself into harmony with the psychic being; when that is done the outer nature is felt as only a fringe on the surface, not as oneself, and is more easily transformed altogether.

Whatever difficulties there may still be in the outer nature, they will not make any difference to the fact that you are now awake within, the Mother's force working in you and you her true child destined to be perfectly that in all ways. Put your faith and your thought entirely on her and you will go through all safely.

*

What you express in the letter is the right way of thinking and seeing. The self-will of the mind wanting things in its own way

and not in the Divine's way was a great obstacle. With that gone the way should become much less rough and hard to follow.

The outer consciousness can grow in faith, fidelity to the Divine, reverence, love, worship and adoration, great things in themselves, — though in fact these things too come from within, — but realisation can only take place when the inner being is awake with its vision and feeling of things unseen. Till then, one can feel the results of the divine help and, if one has faith, know that they are the work of the Divine; but it is only then that one can feel clearly the Force at work, the divine Presence, the direct communion.

*

So long as you live only in thoughts and other movements of the surface consciousness, you cannot be conscious in the Yogic sense. It is when the mind becomes quiet that the real (inner) consciousness comes out or the higher consciousness above the mind comes down. It is only then also that the inner physical being becomes active and brings an alert consciousness and an intuitive sense into the body. Also the higher thought and the inner will comes then only.

*

The exterior being has to become aware of the inner — the veil between the inner and outer consciousness has to be removed, it is only then that a real Yogic consciousness begins. The outer has to be merely an instrument or channel for the inner to express itself and communicate with the outer physical world. The inner again has to have free communication with the universal on all the planes — it has to enter into the cosmic consciousness. The outer consciousness has to be remoulded and reshaped through the inner consciousness and the processes that must do it are the psychic by its influence and the higher consciousness by its descent. Naturally, in the process the outer being also will lose its separativeness and become aware of and, in a way, unified with the universal.

Becoming Aware of the Inner Being

It is not that anything has been taken from you, but as you say at the end, your being is seen by you in two parts. That is a thing that happens as the sadhana proceeds and must happen in order that one may have completely the knowledge of oneself and the true consciousness. These two parts are the inner being and the outer being. The outer being (mind, vital and physical) has now become capable of quietude and it sits in meditation in a free, happy, vacant quietude which is the first step towards the true consciousness. The inner being (inner mind, vital, physical) is not lost but gone inside — the outer part does not know where — but probably gone inside into union with the psychic. The only thing that can have gone is something of the old nature that was standing in the way of this experience.

*

The silence descends into the inner being first — as also other things from the higher consciousness. One can become aware of this inner being, calm, silent, strong, untouched by the movements of Nature, full of knowledge or light, and at the same time be aware of another lesser being, the small personality on the surface which is made up of the movements of Nature or else still subject to them or else, if not subject to them, still open to invasion by them. This is a condition that any number of sadhaks and Yogis have experienced. The inner being means the psychic, the inner mind, the inner vital, the inner physical. In this condition none of these can be even touched, so there has been an essential purification. All need not feel this division into two consciousnesses, but most do. When it is there, the will that decides the action is in the inner being, not in the outer — so the invasion of the outer by vital movements can in no way compel the action. It is on the contrary a very favourable stage in the transformation because the inner being can bring the whole force of the higher consciousness in it to change the nature wholly, observing the action of Nature without being affected by it, putting the force for change wherever needed

and setting the whole being right as one does with a machine. That is if one wants a transformation. For many Vedantins don't think it necessary — they say the inner being is *mukta*, the rest is simply a mechanical continuation of the impetus of Nature in the physical man and will drop away with the body so that one can depart into Nirvana.

*

In fact all these ignorant vital movements originate from outside in the ignorant universal nature; the human being forms in his superficial parts of being, mental, vital, physical a habit of certain responses to these waves from outside. It is these responses that he takes as his own character (anger, desire, sex etc.) and thinks he cannot be otherwise. But that is not so; he can change. There is another consciousness deeper within him, his true inner being, which is his real self, but is covered over by the superficial nature. This the ordinary man does not know, but the Yogi becomes aware of it as he progresses in his sadhana. As the consciousness of this inner being increases by sadhana, the surface nature and its responses are pushed out and can be got rid of altogether. But the ignorant universal Nature does not want to let go and throws the old movements on the sadhak and tries to get them inside him again; owing to a habit the superficial nature gives the old responses. If one can get the firm knowledge that these things are from outside and not a real part of oneself, then it is easier for the sadhak to repel such notions, or if they lay hold, he can get rid of them sooner. That is why I say repeatedly that these things are not in yourself, but from outside.

The Piercing of the Veil

The cry you heard was not in the physical heart, but in the emotional centre. The breaking of the wall meant the breaking of the obstacle or at least of some obstacle there between your inner and your outer being. Most people live in their ordinary outer ignorant personality which does not easily open to the

Divine; but there is an inner being within them of which they do not know, which can easily open to the Truth and the Light. But there is a wall which divides them from it, a wall of obscurity and unconsciousness. When it breaks down, then there is a release; the feelings of calm, Ananda, joy which you had immediately afterwards were due to that release. The cry you heard was the cry of the vital part in you overcome by the suddenness of the breaking of the wall and the opening.

*

The piercing of the veil between the outer consciousness and the inner being is one of the crucial movements in Yoga. For Yoga means union with the Divine, but it also means awaking first to your inner self and then to your higher self, — a movement inward and a movement upward. It is, in fact, only through the awakening and coming to the front of the inner being that you can get into union with the Divine. The outer physical man is only an instrumental personality and by himself he cannot arrive at this union, — he can only get occasional touches, religious feelings, imperfect intimations. And even these come not from the outer consciousness but from what is within us.

There are two mutually complementary movements; in one the inner being comes to the front and impresses its own normal motions on the outer consciousness to which they are unusual and abnormal; the other is to draw back from the outer consciousness, to go inside into the inner planes, enter the world of your inner self and wake in the hidden parts of your being. When that plunge has once been taken, you are marked for the Yogic, the spiritual life and nothing can efface the seal that has been put upon you.

This inward movement takes place in many different ways and there is sometimes a complex experience combining all the signs of the complete plunge. There is a sense of going in or deep down, a feeling of the movement towards inner depths; there is often a stillness, a pleasant numbness, a stiffness of the limbs. This is the sign of the consciousness retiring from the body inwards under the pressure of a force from above, — that

pressure stabilising the body into an immobile support of the inner life, in a kind of strong and still spontaneous *āsana*. There is a feeling of waves surging up, mounting to the head, which brings an outer unconsciousness and an inner waking. It is the ascending of the lower consciousness in the Adhara to meet the greater consciousness above. It is a movement analogous to that on which so much stress is laid in the Tantrik process, the awakening of the Kundalini, the Energy coiled up and latent in the body and its mounting through the spinal cord and the centres (*cakras*) and the Brahmarandhra to meet the Divine above. In our Yoga it is not a specialised process, but a spontaneous uprush of the whole lower consciousness sometimes in currents or waves, sometimes in a less concrete motion, and on the other side a descent of the Divine Consciousness and its Force into the body. This descent is felt as a pouring in of calm and peace, of force and power, of light, of joy and ecstasy, of wideness and freedom and knowledge, of a Divine Being or a Presence — sometimes one of these, sometimes several of them or all together. The movement of ascension has different results: it may liberate the consciousness so that one feels no longer in the body, but above it or else spread in wideness with the body either almost non-existent or only a point in one's free expanse. It may enable the being or some part of the being to go out from the body and move elsewhere, and this action is usually accompanied by some kind of partial *samādhi* or else a complete trance. Or it may result in empowering the consciousness, no longer limited by the body and the habits of the external nature, to go within, to enter the inner mental depths, the inner vital, the inner (subtle) physical, the psychic, to become aware of its inmost psychic self or its inner mental, vital and subtle physical being and, it may be, to move and live in the domains, the planes, the worlds that correspond to these parts of the nature. It is the repeated and constant ascent of the lower consciousness that enables the mind, the vital, the physical to come into touch with the higher planes up to the supramental and get impregnated with their light and power and influence. And it is the repeated and constant descent of the Divine Consciousness and its Force

that is the means for the transformation of the whole being and the whole nature. Once this descent becomes habitual, the Divine Force, the Power of the Mother begins to work, no longer from above only or from behind the veil, but consciously in the Adhara itself, and deals with its difficulties and possibilities and carries on the Yoga.

Last comes the crossing of the border. It is not a falling asleep or a loss of consciousness, for the consciousness is there all the time; only, it shifts from the outer and physical, becomes closed to external things and recedes into the inner psychic and vital part of the being. There it passes through many experiences and of these some can and should be felt in the waking state also; for both movements are necessary, the coming out of the inner being to the front as well as the going in of the consciousness to become aware of the inner self and nature. But for many purposes the ingoing movement is indispensable. Its effect is to break or at least to open and pass the barrier between this outer instrumental consciousness and that inner being which it very partially strives to express, and to make possible in future a conscious awareness of all the endless riches of possibility and experience and new being and new life that lie untapped behind the veil of this small and very blind and limited material personality which men erroneously think to be the whole of themselves. It is the beginning and constant enlarging of this deeper and fuller and richer awareness that is accomplished between the inward plunge and the return from this inner world to the waking state.

The sadhak must understand that these experiences are not mere imaginations or dreams but actual happenings, for even when, as often occurs, they are formations only, of a wrong or misleading or adverse kind, they have still their power as formations and must be understood before they can be rejected and abolished. Each inner experience is perfectly real in its own way, although the values of different experiences differ greatly, but it is real with the reality of the inner self and the inner planes. It is a mistake to think that we live physically only or only with the outer mind and life. We are all the time living and acting on other planes of consciousness, meeting others there and acting upon

them, and what we do and feel and think there, the forces we gather, the results we prepare have an incalculable importance and effect, unknown to us, upon our outer life. Not all of it comes through, and what comes through takes another form in the physical—though sometimes there is an exact correspondence; but this little is at the basis of our outward existence. All that we become and do and bear in the physical life is prepared behind the veil within us. It is therefore of immense importance for a Yoga which aims at the transformation of life to grow conscious of what goes on within these domains, to be master there and be able to feel, know and deal with the secret forces that determine our destiny and our internal and external growth or decline.

It is equally important for those who want that union with the Divine without which the transformation is impossible. The aspiration could not be realised if you remained bound by your external self, tied to the physical mind and its petty movements. It is not the outer being which is the source of the spiritual urge; the outer being only undergoes the inner drive from behind the veil. It is the inner psychic being in you that is the bhakta, the seeker after the union and the Ananda, and what is impossible for the outer nature left to itself becomes perfectly possible when the barrier is down and the inner self in the front. For the moment this comes strongly to the front or draws the consciousness powerfully into itself, peace, ecstasy, freedom, wideness, the opening to light and a higher knowledge begin to become natural, spontaneous, often immediate in their emergence.

Once the barrier breaks by the one movement or the other, you begin to find that all the processes and movements necessary to the Yoga are within your reach and not as it seems in the outer mind difficult or impossible. The inmost psychic self in you has already in it the Yogin and the bhakta and if it can fully emerge and take the lead, the spiritual turn of your outer life is predestined and inevitable. In the initially successful sadhak it has already built a deep inner life, Yogic and spiritual, which is veiled only because of some strong outward turn the education and past activities have given to the thinking mind and lower

vital parts. It is precisely to correct this outward orientation and take away the veil that he has to practise more strenuously the Yoga. Once the inner being has manifested strongly whether by the inward-going or the outward-coming movement, it is bound to renew its pressure, to clear the passage and finally come by its kingdom. A beginning of this kind is the indication of what is to happen on a greater scale hereafter.

The Movement Inward

The movement inward is all to the good — for going inward if one goes far enough brings one to the psychic. The more peace there is the better; even if it is only a little at first, that is so much gained. If the inward-drawing movement is held to, it will grow and the power to reject anger and other such movements will increase. It is this peace and inward psychic movement in you that we shall try for till it is done.

*

It is rather a pity that the fear came in and spoiled the inward movement — for this inward movement is exceedingly important for the sadhana. The increasing frequency and completeness of the psychic consciousness in you coming in and replacing the ordinary one has hitherto been the most hopeful sign of progress — but the establishment of an inward movement would be a still greater thing; for its natural result would be to liberate the soul within and to give you a stand in the inner being so that you would be able to regard any fluctuations in the outer consciousness without being subjugated by them and without any interruption of the inner poise and freedom. But the movement is bound to come back and fulfil itself. It is very good that the help comes when you call and that you can shake yourself free — it is another sign of the psychic growth.

*

It takes time of course to make the transition from one state of consciousness to another. The depth of feeling will come more

and more as your consciousness draws back from the claim of external things and goes deeper in into the heart region seeing and feeling from there with the psychic to prompt and enlighten it. Faith also will increase with that movement — for it is the outer intellect that is infirm or deficient in faith, the inner being in the heart has it always.

*

That is quite natural [*an inward movement during the afternoon nap*]. The usual movement does not take place, but there is still a pressure habitual at the time under which the consciousness goes inside not into sleep but into some kind of samadhi in which a working takes place in the inner consciousness. As yet you have not developed the power of being conscious in this state nor the power of remembering what took place.

*

It was probably not so much a sleep as a going inward under the pressure of the influence at the Pranam. In any case it was not a dream but an experience, an ascent into one of the higher ranges of consciousness above the mind — all of which have this character of vastness and peace everywhere.

*

X's experiences are those which usually attend the withdrawal from the outer consciousness into an inner plane of experience. The feeling of coldness of the body in the first is one of the signs — like the immobility and stiffness of Y's experience — that the consciousness is withdrawing from the outer or physical sheath and retiring inside. The crystallisation was the form in which he felt the organisation of an inner consciousness which could receive at once firmly and freely from above. The crystals at once indicate organised formation and a firm transparency in which the greater vision and experience descending from the higher planes could be clearly reflected.

As for the other experience, his rejection of the waking consciousness evidently had the result of throwing him into an

inner awareness in which he began to have contact with the supraphysical planes. What was meant by the sea of red colour and stars depends on the character of the red colour. If it was crimson, what he saw was the sea of the physical consciousness and physical life as it is represented to the inner symbolic vision; if it was purple red, then it was the sea of the vital consciousness and the vital life-force. Perhaps, if he had not stopped his sense of the Mother's presence, it would have been better, — he should rather, if he can, take it with him into the inner planes, then he would have had no occasion to fear.

In any case, if he wants to go into the inner consciousness and move in the inner planes — which will inevitably happen if he shuts off the waking consciousness in his meditation — he must cast away fear. Probably he expected to get the silence or the touch of the divine consciousness by following out the suggestion of the Gita. But the silence or the touch of the divine consciousness can be equally and for some more easily got in the waking meditation through the Mother's presence and the descent from above. The inward movement, however, is probably unavoidable and he should try to understand and, not shrinking or afraid, to go to it with the same confidence and faith in the Mother as he has in the waking meditation. His dreams are of course experiences on the inner (vital) plane.

P.S. The dream about the Mahadeva image may mean that someone (not of this world, of course) wanted to mislead him and make him confuse some narrower traditional form of the past with the greater living Truth that he is seeking.

*

The difficulty indicated by you in your last (long) letter indicates that you enter into the inner being and begin to have experiences there, but there is a difficulty in organising them or seeing them coherently. The difficulty is because the inner mind is not yet sufficiently habituated to act and see the inside things and therefore the ordinary outer mind interferes and tries to arrange them; but the outer mind is unable to see the meaning of inner things. When the outer mind is left outside altogether,

the things inside begin to be seen vividly and clearly, but the inner mind not being active, either their coherence is not seen or the consciousness lingers in the confused experiences of the lower vital plane and does not get through to the deeper, more coherent and significant experiences. A development of the inner consciousness is needed—when that development takes place, then all will become more clear and coherent. This development will take place if, without getting disturbed, you quietly aspire and go on calling the Mother's Force to do what is needed.

Your call will always reach the Mother. If you remain quiet and confident, you will in time become aware of the answer. The more the mind becomes quiet, the clearer will it become to you and you will feel her working. From time to time you can write of your experiences; wherever an answer is needed, I will answer.

The Inner Consciousness and the Body

It is the inner consciousness that you felt separated from the body, liberated from the identification with the body, and yet in touch with all the material surroundings. It is a very helpful experience—indispensable for the Yoga.

*

It is that the consciousness is detaching itself from the body.¹ Usually in men it is identified with the body and bound to it—in Yoga it detaches itself and becomes free. The body is no longer felt as oneself, but as something not oneself, something that one carries with oneself or else as an instrument which one uses for certain purposes.

*

If you went inside and lost consciousness of the outer world, it would be called a kind of samadhi—but this experience can

¹ *The correspondent wrote that sometimes he felt raindrops or sunlight falling on his body as if they were touching something other than himself; at other times he felt very light, as if he had no body at all.*—Ed.

be got in the waking state also. It is a liberation from body consciousness and an awakening into the spiritual wideness. At first it is usually felt as a void of all other things but consciousness alone or existence alone.

*

The feeling [*in meditation*] of having no head usually means that the mental consciousness is no longer imprisoned in the head at the time — but silent and extended.

A Transitional State of Inwardness

The condition which you feel is one which is very well known in sadhana. It is a sort of passage or transition, a state of inwardness which is growing but not yet completed — at that time to speak or throw oneself outward is painful. What is necessary is to be very quiet and remain within oneself all the time until the movement is completed; one should not speak or only a little and in a low quiet way nor concentrate the mind on outward things. You should also not mind what people say or question; although they are practising sadhana, they know nothing about these conditions and if one becomes quiet or withdrawn they think one must be sad or ill. The Mother did not find you at all like that, sad or ill; it is simply a phase or temporary state in the sadhana that she has experience of and knows very well.

*

The condition [*of inwardness*] lasts often for a number of days, sometimes many, until something definite begins. Remain confident and quiet.

The Growth of the Inner Being and the Inner Consciousness

What you feel as the new life is the growth of the inner being in you; the inner being is the true being and as it grows the whole consciousness begins to change. This feeling and your new attitude towards people are signs of the change. The seeing

of inner things also usually comes with this growth of the inner being and consciousness; it is an inner vision which awakes in most sadhaks when they enter this stage.

It is also a characteristic of this inner consciousness that even when it is active, there is felt behind the action or containing it a complete quietude or silence. The more one concentrates, the more this quietude and silence increases. That is why there seems to be all quiet within even though all sorts of things may be taking place within.

It is also quite usual that what takes place in the inner consciousness should not express itself at present in the outer physical. It at first creates changes inside, but takes possession of the outer instruments only afterwards.

*

The things you feel are due to the fact that the consciousness goes inside, so physical things are felt as if they were at a distance. The same phenomenon can happen when one goes into another plane of consciousness and sees physical things from there. But it is probably the first that is happening with you. When one goes quite inside, then physical things disappear, — when some connection is kept, then they become distant. But this is a transitory change. Afterwards you will be able to have the two consciousnesses together, be in your psychic in one part of yourself with all the experience and activities of the psychic being and nature and yet with your surface self fully awake and active in physical things with the psychic support and influence behind this outer action.

*

It is a very good sign that when the thoughts and the attempt at disturbance come there is something that remains calm and cool — for that, like the psychic reply from within, shows that the inner consciousness is fixed or fixing itself in part of the being. This is a well-recognised stage of the inner change in sadhana. Equally good is the emerging of the self-existent Ananda from within not dependent on outward things. It is a fact that this

inner gladness and happiness is something peaceful and happy at once — it is not an excited movement like the vital outward pleasure, though it can be more ardent and intense. Another good result is the fading out of the feeling that “the work is mine” and the power to do it with the outward consciousness not engaging the inner being.

The sense of release as if from jail always accompanies the emergence of the psychic being or the realisation of the self above. It is therefore spoken of as a liberation, *mukti*. It is a release into peace, happiness, the soul’s freedom not tied down by the thousand ties and cares of the outward ignorant existence.

It was of course the Mother’s face you saw in your vision, but probably in one of her supraphysical, not her physical form and face — that is also indicated by the great light that came from the form and rendered it invisible.

*

I am glad to hear of the development you speak of in your dealing with others. It is a power proper to the Yoga consciousness that is developing in you, because the Mother’s force is at work and is developing the inner consciousness. For it is one of the powers of this inner consciousness to bring about what it sees to be the right thing by simply communicating in entire silence to the consciousness of another. That is the true way of acting — through the power of the inner consciousness, its knowledge, vision and will. The other thing, the coming of what you want to see on the street, is another form of the same action of the inner conscious force. As for the anger it is evidently in process of control and elimination and its recurrences cannot fail to disappear after a time as the new consciousness increases.

Living Within

There is an inner being in man of which he is not usually conscious; he lives in a superficial consciousness which he calls himself and which is normally concerned with outer things; one is aware of the inner being either not at all or only as something

behind from which feelings, ideas, impulses, imperatives etc. come occasionally into the outer. When one ceases to be mainly concerned with outer and surface things one can go more inside nearer to this inner being and become aware of things other than the ego and the outer nature. One can become aware of the inner being and live in it and get detached from the hold of outer things, dealing with them from an inner consciousness (felt as separate from the outer consciousness) according to an inner truth of the soul and spirit and no longer according to the demands of the outer Nature.

*

If one lives within, then it is the inner consciousness that one depends on, not the outer. The inner consciousness can then always go on independent of the outer state to which it gives attention only when it chooses.

*

It is good. Fasten on the true thing, the concentration in the inner being and the inner life. All these outer things are of minor importance and it is only when the inner life is well established that the difficulties with which they are hampered can get their true solution. That you have seen several times when you went inside. To be too much occupied in mind with the outer difficulties keeps it externalised. Living inwardly you will find the Mother close to you and realise her will and her action.

*

Do not allow outward events to disturb you or be the cause of suggestions. It is as with the words of people and the suggestions they raise which disturb uselessly the consciousness. Both should be rejected. Live in the inner consciousness which can remain in its own calm and light whatever happens outside.

*

To remain within, above and untouched, full of the inner consciousness and the inner experience, — listening, when need be,

to *X* or another with the surface consciousness, but with even that undisturbed, not either pulled outwards or invaded, that is the perfect condition for the sadhana.

*

You must gather yourself within more firmly. If you disperse yourself constantly, go out of the inner circle, you will constantly move about in the pettinesses of the ordinary outer nature and under the influences to which it is open. Learn to live within, to act always from within, from constant inner communion with the Mother. It may be difficult at first to do it always and completely, but it can be done if one sticks to it — and it is at that price, by learning to do that that one can have the siddhi in the Yoga.

*

It is a very serious difficulty in one's Yoga — the absence of a central will always superior to the waves of the Prakriti forces, always in touch with the Mother, imposing its central aim and aspiration on the nature. That is because you have not yet learned to live in your central being; you have been accustomed to run with every wave of Force, no matter of what kind, that rushed upon you and to identify yourself with it for the time being. It is one of the things that has to be unlearned; you must find your central being with the psychic as its basis and live in it.

*

To be aware of one's central consciousness and to know the action of the forces is the first definite step towards self-mastery.

*

In the things of the subtle kind having to do with the working of consciousness in the sadhana, one has to learn to feel and observe and see with the inner consciousness and to decide by the intuition with a plastic look on things which does not make set definitions and rules as one has to do in outward life.

*

Yes. When one is in the right consciousness, then there is the right movement, the right happiness, everything in harmony with the Truth.

When there is the wrong consciousness, there is demand, dissatisfaction, doubt, all kinds of disharmony.

*

It [*calmness*] is only the proper condition for receptivity. Naturally, it is the proper thing to do if you want to be receptive or become conscious of inner things. So long as the mind is jumping about or rushing out to outside things, it is not possible to be inward, collected, conscious within.

*

Obviously to live in the silent Brahman, the best way is to live within where one can have the silence and resist all outward pulls. As much avoidance of outer pulls—contact does not matter, if there is no pull outward—as will help that, can be very helpful. It is only an entire seclusion that for occult rather than mental reasons is not altogether desirable unless one has already a great inner strength and poise.

Living Within and the External Being

It is the past habit of the vital that makes you repeatedly go out into the external part; you must persist and establish the opposite habit of living in your inner being which is your true being and of looking at everything from there. It is from there that you get the true thought, the true vision and understanding of things and of your own self and nature.

*

You must have somehow externalised yourself too much. It is only by living in one's inner consciousness and doing everything from there that the right psychic condition can be kept. Otherwise it goes inside and the external covers it up. It is not lost, but hidden—one must go inside again to recover it.

*

When one comes out of the inner condition, one gets externalised in the outer consciousness. It is difficult for the outer nature to remain always within, its nature is to pull outward. But when this happens, one must learn to look quietly at what is happening, observe what the outer nature does but not identify with it, not feel that it is oneself that is doing that, but only something that one is observing, while one's real self is that which observes and that which goes within. If one can do that, then there is no disturbance and it is easier to go back again inward.

*

As for the activity going on, it is so with everybody. What has to be done, is not to be upset by it, but to learn to live inside where one always feels the force — or even if one does not feel because the consciousness is covered up, it is still there and after a time dispels the covering and is visible again. Outside the imperfect activities will go on till the whole being is changed and that cannot be done in a day.

Your mistake is to get upset because the exterior being is still there with its imperfections. What you ought to do is not to mind too much, to aspire for changing it but not get upset, to have confidence that it will change in time and meanwhile to stand back from it, to live in the part of you that is open to the force and to regard the rest as you would a cut that has to be cleaned or anything else belonging to you but external.

*

The large inner mind and the true vital having shown themselves are bound to get the mastery; but the old lower nature, especially the vital part of it, is bound to struggle for reaffirming its hold on the consciousness. To remain very firm and repel its attacks till they lose their strength, is necessary.

*

The difficulty is that you attach so much importance to things that are of quite a small value. You behave as if to have or have not a table is something of supreme importance and worry

and excite yourself so much about the rights and wrongs of the matter that you allow it to upset your whole peace of mind and make you fall from the true condition. These things are small and relative—you may have a new table or you may not have a new table, neither way is of any very great importance and it makes no difference to the Divine Purpose in you. The one thing important is to increase calm and peace and the descent of the Divine Force, to grow in equality and inward light and consciousness. Outward things have to be done with a great quiet, doing whatever is necessary but not exciting or upsetting yourself about anything. It is only so that you can advance steadily and quickly. When you feel the Mother's Force about you, the peace closely round you that is the one thing of importance—these small outward things can be settled in a hundred different ways, it does not really matter.

*

The entire dependence on the inner realisation and not on outward things for their own sake and the seeking of the Divine for the sake of the Divine and without any tinge of ego motive is indeed the most difficult thing for the mind even of the Sadhak to learn; but it is the essence of the highest realisation and the condition of a perfect self-finding.

*

When you come to the Divine, lean inwardly on the Divine and do not let other things affect you.

Acting from Within on the Outer Being

Detach yourself from the outer being; live in the inner; let the Force work from the inner being—it will change the outer being.

*

It is on the surface that the transformation is done. One comes up to the surface with what one has gained in the depths, to

change it. It may be you need to go in again and find it difficult to make the movement back quickly. When the whole being becomes plastic you will be able to make whatever movement is needed more quickly.

*

Yes, that is right. Relying on outer methods mainly never succeeds very well. It is only when there is the inner poise that the outer movement is really effective — and then it comes of itself.

*

The difference [*in learning something*] is when a thing is done with the inner mind and when it is done only with the outer brain. What you feel is the inner mind taking it up — then it becomes part of the consciousness and things are really learned — the working of the outer mind is always difficult and superficial.

It is evident that the inner being in you is beginning to come more and more forward. As it does so, these outer difficulties will be more and more pushed out and the consciousness will keep the peace and force at first in the greater part of it, afterwards in the whole.

*

It is a wall of consciousness that one has to build [*against undesirable things*]. Consciousness is not something abstract, it is like existence itself or ananda or mind or prana, something very concrete. If one becomes aware of the inner consciousness one can do all sorts of things with it, send it out as a stream of force, erect a circle or wall of consciousness around oneself, direct an idea so that it shall enter somebody's head in America etc. etc.

*

It is simply that you became conscious of the inner being and the inner world and rose up to a higher plane of being where the outer difficulties do not exist. The object of Yoga is to establish the inner consciousness and the higher being in you and by their strength change the outer existence.

The Double Consciousness

The condition you describe in your work shows that the inner being is awake and that there is now the double consciousness. It is the inner being which has the inner happiness, the calm and quiet, the silence free from any ripple of thought, the inwardly silent repetition of the name. The automatic repetition of the mantra is part of the same phenomenon — that is what ought to happen to the mantra, it must become a conscious but spontaneous thing repeating itself in the very substance of the consciousness itself, no longer needing any effort of the mind. All these doubts and questionings of the mind are useless. What has to happen is that this inner consciousness should be always there not troubled by any disturbance with the constant silence, inner happiness, calm quietude, etc., while the outer consciousness does what is necessary in the way of work etc. or, what is better, has that done through it — it is the latter experience that you have some days as someone pushing the work with so much continuous force without your feeling tired.

If you feel more quiet and the surrender feels more intense, then that is a good, not a bad condition — and if it makes the mind an empty room receiving the light, so much the better. Experiences and descents are very good for preparation, but change of the consciousness is the thing wanted — it is the proof that the experiences and descents have had an effect. Descents of peace are good, but an increasingly stable quietude and silence of the mind is something more valuable. When that is there then other things can come — usually one at a time, light or strength and force or knowledge or ananda. It is not necessary to go on for ever having always the same preparatory experiences — a time comes when the consciousness begins to take a new poise and another state.

The Inner Being and Calmness, Silence, Peace

The calmness you feel is that of the inner being which remains the same whatever the surface experience. But the use to be made

of these things is to liberate oneself from the desires and mental or vital sanskaras of the past so that one may be free to reach that greater Truth consciousness in which there is no need of an Adesh, for all one's action there is the direct conscious movement of the self-knowing Truth and the Mother herself is the doer.

*

The absence of thought is quite the right thing — for the true inner consciousness is a silent consciousness which has not to think out things, but gets the right perception, understanding and knowledge in a spontaneous way from within and speaks or acts according to that. It is the outer consciousness which has to depend on outside things and to think about them because it has not this spontaneous guidance. When one is fixed in this inner consciousness, then one can indeed go back to the old action by an effort of will, but it is no longer a natural movement and, if long maintained, becomes fatiguing. As for the dreams, that is different. Dreams about old bygone things come up from the subconscious which retains the old impressions and the seeds of the old movements and habits long after the waking consciousness has dropped them. Abandoned by the waking consciousness, they still come up in dreams; for in sleep the outer physical consciousness goes down into the subconscious or towards it and many dreams come up from there.

The silence in which all is quiet and one remains as a witness while something in the consciousness spontaneously calls down the higher things is the complete silence which comes when the full force of the higher consciousness is upon mind and vital and body.

*

All experiences come in the silence² but they do not come all pell-mell in a crowd at the beginning. The inner silence and peace have first to be established.

*

² *The correspondent wrote that although he was sometimes able to achieve silence of mind, experiences were not coming in the silence. — Ed.*

The consciousness from which these experiences come [*such as the division of the mind into an active surface mind and a silent inner mind*] is always there pressing to bring them in. The reason why they don't come in freely or stay is the activity of the mind and vital always rushing about, thinking this, wanting that, trying to perform mountaineering feats on all the hillocks of the lower nature instead of nourishing a strong and simple aspiration and opening to the higher consciousness that it may come in and do its own work. Rasa of poetry, painting or physical work is not the thing to go after. What gives the interest in Yoga is the rasa of the Divine and of the divine consciousness which means the rasa of Peace, of Silence, of inner Light and Bliss, of growing inner Knowledge, of increasing inner Power, of the Divine Love, of all the infinite fields of experience that open to one with the opening of the inner consciousness. The true rasa of poetry, painting or any other activity is truly found when these activities are part of the working of the Divine Force in you and you feel it as that and you feel in it the joy of that working.

This condition you had of the inner being and its silence, separated from the surface consciousness and its little restless workings, is the first liberation, the liberation of Purusha from Prakriti, and it is the fundamental experience. The day when you can keep it, you can know that the Yogic consciousness has been founded in you. This time it has increased in intensity, but it must also increase in duration.

These things do not "drop" — what you have felt was there in you all the time, but you did not feel it because you were living on the surface altogether and the surface is all crowd and clamour. But in all men there is this silent Purusha, base of the true mental being, the true vital being, the true physical being. It was by your prayer and aspiration that the thing came, to show you in what direction you must travel in order to have the true rasa of things, for it is only when one is liberated that one can get the real rasa. For after this liberation come others and among them the liberation and Ananda in action as well as in the static inner silence.

I don't think it is at all owing to the suggestion from what I wrote in the letter that you got the experience [*of a deep spiritual peace*]. The fundamental reason of these things does not belong to the surface, it is in the depths — or on the heights, at any rate, in the inner being behind the veil of the frontal consciousness. The actual occasional cause of the spiritual experience, — the match that sets the fire, so to say, — may be something very slight and looking accidental on the surface, a chance word or happening or something else quite fortuitous in its appearance. The person also through whom it comes may seem very much like a fortuitous instrument. It is true that this is only in appearance; for things slight and seemingly fortuitous have a reason for happening as they do, but that reason too is not on the surface.

As for the experience itself it takes up the movement which had started in you a long time ago and was interrupted by the vital upheaval that brought you so much trouble and struggle. Only, there has been since a widening of the consciousness and a step forward which made this form of the experience possible. At that time you had not much appreciation for calm and peace — you hankered only after bhakti and Ananda. But calm, peace, shanti are the necessary basis for any establishment of other things. Otherwise there is no solid foundation in the consciousness; if there is only unrest and movement, bhakti, Ananda and everything else can only come and go in starts and fits and find no ground to live on. It must, however, be not a mere mental quiet, but the deep spiritual peace of the shantimaya Shiva. It was this that touched you (descending through the head) in this experience. For the rest it is a resumption of the piercing of the veil, the beginning of the power of inner experience as opposed to the lesser experiences of the surface, the opening of the inner being, which is necessary for bringing the Yogic consciousness. A certain amount of vital purification has taken place which made the resumption of this kind of experience possible.

You certainly need not be afraid of going into unconsciousness, for it is not unconsciousness that you would go into, but simply the *inner* consciousness, — that going quite inward which

is the result of intense *dhyāna* and the beginning of a certain kind of *samādhi*.

The Inner Being and the Inmost or Psychic Being

There is an inner being and an inmost being which we call the psychic. When one meditates, one tries to go into the inner being. If one does it, then one feels very well that one has gone inside. What can be realised in meditation can also become the ordinary consciousness in which one lives. Then one feels what is now the ordinary consciousness to be something quite external and on the surface, not one's real self.

*

The inner being is composed of the inner mental, the inner vital, the inner physical. The psychic is the inmost — supporting all the others. Usually it is in the inner mental that this separation first happens and it is the inner mental Purusha who remains silent observing the Prakriti as separate from himself. But it may also be the inner vital Purusha or inner physical or else without location simply the whole Purusha consciousness separate from the whole Prakriti. Sometimes it is felt above the head — but then it is usually spoken of as the Atman and the realisation is that of the silent Self.

*

It is not possible to distinguish the psychic being at first. What has to be done is to grow conscious of an inner being which is separate from the external personality and nature — a consciousness or Purusha calm and detached from the outer action of the Prakriti.

*

The reason why she remembers nothing when she comes out of her meditation is that the experience is taking place in the inner being and the outer consciousness is not ready to receive it. Formerly her sadhana was mainly on the vital plane which is

often the first to open and the connection of that plane with the body consciousness is easy to establish because they are nearer to each other. Even then however her body was suffering because of attacks from the hostile elements in the vital plane. Now the sadhana seems to have gone inward into the psychic being. This is a great advance and she need not mind the want of connection with the most external consciousness at present. The work goes on all the same and it is probably necessary that it should be so just now. Afterwards, if she keeps steadily to the right attitude, it will descend into the outer consciousness.

Chapter Two

Inner Detachment and the Witness Attitude

Inner Detachment

It [*the individual consciousness*] is not by its nature detached from the mental and other activities. It can be detached, it can be involved. In the human consciousness it is as a rule always involved, but it has developed the power of detaching itself—a thing which the lower creation seems unable to do. As the consciousness develops, this power of detachment also develops.

*

Detachment means standing back with part of the consciousness and observing what is being done without being involved in it. There is no “how” to that; you do it or try it until it succeeds.

*

That sense of separate being and concentration behind the frontal consciousness is very good. It helps to liberate the inner being and make it stand back from the movements of the outer nature.

*

That is the condition of progress,—if, whenever there is an attempt to cloud the consciousness, you can stand back, remain quiet and prevent the clouding. Do that always and the progress is sure.

*

All that you have written here is perfectly correct. It is so, by standing back from these forces [*in the surrounding world*], neither attracted nor disturbed by them, that one gets freedom,

perceives their falsity or imperfection and is able to rise above and overcome them. The consciousness that comes forward may be either the psychic or the spiritualised mind — it is probably the former.

*

Well, but it [*the need for detachment*] is not individual to you. Everyone has to do that with his difficulties. Detach means that the Witness in oneself has to stand back and refuse to look on the movement as his own (the soul's own) and look on it as a habit of past nature or an invasion of general Nature. Then to deal with it as such. It may seem difficult, but it comes perfectly well by trying persistently.

*

One must get the power to quiet the mental and vital, if not at first at all times, yet whenever one wills — for it is the mind and vital that cover up the psychic being as well as the self (Atman) and to get at either one must get in through their veil; but if they are always active and you are always identified with their activities, the veil will always be there. It is also possible to detach yourself and look at these activities as if they were not your own but a mechanical action of Nature which you observe as a disinterested witness. One can then become aware of an inner being which is separate, calm and uninvolved in Nature. This may be the inner mental or vital Purusha and not the psychic, but to get at the consciousness of the inner *manomaya* and *prāṇamaya* Purusha is always a step towards the unveiling of the psychic being.

*

The condition in which all movements become superficial and empty with no connection with the soul is a stage in the withdrawal from the surface consciousness to the inner consciousness. When one goes into the inner consciousness, it is felt as a calm, pure existence without any movement, but eternally tranquil, unmoved and separate from the outer nature. This

comes as a result of detaching oneself from the movements, standing back from them and is a very important movement of the sadhana. The first result of it is an entire quietude, but afterwards that quietude begins (without the quietude ceasing) to fill with the psychic and other inner movements which create a true inner and spiritual life behind the outer life and nature. It is then easier to govern and change the latter.

At present there are fluctuations in your consciousness because this inner state is not yet fully developed and established. When it is, there will still be fluctuations in the outer consciousness, but the inner quiet, force, love etc. will be constant and the superficial fluctuations will be watched by the inner being without its being shaken or troubled, until they are removed by the complete outer change.

As for X, it is best to let it pass and try to remain steady within and detached; one cannot separate from all contacts; one must become more and more superior to their customary reactions.

*

Detachment is the beginning of mastery, but for complete mastery there should be no reactions at all. When there is something within undisturbed by the reactions that means the inner being is free and master of itself, but it is not yet master of the whole nature. When it is master, it allows no wrong reactions — if any come they are at once repelled and shaken off, and finally none come at all.

*

The experience you have of a division in the being with the inner void and indifferent, *udāsīna*, — not sorrowful, but neutral and indifferent, — is an experience which many pass through and is highly valued by the Sannyasis. For us it is a passage only to something larger and more positive. In it the old small human feelings fall away and a sort of calm neutral void is made for a higher nature to manifest. It must be fulfilled and replaced by a sense of large silence and freedom into which the Mother's

consciousness can flow from above.

*

In the ordinary consciousness one takes a personal interest in what is done, feels joy or feels sorrow. When one does sadhana, a condition may come in which the consciousness draws back from these reactions of joy and sorrow and does work and action impersonally as a thing that ought or has to be done but without desire or reactions. The Yogis value this condition of complete detachment very highly. In our Yoga it is a passage only, if it comes, through which one goes from the ordinary consciousness to a deeper one in which one acts out of a deep peace and union with the Divine or else of a self-existent Ananda not depending on anything but the presence of the Divine, in which all works are done not out of personal interest or satisfaction but for the sake of the Divine.

The Witness Attitude

A man with a very developed introspective mind often identifies himself with the witness part of his mind and observes his own thoughts and studies their nature. That is a beginning which makes it easy for the full detachment to come. For others it is less easy, but it can be done by all.

*

There is a stage in the sadhana in which the inner being begins to awake. Often the first result is the condition made up of the following elements:

(1) A sort of witness attitude, in which the inner consciousness looks at all that happens as a spectator or observer, observing things but taking no active interest or pleasure in them.

(2) A state of neutral equanimity in which there is neither joy nor sorrow, only quietude.

(3) A sense of being something separate from all that happens, observing it but not part of it.

(4) An absence of attachment to things, people or events.

It seems as if this condition were trying to come in you; but it is still imperfect. For instance in this condition (1) there should be no disgust or impatience or anger when people talk, only indifference and an inner peace and silence. Also (2) there should not be a mere neutral quiet and indifference, but a positive sense of calm, detachment and peace. Again (3) there should be no going out of the body so that you do not know what is happening or what you are doing. There may be a sense of not being the body but something else, — that is good; but there should be a perfect awareness of all that is going on in or around you.

Moreover this condition even when it is perfect is only a transitional stage—it is intended to bring a certain state of freedom and liberation. But in that peace there must come the feeling of the Divine Presence, the sense of the Mother's power working in you, the joy or Ananda.

If you can concentrate in the heart as well as in the head, then these things can more easily come.

*

The mind can become quiet only when you detach yourself from it and see the thoughts as things that pass. Then you don't think yourself but see thoughts passing through your mind. Afterwards you can stop attending to these passers-by and concentrate on the Mother.

Thoughts and feelings are passing from one human being to another all the time, only people don't know or observe it. Especially if people live together the same life, as in the Asram, a sort of atmosphere is formed in which the same thoughts and feelings are moving about and constantly passing from one to another.

You have to become conscious — that is to say, there must be something in you which is not carried away by thoughts and feelings, but looks at them and observes how they work and how they affect you. The part that observes and knows is called the Witness *sākṣī* in man. It is always possible to develop this in oneself.

It is not by thinking and reading that consciousness comes. There are many who read and think a great deal but are not conscious, have not the witness developed in them. There are others who work all day like X, yet are very strongly conscious. When one has the power of stopping thinking altogether and only looking, then the Witness becomes very strong and conscious. This consciousness can come by practice, but it can also come by turning to the Mother and thinking of her always and offering to her everything. The being opens, the Mother's force begins to work and one becomes more and more conscious.

*

It is indeed a great thing that you can keep this calm and this unaffected witness attitude. It is always the sign of a strong inner foundation in the consciousness and that even the physical being shares in this result of the realisation.

*

As for the "spectator" and the coils of the dragon, it is the Chino-Japanese image for the world-force extending itself in the course of the universe and this expresses the attitude of the Witness seeing it all and observing in its unfolding the unrolling of the play of the Divine, Lila. It is this attitude that gives the greatest calm, peace, samata in face of the riddle of the cosmic workings. It is not meant that action and movement are not accepted but they are accepted as the Divine Working which is leading to ends which the mind may not always see at once, but the soul divines through all the supreme purpose and the hidden guidance.

Of course there is afterwards an experience in which the two sides of the Divine Whole, the Witness and the Player, blend together; but this poise of the spectator comes first and leads to that fuller experience. It gives the balance, the calm, the increasing understanding of soul and life and their deeper significances without which the full supramental experience cannot come.

The Witness Purusha or Witness Consciousness

By itself the Purusha is impersonal, but by mixing itself with the movements of Prakriti it makes for itself a surface ego or personality. When it appears in its own separate nature then it is seen to be detached and observing.

*

The consciousness you speak of would be described in the Gita as the witness Purusha. The Purusha or basic consciousness is the true being or at least, on whatever plane it manifests, represents the true being. But in the ordinary nature of man it is covered up by the ego and the ignorant play of the Prakriti and remains veiled behind as the unseen Witness supporting the play of the Ignorance. When it emerges, you feel it as a consciousness behind, calm, central, unidentified with the play which depends upon it. It may be covered over, but it is always there. The emergence of the Purusha is the beginning of liberation. But it can also become slowly the Master — slowly because the whole habit of the ego and the play of the lower forces (which also you describe correctly here) is against that. Still it can dictate what higher play is to replace the lower movement and then there is the process of that replacement, the higher coming, the lower struggling to remain and push away the higher movement. You say rightly that the offering to the Divine shortens the whole thing and is more effective, but usually it cannot be done completely at once owing to the past habit and the two methods continue together until the complete surrender is possible.

*

The attitude of the witness consciousness within—I do not think it necessarily involves an external seclusion, though one may do that also—is a very necessary stage in the progress. It helps the liberation from the lower prakriti—not getting involved in the ordinary nature movements; it helps the establishment of a perfect calm and peace within, for there is then one part of the being which remains detached and sees without

being disturbed the perturbations of the surface; it helps also the ascent into the higher consciousness and the descent of the higher consciousness, for it is through this calm, detached and liberated inner being that the ascent and descent can easily be done. Also, to have the same witness look on the movements of Prakriti in others, seeing, understanding but not perturbed by them in any way is a very great help towards both the liberation and the universalisation of the being. I could not therefore possibly object to this movement in a sadhak.

As for the surrender it is not inconsistent with the witness attitude. On the contrary by liberating from the ordinary Prakriti, it makes easier the surrender to the higher or divine Power. Very often when this witness attitude has not been taken but there is a successful calling in of the Force to act in one, one of the first things the Force does is to establish the witness attitude so as to be able to act with less interference or immixture from the movements of the lower Prakriti.

There remains the question of the avoidance of contact with others and there there is some difficulty or incertitude. Part of your nature has a strong turn towards contact with others, action on others, interchange, almost a need of it. This brings about some fluctuation between the turn to an inner isolation and the turn towards contact and action. There is the same double and fluctuating movement in others here like X. In such cases I generally do not stress upon either tendency but leave the consciousness to find its own poise, because I have seen that to press too much on the isolation tendency when the nature is not mainly contemplative does not succeed very well — unless of course the sadhak himself gets a strong and fixed determination that way. This may be the cause of what you felt. But the question between witness attitude and surrender does not arise, for the reason I have explained — one can very well aid or lead to the other as ours is a Yoga which joins these things together and does not keep them always separate.

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It is by a constant repetition and development of the experience

[*that the witness consciousness can become constant*]. But the witness being does not always remain as a point. It becomes something extended supporting the rest.

The Purusha and Change of the Prakriti

That is the old Vedantic idea — to be free and detached within and leave the Prakriti to itself. When you die, the Purusha will go to glory and the Prakriti drop off — perhaps into Hell. This theory is a source of any amount of self-deception and wilful self-indulgence.

*

The witness attitude is not meant as a convenient means for disowning the responsibility of one's defects and thereby refusing to mend them. It is meant for self-knowledge and, in our Yoga, as a convenient station (detached and uninvolved, therefore not subject to Prakriti) from which one can act on the wrong movements by refusal of assent and by substituting for them the action of the true consciousness from within or above.

*

You can certainly go on developing the consciousness of the Witness Purusha above, but if it is only a witness and the lower Prakriti is allowed to have its own way, there would be no reason why it [*an unquiet and disturbed condition*] should ever stop. Many take that attitude — that the Purusha has to liberate itself by standing apart, and the Prakriti can be allowed to go on till the end of the life doing its own business, — it is *prārabdha karma*; when the body falls away, the Prakriti will drop also and the Purusha go off into the featureless Brahman! This is a comfortable theory, but of more than doubtful truth; I don't think liberation is so simple and facile a matter as that. In any case, the transformation which is the object of our Yoga would not take place.

The Purusha above is not only a Witness, he is the giver (or withholder) of the sanction; if he persistently refuses the sanction

to a movement of Prakriti, keeping himself detached, then, even if it goes on for a time by its past momentum, it usually loses its hold after a time, becomes more feeble, less persistent, less concrete and in the end fades away. If you take the Purusha consciousness, it should be not only as the Witness but as the Anumanta, refusing sanction to the disturbing movements, sanctioning only peace, calm, purity and whatever else is part of the divine nature. This refusal of sanction need not mean a struggle with the lower Prakriti; it should be a quiet, persistent, detached refusal leaving unsupported, unassented to, without meaning or justification the contrary action of the nature.

Chapter Three

Inner Experiences in the State of Samadhi

Samadhi or Trance

The experience you had is of course the going inside of the consciousness which is usually called trance or *samādhi*. The most important part of it however is the silence of the mind and vital which is fully extended to the body also. To get the capacity of this silence and peace is a most important step in the sadhana. It comes at first in meditation and may throw the consciousness inward in trance, but it has to come afterwards in the waking state and establish itself as a permanent basis for all the life and action. It is the condition for the realisation of the Self and the spiritual transformation of the nature.

*

The experience you relate, the stillness, the emptiness of mind and vital and cessation of thoughts and other movements, was the coming of the state called “samadhi” in which the consciousness goes inside in a deep stillness and silence. This condition is favourable to inner experience, realisation, the vision of the unseen truth of things, though one can get these in the waking condition also. It is not sleep but the state in which one feels conscious within, no longer outside.

*

It [*the experience of samadhi*] is not indispensable at this stage; but if it comes of itself, it can be allowed to develop. But experience in the waking state is more important for this Yoga. Samadhi is a help for reaching the inner depths of the consciousness. One is able to go more easily by it inward below the surface being, to get into direct contact with other supraphysical

planes of experience, to pass into other worlds and return, to contact happenings distant in space and time, to see what is in the supraconscious and to enter into what is supraconscious to our mental status.

*

What she speaks of as losing the body consciousness is probably a tendency of the consciousness to go inside — into Samadhi of some kind. Samadhi means a state in which one is not awake and aware of outward things, but also one is not asleep, one is conscious inwardly with another than the waking consciousness. If this comes, it is not to be avoided, as Yogic realisation can take place in this condition as well as in the waking state.

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It is a state of inner immobile silence that one gets in Samadhi when the outer mind is stilled and there is only some inner or some higher consciousness which may itself be either in silent concentration or else experiencing some state of Knowledge or Ananda or Peace.

*

Going inside does not bring always Ananda. There are many kinds of samadhi and many sorts of experience in each kind. What happens when one goes in is that one enters into the inner planes of consciousness, it may be the subconscious, it may be the mental, vital or subtle physical plane. From there one goes into the corresponding worlds or else one rises up into higher planes superconscious to us — to the ranges above our mind or to the spiritual mental plane in which one can unite with the Sachchidananda consciousness or to the Supramental. What you describe seems to be the subconscious, but that may be only a first step in the going inside.

*

In samadhi it is the inner mental, vital, physical which are separated from the outer, no longer covered by it — therefore they

can freely have inner experiences. The outer mind is either quiescent or in some way reflects or shares the experience. As for the central consciousness being separated from all mind that would mean a complete trance without any recorded experiences.

*

It is the subtle parts of the physical that go up. The external consciousness can also go up, but then there is a complete trance. There is not much utility for the complete trance in this sadhana.

*

Trance in English is usually used only for the deeper kinds of samadhi; but, as there is no other word, we have to use it for all kinds.

*

Samadhi is not a thing to be shunned — only it has to be made more and more conscious.

Trance Not Essential

It is not necessary to be in samadhi to be in contact with the Divine.

*

Yes, they [*all the stages of higher realisation*] can be attained even in full activity. Trance is not essential — it can be used, but by itself it cannot lead to the change of consciousness which is our object, for it gives only an inner subjective experience which need not make any difference in the outer consciousness. There are plenty of instances of sadhaks who have fine experiences in trance but the outer being remains as it was. It is necessary to bring out what is experienced and make it a power for transformation both of the inner and the outer being. But it can be done without going into Samadhi in the waking consciousness itself. Concentration of course is indispensable.

Kinds of Samadhi

Nirvikalpa Samadhi according to tradition is simply a trance from which one cannot be awakened even by burning or branding — i.e. a trance in which one has gone completely out of the body. In more scientific parlance it is a trance in which there is no formation or movement of the consciousness and one gets lost in a state from which one can bring back no report except that one was in bliss. It is supposed to be a complete absorption in the Sushupti or the Turiya.

*

“Nirvikalpa samadhi” properly means a complete trance in which there is no thought or movement of consciousness or awareness of either inward or outward things — all is drawn up into a supracosmic Beyond. But here it cannot mean that — it probably means a trance in a consciousness beyond the Mind.

*

As to the dream, it was not a dream but an experience of the inner being in a conscious dream state, *svapna-samādhi*. The numbness and the feeling of being about to lose consciousness are always due to the pressure or descent of a Force to which the body is not accustomed but feels strongly. Here it was not the physical body that was being directly pressed, but the subtle body, the *sūkṣma śarīra* in which the inner being more intimately dwells and in which it goes out in sleep or trance or in the moment of death. But the physical body in these vivid experiences feels as if it were itself that was having the experience; the numbness was the effect on it of the pressure. The pressure on the whole body would mean a pressure on the whole inner consciousness, perhaps for some modification or change which would make it more ready for knowledge or experience; the 3rd or 4th rib would indicate a region which belongs to the vital nature, the domain of the life-force, some pressure for a change there.

*

It [*the kind of samadhi one has*] depends on the nature of the physical consciousness you keep. When there is the descent of consciousness into the body one becomes aware of a subtle physical consciousness and that can remain in samadhi — one seems to be aware of the body, but it is really the subtle body and not the outward physical. But also one can go deep within and yet be aware of the physical body also and of working upon it, but not of outward things. Finally one can be absorbed in a deep concentration but strongly aware of the body and the descent of the Force in it. This last is accompanied with consciousness of outward things, though no attention may be paid to them. This last is not usually called samadhi, but it is a kind of waking samadhi. All conditions from the deep samadhi of complete trance to the working of the Force in the fully waking consciousness are used in this Yoga; one need not insist on complete trance always, for the others also are necessary and without them the complete change cannot take place.

It is good that the higher consciousness and its powers are descending into the parts below the head and heart. That is absolutely necessary for the transformation, since the lower vital and the body must also be changed into stuff of the higher consciousness.

*

For this Yoga these divisions [*the classifications of samadhi in Vedanta*] are not so important.

Samadhi and the Waking State

Trance is a going inside away from the waking state. What corresponds to trance in the waking state would be a complete concentration indifferent to outward movements or else a silence of the whole being in Brahman realisation, the *samāhita* state of the Gita.

*

Immersion in Sachchidananda is a state one can get in the waking

condition without Samadhi — dissolution can come only after the loss of the body on condition that one has reached the highest state and does not will to return here to help the world.

*

On the contrary it is in the waking state that this realisation must come and endure in order to be a reality of the life. If experienced in trance it would be a superconscious state true for some part of the inner being, but not real to the whole consciousness. Experiences in trance have their utility for opening the being and preparing it, but it is only when the realisation is constant in the waking state that it is truly possessed. Therefore in this Yoga most value is given to the waking realisation and experience.

What you write about the work is correct; to work in this calm ever-widening consciousness is at once a *sādhana* and a *siddhi*.

*

The entire oblivion of the experience means merely that there is still no sufficient bridge between the inner consciousness which has the experience in a kind of samadhi and the exterior waking consciousness. It is when the higher consciousness has made the bridge between them that the outer also begins to remember.

Samadhi and Sleep

It [*a tendency to fall asleep while meditating*] is the result of the attempt to go above. It is not sleep that comes, but a tendency to go inside under the pressure — the old Yogas did this going above precisely in this way, by going into samadhi. For us, it has to come in the waking condition — for until it does, it cannot be made the basis for a new consciousness governing the life.

*

It [*the tendency to fall asleep during meditation*] is a common obstacle with all who practise Yoga at the beginning. The sleep disappears gradually in two ways — (1) by the intensifying of the

force of concentration, (2) by the sleep itself becoming a kind of swapna samadhi in which one is conscious of inner experiences that are not dreams (i.e. the waking consciousness is lost for the time, but it is replaced not by sleep but by an inward conscious state in which one moves in the supraphysical of the mental or vital being).

*

There is no reason why one should not have a burning aspiration in sleep, provided one is conscious in sleep. In fact, the condition you describe was not sleep — it was simply that the consciousness was trying to go inside in a sort of indrawn condition (a kind of half-samadhi) while the external mind was constantly coming out of it. What you have, if you go into this indrawn condition, is not dreams but spiritual experiences or visions or experiences in other supraphysical planes of consciousness. Your burning aspiration was just such a spiritual experience.

*

No, it was not sleep. You went inside into an inner consciousness; in this inner consciousness one is awake inside, but not outside, not conscious of external things but of inner things only. Your inner consciousness was busy doing what your outer mind had been trying to do, that is to work upon the thoughts and suggestions that bring restlessness and to put them right; it can be done much more easily by the inner consciousness than by the outer mind.

As for the things that are necessary to be done, they can be done much more easily by the Force and Peace descending (bringing the solid strength) than by your own mental effort.

*

It was not half sleep or quarter sleep or even one-sixteenth sleep that you had; it was a going inside of the consciousness, which in that state remains conscious but shut to outer things and open only to inner experience. You must distinguish clearly between

these two quite different conditions, one is *nidrā*, the other the beginning at least of *samādhi* (not *nirvikalpa* of course!). This drawing inside is necessary because the active mind of the human being is at first too much turned to outward things; it has to go inside altogether in order to live in the inner being (inner mind, inner vital, inner physical, psychic). But with training one can arrive at a point when one remains outwardly conscious and yet lives in the inner being and has at will the indrawn or the out-poured condition; you can then have the same dense immobility and the same inpouring of a greater and purer consciousness in the waking state as in that which you erroneously call sleep.

*

About your experiences:

(1) The sleep which you felt when meditating was not sleep but an inward condition of the consciousness. When this inward condition is not very deep one can be aware of various scenes, voices etc. which belong not to the physical but to some inner plane of consciousness — their value or truth depends on the plane to which one reaches. Those of the surface are of no importance and one has simply to pass through them till one gets deeper.

(2) The fear, anger, depression etc. which used to rise when making the japa of the names came from a vital resistance in the nature (this resistance exists in everyone) which threw up these things because of the pressure on the vital part to change which is implied in sadhana. These resistances rise and then, if one takes the right attitude, slowly or quickly clear away. One has to observe them and separate oneself from them, persisting in the concentration and sadhana till the vital becomes quiet and clear.

(3) The things you saw (moon, sky etc.) are due to the opening of the inner vision; this usually comes when the concentration begins to open up the inner consciousness of which this subtle vision is a part. This faculty of vision has its importance in the development of the inner being, and need not be discouraged, even though too much importance should not be attached to the

things seen in the earlier stages.

(4) There are some however that are part of the growing spiritual experience, such as the sun you saw overhead and the piece of golden light — for these are signs of an opening within and symbolic. Both are symbols of the Divine Truth and Light and of one action of their influence.

(5) The most important experience, however, is that of the peace and quiet which comes with a good concentration. It is this that must grow and fix itself in the mind and vital and body — for it is this peace and quiet that make a firm basis for the sadhana.

*

The starting of the body happens very often when it is in a kind of sleep of samadhi and something touches whether from within or without.

The Trance of Mediums

The medium trance is of a different kind — they get not into touch with Sachchidananda but with the beings of the lower vital plane. To develop the power of going into this higher kind of trance, one must have done some sadhana. As to purification, entire purification is not necessary, but some part of the being must have turned to higher things.

Chapter Four

Three Experiences of the Inner Being

Opening into the Inner Mental Self

The three experiences of which you speak belong all to the same movement or the same stage of your spiritual life; they are initial movements of the consciousness to become aware of your inner being which was veiled, as in most, by the outer waking self. There are, we might say, two beings in us, one on the surface, our ordinary exterior mind, life, body consciousness, another behind the veil, an inner mind, an inner life, an inner physical consciousness constituting another or inner self. This inner self once awake opens in its turn to our true real and eternal self. It opens inwardly to the soul, called in the language of this Yoga the psychic being which supports our successive births and at each birth assumes a new mind, life and body. It opens above to the Self or spirit which is unborn and by conscious recovery of it we transcend the changing personality and achieve freedom and full mastery over our nature.

You did quite right in first developing the sattvic qualities and building up the inner meditative quietude. It is possible by strenuous meditation or by certain methods of tense endeavour to open doors on to the inner being or even break down some of the walls between the inner and outer self before finishing or even undertaking this preliminary self-discipline, but it is not always wise to do it as that may lead to conditions of sadhana which may be very turbid, chaotic, beset with unnecessary dangers. By adopting the more patient course you have arrived at a point at which the doors of the inner being have begun almost automatically to swing open. Now both processes can go on side by side, but it is necessary to keep the sattvic quietude, patience, vigilance, — to hurry nothing, to force nothing, not to

be led away by any strong lure or call of the intermediate stage which is now beginning before you are sure that it is the right call. For there are many vehement pulls from the forces of the inner planes which it is not safe to follow.

Your first experience is an opening into the inner mental self—the space between the eyebrows is the centre of the inner mind, vision, will and the blue light you saw was that of a higher mental plane, a spiritual mind, one might say, which is above the ordinary human mental intelligence. An opening into this higher mind is usually accompanied by a silence of the ordinary mental thought. Our thoughts are not really created within ourselves independently in the small narrow thinking machine we call our mind; in fact, they come to us from a vast mental space or ether either as mind-waves or waves of mind-force that carry a significance which takes shape in our personal mind or as thought-formations ready-made which we adopt and call ours. Our outer mind is blind to this process of Nature; but by the awakening of the inner mind we can become aware of it. What you saw was the receding of this constant mental invasion and the retreat of the thought-forms beyond the horizon of the wide space of mental Nature. You felt this horizon to be in yourself somewhere, but evidently it was in that larger self-space which even in its more limited field just between the eyebrows you felt to be bigger than the corresponding physical space. In fact, though the inner mind spaces have horizons, they stretch beyond those horizons—illimitably. The inner mind is something very wide projecting itself into the infinite and finally identifying itself with the infinity of universal Mind. When we break out of the narrow limits of the external physical mind we begin to see inwardly and to feel this wideness, in the end this universality and infinity of the mental self-space. Thoughts are not the essence of mind-being, they are only an activity of mental nature; if that activity ceases, what appears then as a thought-free existence that manifests in its place is not a blank or void but something very real, substantial, concrete we may say—a mental being that extends itself widely and can be its own field of existence silent or active as well as the Witness, Knower, Master of that

field and its action. Some feel it first as a void, but that is because their observation is untrained and insufficient and loss of activity gives them the sense of blank; an emptiness there is, but it is an emptiness of the ordinary activities, not a blank of existence.

The recurrence of the experience of the receding away of thoughts, the cessation of the thought-generating mechanism and its replacement by the mental self-space, is normal and as it should be; for this silence or at any rate the capacity for it has to grow until one can have it at will or even established in an automatic permanence. For this silence of the ordinary mind-mechanism is necessary in order that the higher mentality may manifest, descend, occupy by degrees the place of the present imperfect mentality and transform the activities of the latter into its own fuller movements. The difficulty of its coming when you are at work is only at the beginning — afterwards when it is more settled one finds that one can carry on all the activities of life either in the pervading silence itself or at least with that as the support and background. The silence remains behind and there is the necessary action on the surface or the silence is our wide self and somewhere in it an active Power does the works of Nature without disturbing the silence. It is therefore quite right to suspend the work while the visitation of the experience is there — the development of this inner silent consciousness is sufficiently important to justify a brief interruption or pause.

In the case of the other two experiences, on the contrary, it is otherwise. The dream-experience must not be allowed to take hold of the waking hours and pull the consciousness within; it must confine its operation to the hours of sleep. So too there should be no push or pressure to break down the wall between the inner self and the outer “I” — the fusion must be allowed to take place by a developing inner action in its own natural time. I shall explain why in another letter.

The Awakening of the Inner Being in Sleep

Your second experience is a first movement of the awakening of the inner being in sleep. Ordinarily when one sleeps a complex

phenomenon happens. The waking consciousness is no longer there, for all has been withdrawn within into the inner realms of which we are not aware when we are awake, though they exist; for then all that is put behind a veil by the waking mind and nothing remains except the surface self and the outward world — much as the veil of the sunlight hides from us the vast worlds of the stars that are behind it. Sleep is a going inward in which the surface self and the outside world are put away from our sense and vision. But in ordinary sleep we do not become aware of the worlds within either; the being seems submerged in a deep subconscious. On the surface of this subconscious floats an obscure layer in which dreams take place, as it seems to us, but, more correctly it may be said, are recorded. When we go very deeply asleep, we have what appears to us as a dreamless slumber; but in fact dreams are going on, but they are either too deep down to reach the recording surface or are forgotten, all recollection of their having existed even is wiped out in the transition to the waking consciousness. Ordinary dreams are for the most part or seem to be incoherent, because they are either woven by the subconscious out of deep-lying impressions left in it by our past inner and outer life, woven in a fantastic way which does not easily yield any clue of meaning to the waking mind's remembrance, or are fragmentary records, mostly distorted, of experiences which are going on behind the veil of sleep — very largely indeed these two elements get mixed up together. For in fact a large part of our consciousness in sleep does not get sunk into this subconscious state; it passes beyond the veil into other planes of being which are connected with our own inner planes, planes of supraphysical existence, worlds of a larger life, mind or psyche which are there behind and whose influences come to us without our knowledge. Occasionally we get a dream from these planes, something more than a dream, — a dream experience which is a record direct or symbolic of what happens to us or around us there. As the inner consciousness grows by sadhana, these dream experiences increase in number, clearness, coherence, accuracy and after some growth of experience and consciousness, we can, if we observe, come to understand them

and their significance to our inner life. Even we can by training become so conscious as to follow our own passage, usually veiled to our awareness and memory, through many realms and the process of the return to the waking state. At a certain pitch of this inner wakefulness this kind of sleep, a sleep of experiences, can replace the ordinary subconscious slumber.

It is of course an inner being or consciousness or something of the inner self that grows aware in this way, not, as usually it is, behind the veil of sleep, but in the sleep itself. In the condition which you describe, it is just becoming aware of sleep and dream and observing them — but as yet nothing farther — unless there is something in the nature of your dreams that has escaped you. But it is sufficiently awake for the surface consciousness to remember this state, that is to say, to receive and keep the report of it even in the transition from the sleep to the waking state which usually abolishes by oblivion all but fragments of the record of sleep-happenings. You are right in feeling that the waking consciousness and this which is awake in sleep are not the same — they are different parts of the being.

When this growth of the inner sleep consciousness begins, there is often a pull to go inside and pursue the development even when there is no fatigue or need of sleep. Another cause aids this pull. It is usually the vital part of the inner being that first wakes in sleep and the first dream experiences (as opposed to ordinary dreams) are usually in the great mass experiences of the vital plane, a world of supraphysical life, full of variety and interest, with many provinces, luminous or obscure, beautiful or perilous, often extremely attractive, where we can get much knowledge too both of our concealed parts of nature and of things happening to us behind the veil and of others which are of concern for the development of our parts of nature. The vital being in us then may get very much attracted to this range of experience, may want to live more in it and less in the outer life. This would be the source of that wanting to get back to something interesting and enthralling which accompanies the desire to fall into sleep. But this must not be encouraged in waking hours, it should be kept for the hours set apart for

sleep where it gets its natural field. Otherwise there may be an unbalancing, a tendency to live more and too much in the visions of the supraphysical realms and a decrease of the hold on outer realities. The knowledge, the enlargement of our consciousness of these fields of inner Nature is very desirable, but it must be kept in its own place and limits.

A Touch of the Inner Self

In my last letter I had postponed the explanation of your third experience. What you have felt is indeed a touch of the Self, — not the unborn Self above, the Atman of the Upanishads, for that is differently experienced through the silence of the thinking mind, but the inner being, the psychic supporting the inner mental, vital, physical being, of which I have spoken. A time must come for every seeker of complete self-knowledge when he is thus aware of living in two worlds, two consciousnesses at the same time, two parts of the same existence. At present he lives in the outer consciousness, the outer being and sees within the inner self — but he will go more and more inward, till the position is reversed and he lives within in this new inner consciousness, inner self and feels the outer as something on the surface formed as an instrumental personality for the inner's self-expression in the material world. Then from within a Power works on the outer to make it a conscious plastic instrument so that finally the inner and the outer may become fused into one. The wall you feel is indeed the wall of the ego which is based on the insistent identification of oneself with the outer personality and its movements. It is that identification which is the keystone of the limitation and bondage from which the outer being suffers, preventing expansion, self-knowledge, spiritual freedom. But still the wall must not be prematurely broken down, because that may lead to a disruption or confusion or invasion of either part by the movements of the two separated worlds before they are ready to harmonise. A certain separation is necessary for some time after one has become aware of these two parts of the being as existing together. The force of the Yoga must be given

time to make the necessary adjustments and openings, and to take the being inward and then from this inward poise to work on the outer nature.

This does not mean that one should not allow the consciousness to go inward so that as soon as possible it should live in the inward world of being and see all anew from there. That inward going is most desirable and necessary and that change of vision also. I mean only that all should be done by a natural movement without haste. The movement of going inward may come rapidly, but even after that something of the wall of ego will be there and it will have to be steadily and patiently taken down so that no stone of it may abide. My warning against allowing the sleep world to encroach on the waking hours is limited to that alone and does not refer to the inward movement in waking concentration or ordinary waking consciousness. The waking movement carries us finally into the inner self and by that inner self we grow into contact with and knowledge of the supraphysical worlds, but this contact and knowledge need not and should not lead to an excessive preoccupation with them or a subjection to their beings and forces. In sleep we actually enter into these worlds and there is the danger, if the attraction of the sleep consciousness is too great and encroaches on the waking consciousness, of this excessive preoccupation and influence.

It is quite true that an inner purity and sincerity, in which one is motivated only by the higher call, is one's best safeguard against the lures of the intermediate stage. It keeps one on the right track and guards from deviation until the psychic being is fully awake and in front and, once that happens, there is no farther danger. If in addition to this purity and sincerity there is a clear mind with a power of discrimination, that increases the safety in the earlier stages. I do not think I need or should specify too fully or exactly the forms the lure or pull is likely to take. It may be better not to call up these forces by an attention to them which may not be necessary. I do not suppose you are likely to be drawn away from the path by any of the greater perilous attractions. As for the minor inconveniences of the intermediate

stage, they are not dangerous and can easily be set right as one goes by the growth of consciousness, discrimination and sure experience.

As I have said, the inward pull, the pull towards going inward is not undesirable and need not be resisted. At a particular stage it may be accompanied by an abundance of visions due to the growth of the inner sight which sees things belonging to all the planes of existence. That is a valuable power helpful in the sadhana and should not be discouraged. But one must see and observe without attachment, keeping always the main object in front, realisation of the inner Self and the Divine—these things should only be regarded as incidental to the growth of consciousness and helpful to it, not as objects in themselves to be followed for their own sake. There should also be a discriminating mind which puts each thing in its place and can pause to understand its field and nature. There are some who become so eager after these subsidiary experiences that they begin to lose all sense of the true distinction and demarcation between different fields of reality. All that takes place in these experiences must not be taken as true—one has to discriminate, see what is mental formation or subjective construction and what is true, what is only suggestion from the larger mental and vital planes or what has reality only there and what is of value for help or guidance in inner sadhana or outer life.

Section Three

Experiences of the Cosmic Consciousness

Chapter One

The Universal or Cosmic Consciousness

The Terms “Universal” and “Cosmic”

There is no difference between the terms “universal” and “cosmic” except that “universal” can be used in a freer way than “cosmic”. Universal may mean “of the universe”, cosmic in that general sense. But it may also mean “common to all”, — e.g., “This is a universal weakness” — but you cannot say, “This is a cosmic weakness.”

*

Universal applies to everything in the universe — there are individual beings everywhere, but not physical in the terrestrial sense — the composition being different.

The Nature of the Cosmic Consciousness

Man is shut up at present in his surface individual consciousness and knows the world (or rather the surface of it) only through his outward mind and senses and by interpreting their contacts with the world. By Yoga there can open in him a consciousness which becomes one with that of the world; he becomes directly aware of a universal Being, universal states, universal Force and Power, universal mind, life, matter and lives in conscious relations with these things. He is then said to have the cosmic consciousness.

*

Men are usually shut up in the sense of their separate existence and know of the world and of other beings only what they see, hear, feel by their senses and their mental images and inferences. By Yoga one can get free of this limitation and become directly

aware of the Cosmic Self, the self of other beings, of their movements, of the movements of the cosmic forces, etc. etc. That is the cosmic consciousness.

*

Everyone has a universal consciousness standing concealed behind the individualised personality. When one becomes aware of it one feels in contact with the universal self and forces or one with them.

*

When one has the cosmic consciousness, one can feel the cosmic self as one's own self, one can feel one with other beings in the cosmos, one can feel all the forces of Nature as moving in oneself, all selves as one's own self.

There is no why except that it is so, since all is the One.

*

The ordinary consciousness of man is confined to his own individuality — he can enter into the consciousness of others and of the universe only by indirect means or a superficial and incomplete apprehension, by sense experience, contacts of emotional sympathy, mental concepts, analogy with his own movements, inference. In Yoga at a certain point this limitation breaks down, the consciousness enlarges itself, becomes directly aware of the Cosmic Self and knows the individual self to be one with it; of the Cosmic Energy and meets directly the action of the cosmic forces; of the cosmic mind, life, matter and feels first a contact of its individual mind, life, body with them, then a unity in which one's own individual mentality, vitality, physicality is felt as only a part of the universal, a wave of the ocean, a dynamo receiving and formulating the universal forces. Finally, the individual melts into the cosmic consciousness, the whole world is felt in oneself and oneself suffused through the world — it is the cosmic Consciousness, Mind, Life, material Energy that works through the individual function. The separate ego either does not exist or is only a convenience for the universal Spirit

and its action. This is the complete consummation of the cosmic Consciousness, but in its fullness it is not common, belonging properly to what we may call the Overmind realisation; but a constant partial and growing experience of it or an increasing contact with the cosmic Consciousness is a normal part of Yoga.

The Cosmic Consciousness and the Overmind

The cosmic consciousness does not belong to overmind in especial; it covers all the planes.

*

The overmind is the basis of the total cosmic consciousness, but the cosmic consciousness itself can be felt on any plane, not only above mind, but in mind, life, matter.

The Cosmic Consciousness and the Transcendent

The consciousness in the individual widens itself into the cosmic consciousness outside and can have any kind of dealing with it, penetrate, know its movements, act upon it or receive from it, even become commensurate with or contain it — which was what was meant in the language of the old Yogas by having the *brahmāṇḍa* within you.

The cosmic consciousness is that of the universe, of the cosmic Spirit and cosmic Nature with all the beings and forces within it. All that is as much conscious as a whole as the individual separately is, though in a different way. The consciousness of the individual is part of this, but a part feeling itself as a separate being. Yet all the time most of what he is comes into him from the cosmic consciousness. Only there is a wall of separative ignorance between. Once it breaks down he becomes aware of the cosmic Self, of the consciousness of the cosmic Nature, of the forces playing in it etc. He feels all that as he now feels physical things and impacts. He finds it all to be one with his larger or universal self.

There is the universal mental, the universal vital, the universal physical nature, and it is out of a selection of their forces and movements that the individual mind, vital and physical are made. The soul comes from beyond this nature of mind, life and body. It belongs to the Transcendent and because of it we can open to the higher Nature beyond.

The Divine is always One that is Many. The individual spirit is part of the “Many” side of the One, and the psychic being is what it puts forth to evolve here in the earth-nature. In liberation the individual self realises itself as the One (that is yet Many). It may plunge into the One and merge or hide itself in its bosom — that is the Laya of the Adwaita; it may feel its oneness and yet as part of the Many that is One enjoy the Divine, that is the Dwaitadwaita liberation; it may lay stress on its Many aspect and be possessed by the Divine, the Visishtadwaita, or go on playing with Krishna in the eternal Vrindavan, the Dwaita liberation. Or it may, even being liberated, remain in the Lila or manifestation or descend into it as often as it likes. The Divine is not bound by human philosophies — it is free in its play and free in its essence.

*

One has to get above the cosmic consciousness of the mind, life and matter by entering into the spiritual levels above the ordinary mind, into the higher consciousness. This does not cut one off from the cosmic consciousness, but one sees it without being involved in it.

*

It [*the correspondent's experience*] is the release from the limitations by the body consciousness and the opening into the wider being which is universal although it has an individual centre. As this develops one becomes aware of the true Self silent and illimitable and the cosmic consciousness. The concentration at the apex above the head is the station in the thousand-petalled lotus. There one becomes aware of states of mind above the ordinary human *buddhi*, the higher mind, the illumined mind,

the intuition, the overmind — finally when one has achieved the overmind one opens directly to the supramental consciousness.

*

The cosmic consciousness has many levels — the cosmic physical, the cosmic vital, the cosmic Mind, and above the higher planes of cosmic Mind there is the Intuition and above that the Overmind and still above that the Supermind where the Transcendental begins. In order to live on the Intuitive plane (not merely to receive intuitions), one has to live in the cosmic consciousness because there the cosmic and individual run into each other as it were, and the mental separation between them is already broken down, so nobody can reach there who is still in the separative ego.

A reflected static realisation of Sachchidananda is possible on any of the cosmic planes, but the full entering into it, the entire union with the Supreme Divine dynamic as well as static, comes with the transcendence.

*

It [*realisation of the Cosmic Divine*] is sufficient if only a static Consciousness is aimed at — but if transformation and the dynamic Divine is the aim, then the whole must be known. To realise the Cosmic Divine is after all impossible without entering into or opening to the cosmic consciousness — but one has to know the cosmic Prakriti as well as the cosmic Purusha.

Spiritual, Cosmic and Ordinary Consciousness

1. The spiritual consciousness is that in which we enter into the awareness of Self, the Spirit, the Divine and are able to see in all things their essential reality and the play of forces and phenomena as proceeding from that essential Reality.

2. The cosmic consciousness is that in which the limits of ego, personal mind and body disappear and one becomes aware of a cosmic vastness which is or is filled by a cosmic Spirit and aware also of the direct play of cosmic forces, universal

mind forces, universal life forces, universal energies of Matter, universal Overmind forces. But one does not become aware of all these together; the opening of the cosmic consciousness is usually progressive. It is not that the ego, the body, the personal mind disappear, but one feels them as only a small part of oneself. One begins to feel others too as part of oneself or varied repetitions of oneself, the same self modified by Nature in other bodies or, at the least, as living in the larger universal self which is henceforth one's own greater reality. All things in fact begin to change their value and appearance; one's whole experience of the world is radically different from that of those who are shut up in their personal selves. One begins to know things by a different kind of experience, more direct, not depending on the external mind and the senses. It is not that the possibility of error disappears, for that cannot be so long as mind of any kind is one's instrument for transcribing knowledge, but there is a new vast and deep way of experiencing, seeing, knowing, contacting things, and the confines of knowledge can be rolled back to an almost immeasurable degree. The things one has to be on guard against in the cosmic consciousness are the play of a magnified ego, the vaster attacks of the hostile forces—for they too are part of the cosmic consciousness—and the attempt of the cosmic Illusion (Ignorance, Avidya) to prevent the growth of the soul into the cosmic Truth. These are things that one has to learn by experience; mental teaching or explanation is quite insufficient. To enter safely into the cosmic consciousness and to pass safely through it, it is necessary to have a strong central unegoistic sincerity and to have the psychic being, with its divination of truth and unfaltering orientation towards the Divine, already in front in the nature.

3. The ordinary consciousness is that in which one knows things only or mainly by the intellect, the external mind and the senses and knows forces etc. only by their outward manifestations and results and the rest by inferences from these data. There may be some play of mental intuition, deeper psychic seeing or impulses, spiritual intimations etc.—but in the ordinary

consciousness these are incidental only and do not modify its fundamental character.

The Widening of the Consciousness

It is very good. The widening of the consciousness so as to be in touch with the Universal Infinite is an important stage in the sadhana.

*

The ordinary man lives in his own personal consciousness knowing things through his mind and senses as they are touched by a world which is outside him, outside his consciousness. When the consciousness subtilises, it begins to come into contact with things in a much more direct way, not only with their forms and outer impacts but with what is inside them, but still the range may be small. But the consciousness can also widen and begin to be first in direct contact with an immense range of things in the world, then to contain them as it were, — as it is said to see the world in oneself, — and to be in a way identified with it. To see all things in the self and the self in all things — to be aware of one being everywhere, aware directly of the different planes, their forces, their beings — that is universalisation.

*

Opening is when it [*the consciousness*] receives the higher forces — widening is when it is no longer limited to the body but widens to meet the cosmic consciousness.

*

The widening of the consciousness beyond the body means that there is a preparation to pass out of the limitation by the body consciousness and feel oneself either in the cosmic consciousness or in contact with it. If one has this feeling of enlargement or wideness above the head one is in contact with the universal Self; below it is according to the level with the cosmic Mind, the cosmic vital or the cosmic physical consciousness. When

one is entirely freed from the body limitation, then one feels the consciousness as infinite with the body only as something very small within it.

*

It [*separation of the consciousness from the body*] means the liberation from the body sense in which one can truly say, “I am not the body.” This liberation is part of the cosmic consciousness — as is also the realisation of the cosmic Will.

It is the liberation from the body sense only. That is quite different from the control of the body.

*

Yes, your experience was a very good one and your feeling about it was correct. When the consciousness is narrow and personal or shut in the body, it is difficult to receive from the Divine — the wider it expands, the more it can receive. A time comes when it feels as wide as the world and able to receive all the Divine into itself.

*

If you feel the barrier in which you lived broken down and an inner ocean of wideness, then a great thing has happened in you. For it is this wideness that comes when the consciousness opens to the Divine. Into this wideness the Divine’s peace, love, light and joy can pour and fix themselves there.

Go on calling the Mother and opening yourself to her. All the rest will come.

*

By a widening of all the parts of the being, a sense of largeness and liberation of the mind, vital and physical, an opening to the Divine everywhere and many other signs [*— so the Divine’s wideness manifests itself*].

*

Yes — it [*wideness*] is felt as if a great substantial vastness full

of power and giving the sense of oneness free and infinite and the same from top to bottom.

*

The emptiness and wideness in the brain is a very good sign. It is a condition for the opening horizontally into the cosmic consciousness and upward into the Self and higher spiritual Mind above the head.

*

The lightness, the feeling of the disappearance of the head and that all is open is a sign of the wideness of the mental consciousness which is no longer limited by the brain and its body sense — no longer imprisoned but wide and free. This is felt in the meditation only at first or with closed eyes, but at a later stage it becomes established and one feels always oneself a wide consciousness not limited by any feeling of the body. You felt something of this wideness of your being in the second experience when the Mother's foot pressed down your physical mind (head) till it went below and left room for this sense of an infinite Self. This wide consciousness not dependent on the body or limited by it is what is called in Yoga the Atman or Self. You are only having the first glimpses of it, but later on it becomes normal and one feels that one was always this Atman infinite and immortal.

*

It is an experience of the extension of consciousness. In Yoga experience the consciousness widens in every direction, around, below, above, in each direction stretching to infinity. When the consciousness of the Yogin becomes liberated, it is not in the body, but in this infinite height, depth and wideness that he lives always. Its basis is an infinite void or silence, but in that all can manifest — Peace, Freedom, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda. This consciousness is usually called the consciousness of the Self or Atman, for it is a pure existence or self that is the source of all things and contains all things.

*

You must dismiss the fear of the concentration. The emptiness you feel coming on you is the silence of the great peace in which you become aware of your self, not as the small ego shut up in the body, but as the spiritual self wide as the universe. Consciousness is not dissolved; it is the limits of the consciousness that are dissolved. In that silence thoughts may cease for a time, there may be nothing but a great limitless freedom and wideness, but into that silence, that empty wideness descends the vast peace from above, light, bliss, knowledge, the higher Consciousness in which you feel the oneness of the Divine. It is the beginning of the transformation and there is nothing in it to fear.

*

If these were imaginations, you would be able to reproduce them exactly each time you thought of them. The idea that it is imagination comes from the physical mind which cannot believe in anything supraphysical.

This opening of the chest into the void (not really the void, but the infinite Akash of the Chit universal and illimitable) is always the sign of an opening of the emotional being into the wideness of the Universal Divine. The image of the Akash is often seen by sadhaks in Dhyana. When the consciousness is liberated, whether in the mind or other part, there is always this sense of the wide infinite emptiness. From the top of the head to the throat is the mental plane of the being—a similar opening and emptiness or wideness here is the sign of the mind being freed into the Universal. From the throat to the stomach is the higher vital or emotional region. Below is the lower vital plane.

*

It is of course the inner wideness in which you were absorbed so that outward things went on of themselves without engaging the interest. In the meditation it was the same descent into the head—when it fills the head, there is often this feeling of there being no head, only that which is coming down or else a wideness in which that is acting. In the end one gets the feeling of being not something confined in the head and body, but a

wide consciousness with the body only as something comparatively small inside it. The vision was a figure of this wider consciousness with the Mother's inner presence always there.

*

Yes, what you see is right.¹ It is why the former Yogins preferred to remain in the wide consciousness aloof from the play of the energies — they regarded the latter as something belonging to the life of illusion which would fall away only by the rejection of the physical life through knowledge. It is when you oscillate from one consciousness to another that you seem to lose the higher one or feel as if it were lost. By keeping it within always, one is able to regard both sides and change the recalcitrant lower nature.

*

The wideness comes when one exceeds or begins to exceed the individual consciousness and spread out towards the universal. But the psychic can be active even in the individual consciousness.

*

At the beginning the experience of wideness like other experiences comes only from time to time. It is only afterwards that it becomes frequent and remains long, till finally it settles and the consciousness remains always wide.

The Cosmic Consciousness and the Cosmic Self

In the cosmic consciousness the personal I disappears into the one Self of all. The I which alone exists is not that of the person, the individualised I, but the universalised I identical with all and with the cosmic Self (Atman).

*

¹ *The correspondent said that when he lived in the wide consciousness above, he could remain undisturbed by the energies of the lower nature. But when he tried to change those energies, he became troubled and confused by their downward pull. — Ed.*

It is what it represents itself to be — an experience of the universal consciousness aspiring to the Divine Truth and beginning to receive its light. It is not your own consciousness, although you feel it in yourself, but a symbolic experience of this universal Vishwa-Purusha. These things one sees when one opens to the Cosmic Consciousness. Observed, felt and taken rightly they help to liberate, universalise and impersonalise. But keep the ego out of it — *everybody* opening to the Cosmic Divine will have these or similar experiences. Observe and go forward.

*

There is no doubt that you will succeed in your endeavour — all that is needed is firm persistence till the success is complete.

What you saw in the vision was the wide and luminous infinite of what is called the universal Self or spirit. It is that which is one of the fundamental things into which one enters when one reaches the higher consciousness and goes above. The personal being naturally feels itself as something very small and insignificant in that Infinite. But in that Infinite there are higher and higher levels and it is to these levels that the Mother was leading you when she took you by the hand. This often happens in meditation or trance when one has once gone upward into the spiritual infinity. The reason why you did not see the Mother's form was not that the Mother hid herself, or anything in you came between, but that you were both moving in the formless Infinite as spiritual beings and so it was easier to feel the presence than to see any physical form. Not that the form cannot be there, but it is less insistent and therefore not so soon seen as on the physical plane.

The silence in the head and heart and the emptiness are both necessary and desirable. When they are there, the consciousness finds them natural and they give it the sense of lightness and release; that is why the thoughts or speech of the old kind are foreign to it and when they come give fatigue. This silence and emptiness must grow, so that the higher consciousness with its knowledge, light, Ananda, peace can come down in it and progressively replace the old things. They must indeed occupy

not only head and heart but the whole body.

The Cosmic Consciousness and Self-Realisation

Liberation is the first necessity — to live in the peace, silence, purity, freedom of the Self. Along with that or afterwards if one awakens to the cosmic consciousness, then one can be free, yet one with all things.

To have the cosmic consciousness without the liberation etc. is possible, but then there is no freedom anywhere in the being from the lower nature and one may become in one's extended consciousness the playground of all kinds of forces without being able to be either free and detached from the Prakriti or free and master.

On the other hand, if there has been self-realisation, there is one part of the being that remains untouched amid the play of the cosmic forces — while if the peace and purity of the self has been established in the whole inner consciousness, then the outer touches of the lower nature cannot come in or overpower. This is the advantage of self-realisation preceding the cosmic consciousness and supporting it.

*

When there is the development of the Self-realisation or of the cosmic consciousness or if there is the emptiness which is the preliminary condition for these things, there comes an automatic tendency for a unity with all — their affections, mental, vital, physical may easily touch. One has to keep oneself free.

*

Affections here [*in the preceding letter*] has not the ordinary sense — it means “ways in which they are affected by things”, e.g. joy, grief, pleasure, pain, illness etc.

*

What you feel is the normal condition when the liberation takes place. The work of the senses etc. goes on as before, but the

consciousness is different, so that one feels not only the sense of liberation, separation etc., but that one is living in quite another world than that of the ordinary mind, life or senses. It is another consciousness with another knowledge and way of looking at things that begins. Afterwards as this consciousness takes possession of the instruments, there is a harmony of it with the sense and life; but these too become different, with a changed outlook, seeing the world no more as before but as if made of another substance with another significance.

*

It is when you feel the universal or divine beauty or presence in things that the senses are open to the Divine.

Chapter Two

Aspects of the Cosmic Consciousness

The Cosmic Ignorance and the Cosmic Truth

I think you are speaking of two different sides of the cosmic Consciousness, that which is behind all Cosmos and that which is expressed in the apparent universe.

*

There are in the cosmic consciousness two sides — one the contact with and perception of the ordinary cosmic forces and the beings behind these forces, that is what I call the cosmic Ignorance — the other is the perception of the cosmic Truths, the realisation of the one universal, the one universal Force, all the Vedantic truths of the One in all and all in one; all the various aspects of the Divine in the cosmic and a host of other things can come which do help to realisation and knowledge — provided they are taken in the right way. However all that can be best dealt with when it actually comes. It does not always come as soon as there is the widening — many pass through the widening of the consciousness to what is beyond the cosmic and take the cosmic in detail afterwards — and it is perhaps the safest order.

*

Each defect of the nature of the Ignorance is a deformation of something in the higher nature — a deformation which amounts to a contradiction even. It is a concretised perception of this that you got in your experience.

*

There is no ignorance that is not part of the cosmic Ignorance — only in the individual it becomes a limited formation and

movement, while the cosmic Ignorance is the whole movement of world-consciousness separated from the supreme Truth and acting in an inferior motion in which the Truth is perverted, diminished, mixed and clouded with falsehood and error. The cosmic Truth is the view on things of a cosmic Consciousness in which things are seen in their true essence and their true relation to the Divine and to each other.

*

The Yogi's cosmic experiences are spiritual experiences — experience of the play of the Forces and its relation with the self, the action of the Guide, what is behind the appearance of things, occurrences etc. etc., the actual relations of the workings of Purusha and Prakriti etc. The Divine Truth is the truth of the divine Essence, Consciousness, Self-Knowledge, Light, Power, Bliss. It is something from which the cosmos derives with all its movements, but it is more than the cosmos.

*

The cosmic Truth is the truth of things as they are at present expressed in the universe. The Divine Truth is independent of the universe, above it and originates it.

The Cosmic Harmony and Discords

A cosmos or universe is always a harmony, otherwise it could not exist, it would fly to pieces. But as there are musical harmonies which are built out of discords partly or even predominantly, so this universe (the material) is disharmonious in its separate elements — the individual elements are at discord with each other to a large extent, — it is only owing to a sustaining divine Will behind that the whole is still a harmony to those who look at it with the cosmic vision. But it is a harmony in evolution, in progress — that is, all is combined to strive towards a goal which is not yet reached, and the object of our Yoga is to hasten the arrival to this goal. When it is reached, there will be a harmony of harmonies substituted for the present harmony built up on

discords. This is the explanation of the present appearance of things.

*

This harmony of the lower consciousness is a harmony of discords brought about by a clash and mixture of forces.

*

It [*a rhythmic word like a song*]¹ is a representation in sound of the cosmic harmony from which the Ignorance is a fall and a discord.

*

There is a rhythm in everything unheard by the physical ear and by that rhythm things exist.

The Cosmic Will

It is not possible for the individual mind, so long as it remains shut up in its personality, to understand the workings of the Cosmic Will, for the standards made by the personal consciousness are not applicable to them. A cell in the body, if conscious, might also think that the human being and its actions are only the resultant of the relations and workings of a number of cells like itself and not the action of a unified self. It is only if one enters into the Cosmic Consciousness that one begins to see the forces at work and the lines on which they work and get a glimpse of the Cosmic Self and the Cosmic Mind and Will.

*

Everything here is not perfect, but all works out the cosmic Will in the course of the ages.

¹ *The correspondent heard a rhythmic word entering into his ears from above. The word was like a song and its rhythm sustained the universe, though it worked through destruction. — Ed.*

Opening to the Cosmic Mind

What is happening is that you have got into touch with the cosmic Mind where all sorts of ideas, possibilities, formations are moving about. The individual mind takes up those which appeal to it or perhaps come into distinct form when they touch it. But these are possibilities, not truths, so it is better not to let them run free like that.

*

One [*who is open to the cosmic Mind*] is aware of the cosmic Mind and the mental forces that move there and how they work on one's mind and that of others and one is able to deal with one's own mind with a greater knowledge and effective power. There are many other results, but this is the fundamental one. This is of course if one opens in the right way and does not merely become a passive field of all sorts of ideas and mental forces.

*

The opening to cosmic mind makes the experience of the Divine everywhere for instance more easy — but it is not essentially spiritual; if there is not a coming of wider spiritual experiences, then it need not be spiritual at all.

Opening to the Cosmic Life

One [*who is open to the cosmic Life*] becomes aware of all the life-forces and of how they act upon oneself and others, upon mind, upon body — also the force movements behind events. One becomes too directly aware of the vital plane, its worlds, its beings, and the direct action of their formations on the earth-life. One has to become aware also at the same time of one's own true vital being and act from it and not from the surface or desire vital in relation to all these things. All this effect does not come at once, — it develops as the contact with the cosmic Life increases.

*

In the universal vital especially there is a deceptive attraction and an exhilarating rush of power (not true quiet power but mere force) which those who yield to it cling to as a drunkard to his intoxicants. It gives them a sense of being strong and great and full of interesting things — when it is taken from them, they feel “like ordinary people” and ask for it back again.

*

You had a mental and the beginning of a vital opening to the cosmic consciousness — kept on the spiritualised level, the vision or feeling of the Divine Ananda without seeking for possession or a gross outer enjoyment, it would have established a Yogic consciousness and made a base for knowledge and peace and power and psychic love and surrender to come down.

The Cosmic Consciousness and the Physical

One cannot be high in the cosmic consciousness unless one has taken one's station above the body in a cosmic wideness which envelops the whole being. What you did was to open to it to a certain extent and then, instead of plunging into it at once as some do, your sadhana took the turn of coming down into the physical to prepare it. That is not altogether an undesirable turn — for many suffer by not having taken it. X for instance got a very evident opening into the cosmic, but he lost his way in it altogether because neither his vital nor his physical were cleared of certain very serious imperfections.

*

Yes, it is the psychising and purification that have been going on, but you had some openings of contact with the cosmic consciousness which did not prolong themselves when you came into the physical. X's ascents, I suppose, are more a going out of the body in his mind and vital than any stationing of his consciousness above. The latter would have brought a calm and peace and liberation which he does not possess as yet. This kind of ascent brings a conscious contact with cosmic forces of the

mental and vital planes (in his case more the vital) and some extraordinary experiences which are not altogether safe. There is great danger there of entering into and getting perplexed in the intermediate zone. I would rather see him liberated from these things than pursuing them any farther. A descent from above of the higher forces would be far more helpful to him than these ascensions.

Chapter Three

The Universal or Cosmic Forces

The Nature of the Universal or Cosmic Forces

Universal forces means all forces good or bad, favourable or hostile, of light or of darkness that move in the cosmos.

*

The cosmic forces here whether good or bad are forces of the Ignorance. Above them is the Truth-Consciousness that can only manifest when ego and desire are overcome—it is the force from the Divine Truth-Consciousness that must descend—the higher Peace, Light, Knowledge, Purity, Power, Ananda must work upon the cosmic forces in the individual so as to change them and substitute the Truth-Forces in place of the ordinary working.

*

They [*the cosmic forces*] act on everyone, according to the person's nature—and his will and consciousness.

*

It [*knowledge of the working of the cosmic forces*] is necessary—it comes of itself as one gets more and more forward in the cosmic consciousness.

*

They [*pain and misery*] are perhaps rather the result of the action of universal forces—but in a certain sense grief and pain may be said to be universal forces—for there are waves of these things that arrive and invade the being often without apparent cause.

*

The universal forces move by their own force and the consciousness within them—but there is also the Cosmic Spirit

who supports them and determines by his onlook and disposing will their play — although the direct action is left to the forces — it is the play of universal Prakriti with the universal Purusha watching behind it. In the individual also there is the individual Purusha who can, if he wills, not merely assent to the play of Prakriti, but accept or reject or will for its change. All that is in the play itself as we see it here. There is something above — but the action of that is an intervention rather than a moment to moment control; it can become a constant direct control only when one replaces the play of the forces by the government of the Divine.

*

One can live in contact with the Divine even amidst the universal forces — but to live in the Divine one must be able to rise beyond the lower universal nature or to call down the Divine consciousness here. The beginnings are difficult for most — and at no time is it really easy.

The Universal Energies and the Divine Force

There is only one Force or Energy here in reality; what is called the individual energy does not belong to the individual, but to the one universal Power.

In the one infinite Energy itself a distinction has to be made between the Divine Force that descends from above the mind and the inferior universal Energy with all its different forms, movements, waves and currents that come into you from outside. The inferior Energy proceeds from the Divine Shakti, but it has fallen from the truth of its source and has no longer its direct guidance.

When these universal energies come into touch with the Divine Force, rise to meet it and allow it to take hold of them and occupy and change them, then they are purified and uplifted and transformed and become a movement of the Divine Force.

When they are not in touch with the Divine Force, not obedient to it, but act for themselves, they are unenlightened, erring,

impure, mixed and confused — powers of the Ignorance.

Always, therefore, keep in touch with the Divine Force. The best thing for you is to do that simply and allow it to do its own work; wherever necessary, it will take hold of the inferior energies and purify them; at other times it will empty you of them and fill you with itself. But if you let your mind take the lead and discuss and decide what is to be done, you will lose touch with the Divine Force and the lower energies will begin to act for themselves and all go into confusion and a wrong movement.

It is still worse to try to draw these lower universal energies from those around you and keep up with them a vital interchange; what gain can there be in that? On the contrary, it will lead to greater confusion and even bring in all kinds of mischief and trouble.

Often the association of these universal energies with others is a mistake of your mind. Your mind is seeking always to fix them on to somebody, and often it fixes on one or another at random or else according to old experiences which are no longer valid. For instance, what you call X's force was not his, but a universal hostile force which used X at one time and, owing to a continued association in your mind, still presents itself to you as his, but may now no longer have anything to do with him. By keeping up the old association, you simply give greater opportunity for this undesirable energy to come upon you.

Follow always the one rule, to open yourself directly to the Divine Force and not to others; if you keep in touch with it, all else will progressively arrange itself.

The Cosmic Force and the Overmind

The cosmic Force is under the control of the Overmind. The Supermind does not act on it directly — whatever comes down from there is modified so as to pass through the Overmind and takes a lesser form suitable to the plane on which it acts, mental, vital or physical. But this intervention is exceptional in the ordinary play of the cosmic forces.

The Entry of the Universal Forces

There is no rule for that [*the points at which the universal forces enter one*]. The human being is ordinarily conscious only on the surface — but the surface records only the results of subliminal agencies at work. It is often through the centres that the forces come in, for then they get the greatest power to act on the nature — but they can enter anywhere.

*

The universal forces act very often through the subconscious — especially when the force they send is something the person has been in the habit of obeying and of which the seeds, impressions, “complexes” are strongly rooted in the subconscious — or, even if that is no longer the case, of which there is a memory still in the subconscious.

The Universal Forces and the Individual

Egoism is part of the machinery — a chief part — of universal Nature, first to develop individuality out of indiscriminate force and substance of Nature and, secondly, to make the individual (through the machinery of egoistic thought, feeling, will and desire) a tool of the universal forces. It is only when one gets into touch with a higher Nature that it is possible to get free of this rule of ego and subjection to these forces.

*

Yes, certainly, there is nothing in the individual that is not in the cosmic Energy. For all ordinary purposes the individual is only a differentiated centre of the universal forces — although his soul comes from beyond.

Time Vision and the Cosmic Movement

Time vision is the perception of the cosmic movement of things

developing from state to state and in that the individual movements which make it up. There is also possible a sense of the All as Time in flow or of Time as a dimension interwoven with Space like warp and woof of a cloth etc.

Section Four

The Dangers of Inner and Cosmic Experiences

Chapter One

The Intermediate Zone

The Nature of the Intermediate Zone

I mean by it [*the intermediate zone*] that when the sadhak gets beyond the barriers of his own embodied personal mind he enters into a wide range of experiences which are not the limited solid physical truth of things and not yet either the spiritual truth of things. It is a zone of formations, mental, vital, subtle physical, and whatever one forms or is formed by the forces of these worlds in us becomes for the sadhak for a time the truth — unless he is guided and listens to his guide. Afterwards if he gets through he discovers what it was and passes on into the subtle truth of things. It is a borderland where all the worlds meet, mental, vital, subtle physical, pseudo-spiritual — but there is no order or firm foothold — a passage between the physical and the true spiritual realms.

*

The intermediate zone means simply a confused condition or passage in which one is getting out of the personal consciousness and opening into the cosmic (cosmic Mind, cosmic vital, cosmic physical, something perhaps of the cosmic higher Mind) without having yet transcended the human mind levels. One is not in possession of or direct contact with the divine Truth *on its own levels*, but one can receive something from them, even from the Overmind, indirectly. Only, as one is still immersed in the cosmic Ignorance, all that comes from above can be mixed, perverted, taken hold of for their purposes by lower, even by hostile Powers.

It is not necessary for everyone to struggle through the intermediate zone. If one has purified oneself, if there is no abnormal vanity, egoism, ambition or other strong misleading element, or if one is vigilant and on one's guard, or if the psychic is in front,

one can either pass rapidly and directly or with a minimum of trouble into the higher zones of consciousness where one is in direct contact with the Divine Truth.

On the other hand the passage through the higher zones — higher Mind, illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind — is obligatory; they are the true Intermediaries between the present consciousness and the Supermind.

*

All these experiences are of the same nature and what applies to one applies to another. Apart from some experiences of a personal character, the rest are either idea-truths, such as pour down into the consciousness from above when one gets into touch with certain planes of being, or strong formations from the larger mental and vital worlds which, when one is directly open to these worlds, rush in and want to use the sadhak for their fulfilment. These things, when they pour down or come in, present themselves with a great force, a vivid sense of inspiration or illumination, much sensation of light and joy, an impression of widening and power. The sadhak feels himself freed from the normal limits, projected into a wonderful new world of experience, filled and enlarged and exalted: what comes associates itself, besides, with his aspirations, ambitions, notions of spiritual fulfilment and Yogic siddhi; it is represented even as itself that realisation and fulfilment. Very easily he is carried away by the splendour and the rush and thinks that he has realised more than he has truly done, something final or at least something sovereignly true. At this stage the necessary knowledge and experience are usually lacking which would tell him that this is only a very uncertain and mixed beginning; he may not realise at once that he is still in the cosmic Ignorance, not in the cosmic Truth, much less in the Transcendental Truth, and that whatever formative or dynamic idea-truths may have come down into him are partial only and yet farther diminished by their presentation to him by a still mixed consciousness. He may fail to realise also that if he rushes to apply what he is realising or receiving as if it were something definitive, he may either fall into confusion

and error or else get shut up in some partial formation in which there may be an element of spiritual Truth but it is likely to be outweighed by more dubious mental and vital accretions that deform it altogether. It is only when he is able to draw back (whether at once or after a time) from his experiences, stand above them with the dispassionate witness consciousness, observe their real nature, limitations, composition, mixture that he can proceed on his way towards a real freedom and a higher, larger and truer siddhi. At each step this has to be done. For whatever comes in this way to the sadhak of this Yoga, whether it be from Overmind or Intuition or illumined Mind or some exalted Life-Plane or from all these together, it is not definitive and final; it is not the supreme Truth in which he can rest, but only a stage. And yet these stages have to be passed through, for the Supramental or the Supreme Truth cannot be reached in one bound or even in many bounds; one has to pursue a calm patient steady progress through many intervening stages without getting bound or attached to their lesser Truth or Light or Power or Ananda.

This is in fact an intermediary state, a zone of transition between the ordinary consciousness in mind and the true Yoga knowledge. One may cross without hurt through it, perceiving at once or at an early stage its real nature and refusing to be detained by its half-lights and tempting but imperfect and often mixed and misleading experiences; one may go astray in it, follow false voices and a mendacious guidance, and that ends in a spiritual disaster; or one may take up one's abode in this intermediate zone, care to go no farther and build there some half-truth which one takes for the whole truth or become the instrument of the Powers of these transitional planes, — that is what happens to many sadhaks and Yogis. Overwhelmed by the first rush and sense of power of a supernormal condition, they get dazzled with a little light which seems to them a tremendous illumination or a touch of force which they mistake for the full Divine Force or at least a very great Yoga Shakti, or they accept some intermediate Power (not always a Power of the Divine) as the Supreme and an intermediate consciousness as the supreme

realisation. Very readily they come to think that they are in the full cosmic consciousness when it is only some front or small part of it or some larger Mind, Life-Power or subtle physical ranges with which they have entered into dynamic connection. Or they feel themselves to be in an entirely illumined consciousness, while in reality they are receiving imperfectly things from above through a partial illumination of some mental or vital plane; for what comes is diminished and often deformed in the course of transmission through these planes; the receiving mind and vital of the sadhak also often understands or transcribes ill what has been received or throws up to mix with it its own ideas, feelings, desires which it yet takes to be not its own but part of the Truth it is receiving because they are mixed with it, imitate its form, are lit up by its illumination and get from this association and borrowed light an exaggerated value.

There are worse dangers in this intermediate zone of experience. For the planes to which the sadhak has now opened his consciousness, — not as before getting glimpses of them and some influences, but directly, receiving their full impact, — send a host of ideas, impulses, suggestions, formations of all kinds, often the most opposite to each other, inconsistent or incompatible, but presented in such a way as to slur over their insufficiencies and differences, with great force, plausibility and a wealth of argument or a convincing sense of certitude. Overpowered by this sense of certitude, vividness, appearance of profusion and richness the mind of the sadhak enters into a great confusion which it takes for some larger organisation and order; or else it whirls about in incessant shiftings and changes which it takes for a rapid progress but which lead nowhere. Or there is the opposite danger that he may become the instrument of some apparently brilliant but ignorant formation; for these intermediate planes are full of little Gods or strong Daityas or smaller beings who want to create, to materialise something or to enforce a mental and vital formation in the earth life and are eager to use or influence or even possess the thought and will of the sadhak and make him their instrument for the purpose. This is quite apart from the well-known danger of actually hostile beings whose

sole purpose is to create confusion, falsehood, corruption of the sadhana and disastrous unspiritual error. Anyone allowing himself to be taken hold of by one of these beings, who often take a divine Name, will lose his way in the Yoga. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the sadhak may be met at his entrance into this zone by a Power of the Divine which helps and leads him till he is ready for greater things; but still that itself is no surety against the errors and stumblings of this zone; for nothing is easier than for the powers of these zones or hostile powers to imitate the guiding Voice or Image and deceive and mislead the sadhak or for himself to attribute the creations and formations of his own mind, vital or ego to the Divine.

For this intermediate zone is a region of half-truths — and that by itself would not matter, for there is no complete truth below the Supermind; but the half-truth here is often so partial or else ambiguous in its application that it leaves a wide field for confusion, delusion and error. The sadhak thinks that he is no longer in the old small consciousness at all, because he feels in contact with something larger or more powerful, and yet the old consciousness is still there, not really abolished. He feels the control or influence of some Power, Being or Force greater than himself, aspires to be its instrument and thinks he has got rid of ego; but this delusion of egolessness often covers an exaggerated ego. Ideas seize upon him and drive his mind which are only partially true and by overconfident misapplication are turned into falsehoods; this vitiates the movements of the consciousness and opens the door to delusion. Suggestions are made, sometimes of a romantic character, which flatter the importance of the sadhak or are agreeable to his wishes and he accepts them without examination or discriminating control. Even what is true, is so exalted or extended beyond its true pitch and limit and measure that it becomes the parent of error. This is a zone which many sadhaks have to cross, in which many wander for a long time and out of which a great many never emerge. Especially if their sadhana is mainly in the mental and vital, they have to meet here many difficulties and much danger; only those who follow scrupulously a strict guidance or have

the psychic being prominent in their nature pass easily as if on a sure and clearly marked road across this intermediate region. A central sincerity, a fundamental humility also save from much danger and trouble. One can then pass quickly beyond into a clearer Light where if there is still much mixture, incertitude and struggle, yet the orientation is towards the cosmic Truth and not to a half-illuminated prolongation of Maya and Ignorance.

I have described in general terms with its main features and possibilities this state of consciousness just across the border of the normal consciousness, because it is here that these experiences seem to move. But different sadhaks comport themselves differently in it and respond sometimes to one class of possibilities, sometimes to another. In this case it seems to have been entered through an attempt to call down or force a way into the cosmic consciousness — it does not matter which way it is put or whether one is quite aware of what one is doing or aware of it in these terms, it comes to that in substance. It is not the Overmind which was entered, for to go straight into the Overmind is impossible. The Overmind is indeed above and behind the whole action of the cosmic consciousness, but one can at first have only an indirect connection with it; things come down from it through intermediate ranges into a larger mind-plane, life-plane, subtle physical plane and come very much changed and diminished in the transmission, without anything like the full power and truth they have in the Overmind itself on its native levels. Most of the movements come not from the Overmind, but down from higher mind ranges. The ideas with which these experiences are penetrated and on which they seem to rest their claim to truth are not of the Overmind, but of the higher Mind or sometimes of the illumined Mind; but they are mixed with suggestions from the lower mind and vital regions and badly diminished in their application or misapplied in many places. All this would not matter; it is usual and normal, and one has to pass through it and come out into a clearer atmosphere where things are better organised and placed on a surer basis. But the movement was made in a spirit of excessive hurry and eagerness, of exaggerated self-esteem and self-confidence, of a premature

certitude, relying on no other guidance than that of one's own mind or of the "Divine" as conceived or experienced in a stage of very limited knowledge. But the sadhak's conception and experience of the Divine, even if it is fundamentally genuine, is never in such a stage complete and pure; it is mixed with all sorts of mental and vital ascriptions and all sorts of things are associated with this Divine guidance and believed to be part of it which come from quite other sources. Even supposing there is any direct guidance, — most often in these conditions the Divine acts mostly from behind the veil, — it is only occasional and the rest is done through a play of forces; error and stumbling and mixture of Ignorance take place freely and these things are allowed because the sadhak has to be tested by the world-forces, to learn by experience, to grow through imperfection towards perfection — if he is capable of it, if he is willing to learn, to open his eyes to his own mistakes and errors, to learn and profit by them so as to grow towards a purer Truth, Light and Knowledge.

The result of this state of mind is that one begins to affirm everything that comes in this mixed and dubious region as if it were all the Truth and the sheer Divine Will; the ideas or the suggestions that constantly repeat themselves are expressed with a self-assertive absoluteness as if they were Truth entire and undeniable. There is an impression that one has become impersonal and free from ego, while the whole tone of the mind, its utterance and spirit are full of vehement self-assertiveness justified by the affirmation that one is thinking and acting as an instrument and under the inspiration of the Divine. Ideas are put forward very aggressively that can be valid to the mind, but are not spiritually valid; yet they are stated as if they were spiritual absolutes. For instance, equality, which in that sense — for Yogic Samata is a quite different thing — is a mere mental principle, the claim to a sacred independence, the refusal to accept anyone as Guru, the opposition made between the Divine and the human Divine etc., etc. All these ideas are positions that can be taken by the mind and the vital and turned into principles which they try to enforce on the religious or even the spiritual life, but they are not and cannot be spiritual in their nature. There also begin to come in

suggestions from the vital planes, a pullulation of imaginations romantic, fanciful or ingenious, hidden interpretations, pseudo-intuitions, would-be initiations into things beyond, which excite or bemuse the mind and are often so turned as to flatter and magnify ego and self-importance, but are not founded on any well-ascertained spiritual or occult realities of a true order. This region is full of elements of this kind and, if allowed, they begin to crowd on the sadhak; but if he seriously means to reach the Highest, he must simply observe them and pass on. It is not that there is never any truth in such things, but for one that is true there are nine imitative falsehoods presented and only a trained occultist with the infallible tact born of long experience can guide himself without stumbling or being caught through the maze. It is possible for the whole attitude and action and utterance to be so surcharged with the errors of this intermediate zone that to go farther on this route would be to travel far away from the Divine and from the Yoga.

Here the choice is still open whether to follow the very mixed guidance one gets in the midst of these experiences or to accept the true guidance. Each man who enters the realms of Yogic experience is free to follow his own way; but this Yoga is not a path for anyone to follow, but only for those who accept to seek the aim, pursue the way pointed out upon which a sure guidance is indispensable. It is idle for anyone to expect that he can follow this road far, much less go to the end by his own inner strength and knowledge without the true aid or influence. Even the ordinary long-practised Yogas are hard to follow without the aid of the Guru; in this which as it advances goes through untrodden countries and unknown entangled regions, it is quite impossible. As for the work to be done it also is not a work for any sadhak of any path; it is not, either, the work of the "impersonal" Divine—who, for that matter, is not an active Power but supports impartially all work in the universe. It is a training ground for those who have to pass through the difficult and complex way of this Yoga and none other. All work here must be done in a spirit of acceptance, discipline and surrender, not with personal demands and conditions, but with a vigilant

conscious submission to control and guidance. Work done in any other spirit only results in an unspiritual disorder, confusion and disturbance of the atmosphere. In it too difficulties, errors, stumblings are frequent, because in this Yoga people have to be led patiently and with some field for their own effort, by experience, out of the ignorance natural to Mind and Life to a wider spirit and a luminous knowledge. But the danger of an unguided wandering in the regions across the border is that the very basis of the Yoga may be contradicted and the conditions under which alone the work can be done may be lost altogether. The transition through this intermediate zone — not obligatory, for many pass by a narrower but surer way — is a crucial passage; what comes out of it is likely to be a very wide or rich creation; but when one founders there, recovery is difficult, painful, assured only after a long struggle and endeavour.

The Dangers of the Intermediate Zone

As for the letter, I suppose you will have to tell the writer that his father committed a mistake when he took up Yoga without a Guru — for the mental idea about a Guru cannot take the place of the actual living influence. This Yoga especially, as I have written in my books, needs the help of the Guru and cannot be done without it. The condition into which his father got was a breakdown, not a state of siddhi. He passed out of the normal mental consciousness into a contact with some intermediate zone of consciousness (not the spiritual) where one can be subjected to all sorts of voices, suggestions, ideas, so-called inspirations which are not genuine. I have warned against the dangers of this intermediate zone in one of my books.¹ The sadhak can avoid entering into this zone — if he enters, he has to look with indifference on all these things and observe them without lending any credence; by so doing he can safely pass into the true spiritual light. If he takes them all as true or real without discrimination,

¹ *The Riddle of This World. Sri Aurobindo is referring to the preceding letter (pp. 296–303), which appeared in this book. — Ed.*

he is likely to land himself in a great mental confusion and if there is in addition a lesion or weakness of the brain — the latter is quite possible in one who has been subject to apoplexy — it may have serious consequences and even lead to a disturbance of the reason. If there is ambition or other motive of the kind mixed up in the spiritual seeking, it may lead to a fall in the Yoga and the growth of an exaggerated egoism or megalomania — of this there are several symptoms in the utterances of his father during the crisis. In fact one cannot or ought not to plunge into the experiences of this sadhana without a fairly long period of preparation and purification (unless one has already a great spiritual strength and elevation). Sri Aurobindo himself does not care to accept many into his path and rejects many more than he accepts. It would be well if he can get his father to pursue the sadhana no farther — for what he is doing is not really Sri Aurobindo's Yoga but something he has constructed in his own mind and once there has been an upset of this kind, the wisest course is discontinuance.

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All these experiences of yours belong to what I have called the intermediate zone; a large proportion of them are of the vital plane. In the vital plane there are all kinds of things, good and bad, helpful and dangerous, true, half true and false, genuine and deceptive. One has therefore to be very careful and be always vigilant and turned towards the true source of Light. The difficulty is that here one may have a true spiritual experience and afterwards all sorts of imitative deceptions come in and bring with them the danger of a false experience. One has to watch, observe one's experiences and try to discriminate and understand, — waiting for two things, the opening of a wider higher consciousness from above and the coming forward of the psychic being from behind. When these two things happen, then the chance of error is diminished and the true inner guidance begins to make itself more and more felt in the sadhana.

Lights are of all kinds, supramental, mental, vital, physical, divine or Asuric — one has to watch, grow in experience and

learn to know one from another. The true lights however are by their clarity and beauty not difficult to recognise.

The current from above and the current from below are familiar features of Yogic experience. It is the energy of the higher Nature and the energy of the lower Nature that become active and turned towards each other and move to meet, one descending, the other ascending. What happens when they meet, depends on the sadhaka. If his constant will is for the purification of the lower by the higher consciousness, then the meeting results in that and in spiritual progress. If his mind and vital are turbid and clouded, there is a clash, an impure mixture and much disturbance.

The division of the being into two parts — one a large consciousness behind, the other a smaller consciousness in front, is also a familiar feature of sadhana. In itself it is a necessary movement; it should naturally result in the growth of a larger Yogic consciousness prevailing over the small external consciousness and becoming a means for transformation under the pressure of the Divine Shakti. But here too it is possible for errors to take place — especially an outside Force may come in and replace the larger consciousness behind by a larger vital ego which pretends to be that. One must be on one's guard against any such intrusion; for many sadhaks suffer long and severely owing to such an intrusion which spoils the course of the sadhana.

On the whole aspire for the growth of the psychic and its control of the rest of the nature and for the opening, not to a larger vital consciousness, but to the higher consciousness above. And at all stages open yourself to the protection of the Mother and her grace and call on that for your safeguard and your guidance.

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There is no utility in such experiences; they may happen on the vital plane so long as one has still to pass through the vital range of experiences, but the aim should be to get beyond them and live in a pure psychic and spiritual experience. To admit or call the invasion of others into one's own being is to remain always in

the confusions of the intermediate zone. Only the Divine should be called into one's personal adhar — by which is not meant the loss of one's personal being or any idea of becoming the Divine, for that should be avoided. The ego has to be overcome, but the central personal being (which is not the ego but the individual self, soul, a portion of the Divine) has to remain a channel and instrument of the Divine Shakti. As for others, sadhaks etc. one can feel them in one's universalised consciousness, be aware of their movements, live in harmony with them in the Divine All, but not allow or call their presence within the personal adhar. Very often that leads to the invasion of the consciousness by vital powers or presences which assume the forms of those who are so admitted — and that is most undesirable. The sadhak must make his basic consciousness silent, calm, pure, peaceful and preserve or attain an absolute control over what he shall or shall not admit into it — otherwise, if he does not keep this control, he is in danger of becoming a field of confused and disorderly experiences or a plaything of all sorts of mental and vital beings and forces. Only one rule or influence other than one's own should be admitted, the rule of the Divine Shakti over the adhar.

Avoiding the Dangers of the Intermediate Zone

You are taking the first steps towards the cosmic consciousness in which there are all things good and bad, true and false, the cosmic Truth and the cosmic Ignorance. I was not thinking so much of ego as of these thousand voices, possibilities, suggestions. If you avoid these, then there is no necessity of passing through the intermediate zone. By avoid I mean really not admit — one can take cognizance of their nature and pass on.

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Anybody passing the border of the ordinary consciousness can enter into this [*intermediate*] zone, if he does not take care to enter into the psychic. In itself there is no harm in passing through, provided one does not stop there. But ego, sex, ambition etc., if

they get exaggerated, can easily lead to a dangerous downfall.

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It [*the breaking of the veil*] comes of itself with the pressure of the sadhana. It can also be brought about by specific concentration and effort.

It is certainly better if the psychic is conscious and active before there is the removing of the veil or screen between the individual and the universal consciousness which comes when the inner being is brought forward in all its wideness. For then there is much less danger of the difficulties of what I have called the intermediate zone.

Chapter Two

Inner Voices and Indications

The Nature of Voices

There are many voices, and all are not divine; this may be only a voice of desire. All that keeps one faithful to the Truth and insists on peace, purity, devotion, sincerity, a spiritual change of the nature can be listened to with profit; the rest must be observed with discrimination and not followed blindly. Keep the fire of aspiration burning, but avoid all impatient haste.

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Anybody can get “voices” — there are first the movements of one’s nature that take upon themselves a voice — then there are all sorts of beings who either for a joke or for a serious purpose invade with their voices.

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These voices are sometimes one’s own mental formations, sometimes suggestions from outside. Good or bad depends on what they say and on the quarter from which they come.

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This kind of manifestation [*hearing voices*] comes very often at a certain stage of the practice of Yoga. My experience is that it does not come from the highest source and cannot be relied upon and it is better to wait until one is able to enter a higher consciousness and a greater truth than any that these communications represent. Sometimes they come from beings of an intermediate plane who want to use the sadhak for some work or purpose. Many sadhaks accept and some, though by no means all, succeed in doing something, but it is often at the cost of the greater aims of Yoga. In other cases they come from beings who are hostile to the sadhana and wish to bring it to nothing

by exciting ambition, the illusion of a great work or some other form of ego. Each sadhak must decide for himself (unless he has a guru to guide him) whether to treat it as a temptation or a mission.

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It is possible to have a guiding Voice, but it is also easy to make a mistake in this matter. For the mind imitates the guiding voice and, if there are demands and desires in the vital, these also put themselves in the same form and are mistaken for a guiding voice. Make yourself pure of demand and desire, full only of psychic aspiration, surrendered, and in time a real guidance from within will come.

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An inner voice is a voice only — it may give the direction, but not the force. A voice speaks, it does not act. There is a great difference between reading a book [*for guidance*] and receiving the inner direction.

The Danger of Following Inner Voices

No, these indications of time and these voices were not commands from the Mother. I have indicated to you the truth of this matter; you must follow the rules laid down by the Mother for the physical life; if any change has to be made, either she herself will let you know or you have to get sanction for it from her. No voice heard within can prevail against her word and no intimation that comes through your mind can be accepted as binding unless it is confirmed by her.

You have made a confusion which is often made at the beginning of this kind of experience. It is no doubt the Mother's Force that was working within you or upon you, and some of the experiences, such as that of feeling the Mother in your heart, were perfectly genuine. But when the pressure of the Force works upon the consciousness, then in the plane on which it happens to be working, a great activity of different forces is set in play, e.g. if it is the mind, various mental forces, if it is the vital,

various vital forces. It is not safe to take all these for true things, to be accepted without question and followed as commands of the Mother. You received a pressure of a force so strong that it made your head shake for a long time; if the head shook like that, it is a sign that the mind or at least the mental physical was not able yet to receive all the force and assimilate it; if it had done so, there would have been no movement of the head, all would have been perfectly at ease, calm and still. But your mind started working, interpreting, beginning to put its own meaning on this particular phenomenon and again on others, trying to make a system by which to regulate your conduct and to give it authority, put it as the command of the Mother. The action of the Force was a fact, the interpretation you put on its details of coming and going was a mental formation and had no very positive value.

If you look at it carefully — as I have looked at the details reported by you — you will see that these suggestions were of a very shifting and changeful character, now one thing, now the other; only your mind adapted itself to the changes, adjusted its interpretation to suit them and tried to keep the consistency of a system. But in fact all was irregular and chaotic and it tended to make your action and conduct irregular and chaotic. True intuition would not do that; it would at least tend to balance, harmony, order.

You speak of intuition as regards the indication of time. There is an intuition of Time which is not of the mind and when it plays is always accurate to the very minute and if need be to the very second; but this was not that Intuition, — for it was not always accurate; it came right perhaps several times, then it began to be deceptive, it made you late for Pranam; it began to push towards lateness for the noon meal, make you clash with the convenience of the dining-room workers. It pushed you to be late for the evening and abandoned you altogether, so that in the end you had no evening meal. But your mind had got attached to its own formations and tried to justify, to put a meaning on these chaotic caprices, to explain them by the (very changeful) will of the Mother. All this is well-known to those

experienced in Yoga, and it means that these things were not intuitions, but constructions of the mind, mental formations. If there was an intuition at all, it was movements of the intuitive mind, but what the intuitive mind gives to us is the intuition of possibilities, some of which realise themselves, some do not or do it partly only, others miss altogether. Behind these mental constructions are Forces that want to realise themselves and try to use men as their instruments for realisation. These Forces need not be hostile, but they play for their own hand, they want to rule, use, justify themselves, create their own results. If they can do it by getting the Mother's sanction or passing themselves off as commands of the Mother, they are ready to do so; if they cannot get the embodied Mother's sanction, they are ready to represent themselves as sanctions of the Mother in her subtle unseen universal Form or Presence. Some they persuade to make not only a distinction but an opposition between their inner Mother who always tells them what they want to hear and the embodied Mother who, they find, is not so complaisant, checks them, corrects their fancies and their errors. At this stage there is the danger of a more serious invasion of Falsehood, of a hostile vital Force coming in, taking advantage of the mind's errors, which either tries to take the place of the Mother using her name or else creates revolt against her. A persuasion not to come to Pranam, not to keep her acquainted with your experiences and submit to correction, not to accord the life with her expressed will is a danger-signal at this stage, — for it means that the intruding Force wants space to work free from all control — and that was why I felt compelled to call your attention to the peril of a hostile Maya.

As for voices, there are many voices; each Force, each movement of the mental, vital, physical plane may equip itself with a voice. Your voices were not even at one with each other; one said one thing, when it did not work out another said something inconsistent with it; but you were attached to your mental formation and still tried to follow.

All this happens because the mind and vital in these exaltations of the stress of the sadhana become very active. That is

why it is necessary, first, to found your sadhana on a great calm, a great equality, not eagerly rushing after experiences or their fruit, but looking at them, observing, calling always for more and more Light, trying to be more and more wide, open, quietly and discerningly receptive. If the psychic being is always at the front, then these difficulties are greatly lessened, because there is here a light which the mind and vital have not, a spontaneous and natural psychic perception of the divine and the undivine, the true and the false, the imitation and the genuine guidance. It is also the reason why I insist on your referring your experiences to us, because, apart from anything else, we have the knowledge and experience of these things and can immediately put a check on any tendency to error.

Keep yourself open to the Mother's Force, but do not trust all forces. As you go on, if you keep straight, you will come to a time when the psychic becomes more predominantly active and the Light from above prevails more purely and strongly so that the chance of mental constructions and vital formations mixing with the true experience diminishes. As I have told you, these are not yet and cannot be the supramental Forces; it is a work of preparation which is only making things ready for a future Yoga-siddhi.

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How can the people in this Asram judge whether a man has progressed in Yoga or not? They judge from outward appearances — if a sadhak secludes himself, sits much in meditation, gets voices and experiences, etc. etc. they think he is a great sadhak! X was always a very poor Adhar. He had a few experiences of an elementary kind — confused and uncertain, but at every step he was getting into trouble and going off on a side path and we had to pull him up. At last he began to get voices and inspirations which he declared to be ours — I wrote to him many letters of serious warning and explanation but he refused to listen, was too much attached to his false voices and inspirations and, to avoid rebuke and correction, ceased to write or inform us. So he went wholly wrong and finally became hostile. You can tell this

by my authority to anybody who is puzzled like yourself about this matter.

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Higher experiences hurt nobody — the question is what is meant by higher? X for instance thought his experiences to be the highest Truth itself — I told him they were all imaginations but only with the result that he became furious with me. There are imitation higher experiences when the mind or vital catches hold of an idea or suggestion and turns it into a feeling, and while there is a rush of forces, a feeling of exultation and power etc. All sorts of “inspirations” come, visions, perhaps “voices”. There is nothing more dangerous than these voices — when I hear from somebody that he has a “voice”, I always feel uneasy, though there can be genuine and helpful voices, and feel inclined to say, “No voices please, — silence, silence and a clear discriminating brain.” I have hinted about this region of imitation experiences, false inspirations, false voices into which hundreds of Yogis enter and some never get out of it in my letter about the intermediate zone. If a man has a strong clear head and a certain kind of spiritual scepticism, he can go through and does — but people without discrimination like X or Y get lost. Especially ego enters in and makes them so attached to their splendid (?) condition that they absolutely refuse to come out. Now a retirement into seclusion gives free scope for this kind of action, as it makes one live entirely in one’s own subjective being without any control except what one’s own native discernment can bring in — and if that is not strong? Ego is of course the strong support of these subjective falsehoods, but there are other supports also. Work and mixing with others — with the contact of the objective that that brings — is not an absolute defence against these things, but it is a defence and serves as a check and as a kind of corrective balance. I notice that those who enter into this region of the intermediate zone usually make for retirement and seclusion and insist on it. These are the reasons why I prefer usually that sadhaks should not take to an absolute retirement, but keep a certain poise between silence and action, the inner and the outer together.

Part Four

The Fundamental Realisations of the Integral Yoga

Section One

Three Stages of Transformation:
Psychic, Spiritual, Supramental

Chapter One

The Psychic and Spiritual Realisations

The Fundamental Realisations¹

1. The psychic change so that a complete devotion can be the main motive of the heart and the ruler of thought, life and action in constant union with the Mother and in her Presence.

2. The descent of the Peace, Power, Light etc. of the Higher Consciousness through the head and heart into the whole being, occupying the very cells of the body.

3. The perception of the One and Divine infinitely everywhere, the Mother everywhere and living in that infinite consciousness.

Four Bases of Realisation

You know the four things on which the realisation has to be based — (1) on a rising to a station above the mind, (2) on the opening out of the cosmic consciousness, (3) on the psychic opening, (4) on the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, light, force, knowledge, Ananda etc. into all the planes of the being down to the most physical. All this has to be done by the working of the Mother's force aided by your aspiration, devotion and surrender. That is the Path. The rest is a matter of the working out of these things for which you have to have faith in the Mother's working.

Three Realisations for the Soul

When one speaks of the Divine spark, one is thinking of the soul

¹ *The letter under this heading is Sri Aurobindo's reply to the question, "What are the fundamental realisations in the Yoga?" — Ed.*

as a portion of the Divine which has descended from above into the manifestation rather than of something which has separated itself from the cosmos. It is the nature that has formed itself out of the cosmic forces — mind out of cosmic mind, life out of cosmic life, body out of cosmic matter.

For the soul there are three realisations — (1) the realisation of the psychic being and consciousness as the divine element in the evolution, (2) the realisation of the cosmic Self which is one in all, (3) the realisation of the supreme Divine from which both individual and cosmos have come and of the individual being (Jivatma) as an eternal portion of the Divine.

Foundations of the Sadhana

What you are experiencing is the true foundation of the spiritual life and realisation. It has three elements — first, the love which is the heart of Bhakti; then the descent of peace and equanimity which is the first necessary basis for realisation of self and the higher knowledge — what comes with it is the descent of the force which will work out in you the whole sadhana; thirdly, the feeling of a guiding presence or power which is the basis of Karma — of work and action founded in the spiritual consciousness.

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You can reply to X that the three experiences he is having are the right ones — viz. the opening of the psychic through the heart, the descent of peace and the consciousness of his true being as the witness. But these experiences must be developed, deepened, completed and made the ordinary state of the consciousness. So established they become the triple foundation of the sadhana.

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If you keep the wideness and calm as you are keeping it and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all is safe — for it means the double foundation of the Yoga — the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, freedom and security from

above and the openness of the psychic which keeps all the effort or all the spontaneous movement turned towards the true goal.

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To quiet the mind in such a way that no thoughts will come is not easy and usually takes time. The most necessary thing is to feel a quietude in the mind so that if thoughts come they do not disturb or hold the mind or make it follow them, but simply cross and pass away. The mind first becomes the witness of the passage of thought and not the thinker, afterwards it is able not to watch the thoughts but lets them pass unnoticed and concentrates in itself or on the object it chooses without trouble.

There are two main things to be secured as the foundations of sadhana — the opening of the psychic being and the realisation of the Self above. For the opening of the psychic being, concentration on the Mother and self-offering to her are the direct way. The growth of Bhakti which you feel is the first sign of the psychic development. A sense of the Mother's presence or force or the remembrance of her supporting and strengthening you is the next sign. Eventually, the soul within begins to be active in aspiration and psychic perception guiding the mind to the right thoughts, the vital to the right movements and feelings, showing and rejecting all that has to be put away and turning the whole being in all its movements to the Divine alone. For the self-realisation, peace and silence of the mind are the first condition. Afterwards one begins to feel release, freedom, wideness, to live in a consciousness silent, tranquil, untouched by any or all things, existing everywhere and in all, one with or united with the Divine. Other experiences come on the way, or may come, such as the opening of the inner vision, the sense of the Force working within and various movements and phenomena of the working etc. One may also be conscious of ascents of the consciousness and descents of Force, Peace, Bliss or Light from above.

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I do not know why you doubt your experiences — you should

accept them as genuine unless we expressly say anything to the contrary. In all the experiences you have sent me up to now, I have never found any that were not perfectly genuine; moreover, your observation of them is quite sound and accurate.

Your first experience was that of the opening of the psychic; you became aware of the psychic being and its aspirations and experiences and of the external being in front, as two separate parts of your consciousness. You were not able to keep this experience because the vital was not purified and pulled you out into the ordinary external consciousness. Afterwards, you got back into the psychic and were at the same time able to see your ordinary vital nature, to become aware of its defects and to work by the power of the psychic for its purification. I wrote to you at the beginning that this was the right way; for if the psychic is awake and in front, it becomes easy to remain conscious of the things that have to be changed in the external nature and it is comparatively easy too to change them. But if the psychic gets veiled and retires into the background, the outer nature left to itself finds it difficult to remain conscious of its own wrong movements and even with great effort cannot succeed in getting rid of them. You can see yourself, as in the matter of the food, that with the psychic active and awake the right attitude comes naturally and whatever difficulty there was soon diminishes or even disappears.

I told you also at that time that there was a third part of the nature, the inner being (inner mind, inner vital, inner physical) of which you were not yet aware, but which must also open in time. It is this that has happened in your last experience. What you felt as a part of you, yourself but not your physical self, rising to meet the higher consciousness above, was this inner being; it was your (inner) higher vital being which rose in that way to join the highest Self above — and it was able to do so, because the work of purifying the outer vital nature had begun in earnest. Each time there is a purification of the outer nature, it becomes more possible for the inner being to reveal itself, to become free and to open to the higher consciousness above.

When this happens, several other things can happen at the

same time. First, one becomes aware of the silent Self above — free, wide, without limits, pure, untroubled by the mental, vital and physical movements, empty of ego and limited personality, — this is what you have described in your letter. Secondly, the Divine Power descends through this silence and freedom of the Self and begins to work in the Adhara. This is what you felt as a pressure; its coming through the top of the head, the forehead and eyes and nose meant that it was working to open the mental centres — especially the two higher centres of thought and will and vision in the inner mental being. These two centres are called the thousand-petalled lotus and the *ājñā-cakra* between the eyebrows. Thirdly, by this working the inner parts of the being are opened and freed; you are liberated from the limitations of the ordinary personal mind, vital and physical and become aware of a wider consciousness in which you can be more capable of the needed transformation. But that is necessarily a matter of time and long working and you are only taking the first steps in this way.

When one goes into the inner being, the tendency is to go entirely inside and lose consciousness of the outside world — this is what people call Samadhi. But it is also necessary to be able to have the same experiences (of the Self, the workings in the inner consciousness etc.) in the waking state. The best rule for you will be to allow the entire going inside only when you are alone and not likely to be disturbed, and at other times to accustom yourself to have these experiences with the physical consciousness awake and participating in them or at least aware of them. You did therefore quite right in stopping the complete going inside while you were at X's place. There was no harm in having these experiences there or anywhere, but there should be nothing to draw the attention of others — especially of those who are not in the Yoga or in the atmosphere.

The Central Process of the Yoga

I have said that the most decisive way for the Peace or the Silence to come is by a descent from above. In fact, in reality

though not always in appearance, that is how they always come; — not in appearance always, because the sadhak is not always conscious of the process; he feels the peace settling in him or at least manifesting, but he has not been conscious how and whence it came. Yet it is the truth that all that belongs to the higher consciousness comes from above, not only the spiritual peace and silence, but the Light, the Power, the Knowledge, the higher seeing and thought, the Ananda come from above. It is also possible that up to a certain point they may come from within, but this is because the psychic being is open to them directly and they come first there and then reveal themselves in the rest of the being from the psychic or by its coming into the front. A disclosure from within or a descent from above are the two sovereign ways of the Yoga-siddhi. An effort of the external surface mind or emotions, a tapasya of some kind may seem to build up something of these things, but the results are usually uncertain and fragmentary compared to the result of the two radical ways. That is why in this Yoga we insist always on an “opening” — an opening inwards of the inner mind, vital, physical to the inmost part of us, the psychic, and an opening upwards to what is above the mind — as indispensable for the fruits of the sadhana.

The underlying reason for this is that this little mind, vital and body which we call ourselves is only a surface movement and not our “self” at all. It is an external bit of personality put forward for one brief life and for the play of the Ignorance. It is equipped with an ignorant mind stumbling about in search of fragments of truth, an ignorant vital rushing about in search of fragments of pleasure, an obscure and mostly subconscious physical receiving the impacts of things and suffering rather than possessing a resultant pain or pleasure. All that is accepted until the mind gets disgusted and starts looking about for the real Truth of itself and things, the vital gets disgusted and begins wondering whether there is not such a thing as real bliss and the physical gets tired and wants liberation from itself and its pains and pleasures. Then it is possible for this little ignorant bit of surface personality to get back to its real Self and with it to these

greater things — or else to extinction of itself, Nirvana.

The real Self is not anywhere on the surface but deep within and above. Within is the soul supporting an inner mind, inner vital, inner physical in which there is a capacity for universal wideness and with it for the things now asked for, — direct contact with the Truth of self and things, taste of a universal bliss, liberation from the imprisoned smallness and sufferings of the gross physical body. Even in Europe the existence of something behind the surface is now very frequently admitted, but its nature is mistaken and it is called subconscious or subliminal, while really it is very conscious in its own way and not subliminal but only behind the veil. It is, according to our psychology, connected with the small outer personality by certain centres of consciousness of which we become aware by Yoga. Only a little of the inner being escapes through these centres into the outer life, but that little is the best part of ourselves and responsible for our art, poetry, philosophy, ideals, religious aspirations, efforts at knowledge and perfection. But the inner centres are, for the most part, closed or asleep — to open them and make them awake and active is one aim of Yoga. As they open, the powers and possibilities of the inner being also are aroused in us; we awake first to a larger consciousness and then to a cosmic consciousness; we are no longer little separate personalities with limited lives but centres of a universal action and in direct contact with cosmic forces. Moreover, instead of being unwilling playthings of the latter, as is the surface person, we can become to a certain extent conscious and masters of the play of nature — how far this goes depending on the development of the inner being and its opening upward to the higher spiritual levels. At the same time the opening of the heart centre releases the psychic being which proceeds to make us aware of the Divine within us and of the higher Truth above us.

For the highest spiritual Self is not even behind our personality and bodily existence but is above it and altogether exceeds it. The highest of the inner centres is in the head, just as the deepest is the heart; but the centre which opens directly to the Self is above the head, altogether outside the physical body,

in what is called the subtle body, *sūkṣma śarīra*. This Self has two aspects and the results of realising it correspond to these two aspects. One is static, a condition of wide peace, freedom, silence: the silent Self is unaffected by any action or experience; it impartially supports them but does not seem to originate them at all, rather to stand back detached or unconcerned, *udāsīna*. The other aspect is dynamic and that is experienced as a cosmic Self or Spirit which not only supports but originates and contains the whole cosmic action — not only that part of it which concerns our physical selves but also all that is beyond it, this world and all other worlds, the supraphysical as well as the physical ranges of the universe. Moreover, we feel the Self as one in all, but also we feel it as above all, transcendent, surpassing all individual birth or cosmic existence. To get into the universal Self — one in all — is to be liberated from ego; ego either becomes a small instrumental circumstance in the consciousness or disappears from our consciousness altogether. That is the extinction or *nirvāṇa* of the ego. To get into the transcendent self above all makes us capable of transcending altogether even the cosmic consciousness and action — it can be the way to that complete liberation from the world-existence which is called also extinction, *laya*, *mokṣa*, Nirvana.

It must be noted however that the opening upward does not necessarily lead to peace, silence and Nirvana only. The sadhak becomes aware not only of a great, eventually an infinite peace, silence, wideness above us, above the head as it were and extending into all physical and supraphysical space, but also he can become aware of other things — a vast Force in which is all power, a vast Light in which is all knowledge, a vast Ananda in which is all bliss and rapture. At first they appear as something essential, indeterminate, absolute, simple, *kevala*; a Nirvana into any of these things seems possible. But we can come to see too that this Force contains all forces, this Light all lights, this Ananda all joy and bliss possible. And all this can descend into us. Any of them and all of them can come down, not peace alone; only the safest is to bring down first an absolute calm and peace for that makes the descent of the

rest more secure; otherwise it may be difficult for the external nature to contain or bear so much Force, Light, Knowledge or Ananda. All these things together make what we call the higher, spiritual or divine consciousness. The psychic opening through the heart puts us primarily into connection with the individual Divine, the Divine in his inner relations with us; it is especially the source of love and bhakti. This upward opening puts us into direct relation with the whole Divine and can create in us the divine consciousness and a new birth or births of the spirit.

For when the Peace is established, this higher or Divine Force from above can descend and work in us. It descends usually first into the head and liberates the inner mind centres, then into the heart centre and liberates fully the psychic and emotional being, then into the navel and other vital centres and liberates the inner vital, then into the Muladhara and below and liberates the inner physical being. It works at the same time for perfection as well as liberation; it takes up the whole nature part by part and deals with it, rejecting what has to be rejected, sublimating what has to be sublimated, creating what has to be created. It integrates, harmonises, establishes a new rhythm in the nature. It can bring down too a higher and yet higher force and range of the higher Nature until, if that be the aim of the sadhana, it becomes possible to bring down the supramental force and existence. All this is prepared, assisted, farthered by the work of the psychic being in the heart centre; the more it is open, in front, active, the quicker, safer, easier the working of the Force can be. The more love and bhakti and surrender grow in the heart, the more rapid and perfect becomes the evolution of the sadhana. For the descent and transformation imply at the same time an increasing contact and union with the Divine.

That is the fundamental rationale of the sadhana. It will be evident that the two most important things here are the opening of the heart centre and the opening of the mind centres to all that is behind and above them. For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher consciousness is the principal means of the siddhi. The

first opening is effected by a concentration in the heart, a call to the Divine to manifest within us and through the psychic to take up and lead the whole nature. Aspiration, prayer, bhakti, love, surrender are the main supports of this part of the sadhana — accompanied by a rejection of all that stands in the way of what we aspire for. The second opening is effected by a concentration of the consciousness in the head (afterwards, above it) and an aspiration and call and a sustained will for the descent of the divine Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda into the being — the Peace first or the Peace and Force together. Some indeed receive Light first or Ananda first or some sudden pouring down of knowledge. With some there is first an opening which reveals to them a vast infinite Silence, Force, Light or Bliss above them and afterwards either they ascend to that or these things begin to descend into the lower nature. With others there is either the descent, first into the head, then down to the heart level, then to the navel and below and through the whole body, or else an inexplicable opening — without any sense of descent — of peace, light, wideness or power or else a horizontal opening into the cosmic consciousness or, in a suddenly widened mind, an outburst of knowledge. Whatever comes has to be welcomed — for there is no absolute rule for all, — but if the peace has not come first, care must be taken not to swell oneself in exultation or lose the balance. The capital movement however is when the Divine Force or Shakti, the power of the Mother comes down and takes hold, for then the organisation of the consciousness begins and the larger foundation of the Yoga.

The result of the concentration is not usually immediate — though to some there comes a swift and sudden outflowering; but with most there is a time longer or shorter of adaptation or preparation, especially if the nature has not been prepared already to some extent by aspiration and tapasya. The coming of the result can sometimes be aided by associating with the concentration one of the processes of the old Yogas. There is the Advaita process of the way of knowledge — one rejects from oneself the identification with the mind, vital, body, saying continually “I am not the mind”, “I am not the vital”, “I am not the

body”, seeing these things as separate from one’s real self — and after a time one feels all the mental, vital, physical processes and the very sense of mind, vital, body becoming externalised, an outer action, while within and detached from them there grows the sense of a separate self-existent being which opens into the realisation of the cosmic and transcendent Spirit. There is also the method — a very powerful method — of the Sankhyas, the separation of the Purusha and the Prakriti. One enforces on the mind the position of the Witness — all action of mind, vital, physical becomes an outer play which is not myself or mine, but belongs to Nature and has been enforced on an outer me. I am the witness Purusha who am silent, detached, not bound by any of these things. There grows up in consequence a division in the being; the sadhak feels within him the growth of a calm silent separate consciousness which feels itself quite apart from the surface play of the mind and the vital and physical Nature. Usually when this takes place, it is possible very rapidly to bring down the peace of the higher consciousness and the action of the higher Force and the full march of the Yoga. But often the Force itself comes down first in response to the concentration and call and then, if these things are necessary, it does them and uses any other means or process that is helpful or indispensable.

One thing more. In this process of the descent from above and the working it is most important not to rely entirely on oneself, but to rely on the guidance of the Guru and to refer all that happens to his judgment and arbitration and decision. For it often happens that the forces of the lower nature are stimulated and excited by the descent and want to mix with it and turn it to their profit. It often happens too that some Power or Powers undivine in their nature present themselves as the Supreme Lord or as the Divine Mother and claim the being’s service and surrender. If these things are accepted, there will be an extremely disastrous consequence. If indeed there is the assent of the sadhak to the Divine working alone and the submission or surrender to that guidance, then all can go smoothly. This assent and a rejection of all egoistic forces or forces that appeal to the ego are the safeguard throughout the sadhana. But the

ways of Nature are full of snares, the disguises of the ego are innumerable, the illusions of the Powers of Darkness, Rakshasi Maya, are extraordinarily skilful; the reason is an insufficient guide and often turns traitor; vital desire is always with us tempting to follow any alluring call. This is the reason why in this Yoga we insist so much on what we call *samarpaṇa*—rather inadequately rendered by the English word surrender. If the heart centre is fully opened and the psychic is always in control, then there is no question; all is safe. But the psychic can at any moment be veiled by a lower upsurge. It is only a few who are exempt from these dangers and it is precisely those to whom surrender is easily possible. The guidance of one who is himself by identity or represents the Divine is in this difficult endeavour imperative and indispensable.

What I have written may help you to get some clear idea of what I mean by the central process of the Yoga. I have written at some length but, naturally, could cover only the fundamental things. Whatever belongs to circumstance and detail must arise as one works out the method, or rather as it works itself out,—for the last is what usually happens when there is an effective beginning of the action of the sadhana.

Chapter Two

Conditions of Transformation

Realisation and Transformation

Transformation is something progressive, but certainly there must be realisation before the complete transformation is possible.

The Three Transformations

There are three stages of the sadhana, psychic change, transition to the higher levels of consciousness — with a descent of their conscious forces — the supramental. In the last even the control over death is a later, not an initial stage. Each of these stages demands a great length of time and a high and long endeavour.

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To be *sthitaprajña* merely means to have one's thinking mind settled in the spiritual consciousness in the realisation of Self. That does not necessarily transform the other parts of the nature. The bringing down of the Force and Light of the higher consciousness, the opening of the psychic and the centres of the mind, vital and physical, the consent and receptive opening of the nature to the workings of the psychic and the higher consciousness, finally the opening to the supramental are the conditions of transformation. What do you mean by "attaining" the higher consciousness? The higher consciousness is something above the mind, vital and body of the human being. It is wholly spiritual. To attain may mean only to be able to go into it at will or to remain in it with a part of one's consciousness, while the rest goes on in the old way. Psychic transformation is when the whole being is remoulded into the nature of the psychic; spiritual transformation is when the whole being is spiritualised; supramental transformation is when the whole being is supramentalised —

that cannot be done automatically by merely being aware of the higher consciousness or attaining it in the ordinary limited sense.

The physical is of course the basis — that of the Overmind is in between the two hemispheres. The lower hemisphere must contain all the mind including its higher planes, the vital, the physical. The upper hemisphere contains the Divine existence-consciousness-bliss, with the Supermind as its means of self-formulation. The Overmind is at the head of the lower hemisphere and is the intermediate or transitional plane between the two.

The psychic being stands behind the heart supporting the mind, life and body. In the psychic transformation there are three main elements: (1) the opening of the occult inner mind, inner vital, inner physical, so that one becomes aware of all that lies behind the surface mind, life and body; (2) the opening of the psychic being or soul by which it comes forward and governs the mind, life and body turning all to the Divine; (3) the opening of the whole lower being to the spiritual truth — this last may be called the psycho-spiritual part of the change. It is quite possible for the psychic transformation to take one beyond the individual into the cosmic. Even the occult opening establishes a connection with the cosmic mind, cosmic vital, cosmic physical. The psychic realises the contact with all existence, the oneness of the Self, the universal love and other realisations which lead to the cosmic consciousness.

But all that is a result of the opening to the spiritual above and it comes by an infiltration or reflection of the spiritual light and truth in mind, life and body. The spiritual transformation proper begins or becomes possible when one rises above the mind and lives there governing all from above. Even in the psychic transformation one can rise above by a sort of going above of the mental, vital, physical being and a return, but one does not yet live above in the summit consciousness where Overmind has its seat with the other planes that are above the human Mind.

The supramental transformation can only come when the lid

between the lower and higher hemispheres or halves of existence is removed and the Supermind instead of the Overmind becomes the governing power of the existence — but of that nothing can be spoken now.

Preparation for the Supramental Change

Get the psychic being in front and keep it there, putting its power on the mind, vital and physical — so that it shall communicate to them its force of single-minded aspiration, trust, faith, surrender, direct and immediate detection of whatever is wrong in the nature and turned towards ego and error, away from Light and Truth.

Eliminate egoism in all its forms; eliminate it from every movement of your consciousness.

Develop the cosmic consciousness — let the egocentric outlook disappear in wideness, impersonality, the sense of the cosmic Divine, the perception of universal forces, the realisation and understanding of the cosmic manifestation, the play.

Find in place of ego the true being — a portion of the Divine, issued from the World-Mother and an instrument of the manifestation. This sense of being a portion of the Divine and an instrument should be free from all pride, sense or claim of ego or assertion of superiority, demand or desire. For if these elements are there, then it is not the true thing.

Most, even in doing Yoga, live in the mind, vital, physical, lit up occasionally or to some extent by the higher mind and by the illumined mind; but to prepare for the supramental change it is necessary (as soon as, personally, the time has come) to open up to the Intuition and the Overmind, so that these may make the whole being and the whole nature ready for the supramental change. Allow the consciousness quietly to develop and widen, and the knowledge of these things will progressively come.

Calm, discrimination, detachment (but not indifference) are all very important, for their opposites impede very much the transforming action. Intensity of aspiration should be there, but it must go along with these. No hurry, no inertia — neither

rajasic over-eagerness nor tamasic discouragement — a steady and persistent but quiet call and working. No snatching or clutching at realisation, but allowing realisation to come from within and above and observing accurately its field, its nature, its limits.

Let the power of the Mother work in you, but be careful to avoid mixture or the substitution in its place of either a magnified ego-working or a force of Ignorance presenting itself as Truth. Aspire especially for the elimination of all obscurity and unconsciousness in the nature.

These are the main conditions of preparation for the supramental change, but none of them is easy, and they must be complete before the nature can be said to be ready. If the true attitude (psychic, unegoistic, open only to the Divine Force) can be established, then the process can go on much more quickly. To take and keep the true attitude, to further the change in *oneself*, is the help that can be given, the one thing needed to assist the general change.

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1. Loss of egoism — including all ambition (even “spiritual” ambition), pride, desire, self-centred life, mind, will.
2. Universalisation of the consciousness.
3. Absolute surrender to the transcendental Divine.

Section Two

The Psychic Opening, Emergence and Transformation

Chapter One

The Psychic Being and Its Role in Sadhana

The Importance of the Psychic Change

What is meant in the terminology of the Yoga by the psychic is the soul element in the nature, the pure psyche or divine nucleus which stands behind mind, life and body (it is not the ego) but of which we are only dimly aware. It is a portion of the Divine and permanent from life to life, taking the experience of life through its outer instruments. As this experience grows it manifests a developing psychic personality which insisting always on the good, true and beautiful, finally becomes ready and strong enough to turn the nature towards the Divine. It can then come entirely forward, breaking through the mental, vital and physical screen, govern the instincts and transform the nature. Nature no longer imposes itself on the soul, but the soul, the Purusha, imposes its dictates on the nature.

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The soul, the psychic being, is in direct touch with the divine Truth, but it is hidden in man by the mind, the vital being and the physical nature (*manas, prāṇa, anna* of the Taittiriya Upanishad). One may practise Yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason; one may conquer power and luxuriate in all kinds of experiences in the vital; one may establish even surprising physical siddhis; but if the true soul-power behind does not manifest, if the psychic nature does not come into the front, nothing genuine has been done. In this Yoga, the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the true supramental light and finally to the supreme Ananda. Mind can open by itself to its own higher reaches; it can still itself and widen into the Impersonal; it may too spiritualise itself in

some kind of static liberation or Nirvana; but the supramental cannot find a sufficient base in spiritualised mind alone. If the inmost soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then this Yoga can be done; otherwise (by the sole power of the mind or any other part) it is impossible. If there is a refusal of the psychic new birth, a refusal to become the child new born from the Mother, owing to attachment to intellectual knowledge or mental ideas or to some vital desire, then there will be a failure in the sadhana.

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It seems to me that you must know by this time about the psychic being — that it is behind the veil and its consciousness also; only a little comes out into the mind and vital and physical. When that consciousness is not concealed, when you are aware of your soul (the psychic being), when its feelings and aspirations are yours, then you have got the consciousness of the psychic being. The feelings and aspirations of the psychic being are all turned towards truth and right consciousness and the Divine; it is the only part that cannot be touched by the hostile forces and their suggestions.

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Everything is dangerous in the sadhana or can be, except the psychic change.

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That [*feeling the Mother's Presence, Love, Joy, Beauty*] is one part of the psychic experience — the other is a complete self-giving, absence of demand, a prominence of the psychic being by which all that is false, wrong, egoistic, contrary to the Divine Truth, Divine Will, Divine Purity and Light is shown, falls away, cannot prevail in the nature. With all that the increase of the psychic qualities, gratitude, obedience, unselfishness, fidelity to the true perception, true impulse etc. that comes from the Mother or leads to the Mother. When this side grows, then the other,

the Presence, Love, Joy, Beauty, can develop and be permanently there.

The Role of the Psychic in Sadhana

The contribution of the psychic being to the sadhana is: (1) love and bhakti, a love not vital, demanding and egoistic but without conditions or claims, self-existent; (2) the contact or the presence of the Mother within; (3) an unerring guidance from within; (4) a quieting and purification of the mind, vital and physical consciousness by their subjection to the psychic influence and guidance; (5) the opening up of all this lower consciousness to the higher spiritual consciousness above for its descent into a nature prepared to receive it with a complete receptivity and right attitude — for the psychic brings in everything right thought, right perception, right feeling, right attitude.

One can raise up one's consciousness from the mental and vital and bring down the power, ananda, light, knowledge from above; but this is far more difficult and uncertain in its result, even dangerous if the being is not prepared or not pure enough. To ascend with the psychic for the purpose is by far the best way. If you are thus rising from the psychic centre, so much the better.

What you say indicates that the psychic and mental centres are in communication and through them you are able to bring down things from the higher consciousness. But you have not changed your head centre for the above-head centre or for the above-head wideness. That usually comes by a gradual rising of the consciousness first to the top of the head and then above it. But this must not be strained after or forced; it will come of itself.

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The psychic being not only helps openly, when it is strong and in front, but can govern the mind and vital and physical nature, give it the clear intimation of what is true and false, divine or undivine, right or wrong and repel all invasion of the hostile forces.

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It is true that if the consciousness remains quiet, the psychic will manifest more and more from deep inside and a clear feeling will come of what is true and spiritually right and what is wrong or untrue and with it also will come the power to throw away what is hostile, wrong or untrue.

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If the psychic is active — or in so far as it is active, there is something in it which is like an automatic test for the universal forces — warning against (not by thought so much as by an essential feeling) and rejecting what should not be, accepting and transmuting what should be.

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That is the special work of the psychic being, to receive the true things from above and to send away the false things from below.

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This is the function of the psychic — it has to work on each plane so as to help each to awaken to the true truth and the divine reality.

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You are right in thinking that this psychic attitude is your true need; it is that which can make the progress simple, happy and easy.

Persevere; there is no reason for giving up. Let no uprising of difficulties discourage you. At the end there is victory and lasting peace.

The Psychic Deep Within

The place of the psychic is deep within the heart, — but *deep within*, not on the surface where the ordinary emotions are. But it can come forward and occupy the surface as well as be within, — then the emotions themselves become no longer vital things, but psychic emotions and feelings. The psychic so standing in

front can also extend its influence everywhere, to the mind for instance so as to transform its ideas or to the body so as to transform its habits and its reactions.

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The psychic being is in the heart centre in the middle of the chest (not in the physical heart, for all the centres are in the middle of the body), but it is deep behind. When one is going away from the vital into the psychic, it is felt as if one is going deep deep down till one reaches that central place of the psychic. The surface of the heart centre is the place of the emotional being; from there one goes deep to find the psychic. The more one goes, the more intense becomes the psychic happiness which you describe.

*

If it was something in the heart, it must be the psychic being which is often felt as if deep down somewhere or rising out of a depth. If one goes to it, it is felt often as if one were going into a deep well.

The shock must have been the psychic force trying to open the mental and vital lid which covers the soul.

*

It is evidently the psychic—it is often seen as a deep well or abyss into which one plunges and finds no end; but here it is evidently the psychic penetrating down into all the lower planes and also rising up to the higher planes above.

*

The empty condition by itself is not called samadhi—it is when one goes inside, is conscious within but not conscious of outside things. What you describe yourself as doing involuntarily is this going inside and being conscious there. It was into the psychic centre inside that you were going, the place that you saw as a luminous *maidān* in a former experience. When one goes there it is just this peace and sweetness that one feels and also this

sense of the Mother being there not far away or very near. So it is a very good development of the sadhana.

The Psychic and the Mental, Vital and Physical Nature

The mind, life and body are the instruments for manifestation. Of course the psychic can manifest things by itself inwardly or in its own plane, but for manifestation in the physical plane the instrumentality of the other parts is needed.

*

These [*questions about the transformation of the lower worlds*] are questions with which we need not concern ourselves at present. To answer them would be to stimulate merely the curiosity of the mind—what is important now is to liberate the psychic from its veils and to open the mind and vital and body to the higher consciousness. Until that is done, there can be no individual transformation and so long as there is not the individual transformation what is the use of speculating about the transformation of worlds and its results?

*

The soul is the witness, upholder, inmost experiencer, but it is master only in theory, in fact it is not-master, *amīśa*, so long as it consents to the Ignorance. For that is a general consent which implies that the Prakriti gambols about with the Purusha and does pretty well what she likes with him. When he wants to get back his mastery, make the theoretical practical, he needs a lot of tapasya to do it.

The psychic has always been veiled, consenting to the play of mind, physical and vital, experiencing everything through them in the ignorant mental, vital and physical way. How then can it be that they are bound to change at once when it just takes the trouble to whisper or say, “Let there be Light”! They have a tremendous negating power and can refuse and do refuse point-blank. The mind resists with an obstinate persistency in argument and a constant confusion of ideas, the vital with a fury

of bad will aided by the mind's obliging reasonings on its side, the physical resists with an obstinate inertia and crass fidelity to old habit, and when they have done, the general Nature comes in and says, "What, you are going to get free from me so easily? Not if I know it," and it besieges and throws back the old nature on you again and again as long as it can.

*

You should never listen to these suggestions of unfitness or anything else that denies the possibility of progress and fulfilment. Whatever the difficulties or the slowness or periods of emptiness, keep before you the firm idea that succeed you must and will. Do not be discouraged by the time taken. There are people who have laboured for many years together thinking they were making no progress and yet finally the opening has come. The Force is there working behind the veil to remove difficulties and prepare the Adhar — if one is constant, finally the result will appear.

It does not matter with what motive you or anyone began the sadhana. There are always two elements, the psychic within which wants the Divine, and the mind, vital, physical which are pushed to enter the way through some idea, desire or feeling — it may be the feeling of *vairāgya* with the ordinary life, disgust of it and a desire for freedom and peace, or it may be something else, the idea of a greater knowledge or joy or calm which mind and life cannot give, or the seeking of Yoga power for one object or another. All that does not matter — for as the psychic pushes one farther on the way, these things drop away and the one longing for the Divine takes their place, or else they themselves are transformed and put in their proper place. The only thing you must be careful about is that, when the experience develops, you do not replace the first motives by Yogic ambition or desire for greatness or get misled by vital desires; but this can always be avoided if your mind knows and holds to it firmly that union with the Divine alone is the true central object of sadhana.

The Psychic Awakening

The psychic being is always there, but is not felt because it is covered up by the mind and vital; when it is no longer covered up, it is then said to be awake. When it is awake, it begins to take hold of the rest of the being, to influence it and change it so that all may become the true expression of the inner soul. It is this change that is called the inner conversion. There can be no conversion without the awakening of the psychic being.

*

The experiences that are coming cannot be permanent at the beginning; they come and go and do their work and afterwards there is a permanent result. What must be permanent is the psychic awakening, the psychic condition and attitude and what you have written in your letter is an exact description of this psychic condition and psychic attitude. One has to keep this and see what happens and the Mother's Force will do the rest.

*

Let the sweetness and the happy feeling increase, for they are the strongest sign of the soul, the psychic being awake and in touch with us. Let not mistakes of thought or speech or action disturb you — put them away from you as something superficial which the Power and Light will deal with and remove. Keep to the one central thing — your soul and these higher realities it brings with it.

*

That is good — the awakening of the psychic consciousness and its control over the rest is one of the most indispensable elements of the sadhana.

Living in the Psychic

The division of the being of which you speak is a necessary stage in the Yogic development and experience. One feels that there

is a twofold being, the inner psychic which is the true one and the other, the outer human being which is instrumental for the outward life. To live in the inner psychic being and in union with the Divine while the outer does the outward work, as you feel, is the first stage in Karmayoga. There is nothing wrong in these experiences; they are indispensable and normal at this stage.

If you feel no bridge between the two, it is probably because you are not yet conscious of what connects the two. There is an inner mental, an inner vital, an inner physical which connect the psychic and the external being. About this, however, you need not be anxious at present.

The important thing is to keep what you have and let it grow, to live always in the psychic being, your true being. The psychic will then in due time awaken and turn to the Divine all the rest of the nature, so that even the outer being will feel itself in touch with the Divine and moved by the Divine in all it is and feels and does.

*

If it is the sense of the presence that you have, then you are living in the consciousness of the psychic centre. Thinking with the mind is good because it leads towards that but it is not in itself that living in the psychic centre.

*

It is necessary [*in order to be constantly aware of the psychic*] to accustom oneself to do things from within, not to let the consciousness be thrown outward. If it is thrown outward, then to step back inwardly and regard the action or movement from within. Of course there must be the habit of self-offering too or turning all to the Divine.

*

It [*the psychic being*] has to be surrendered consciously and with more and more knowledge. The psychic aspires to the Divine or answers to things divine, it is surrendered in principle, but it has

to develop its surrender in detail carrying with it the surrender of all the being.

*

There are always unregenerate parts tugging people backwards and who is not divided? But it is best to put one's trust in the soul, the spark of the Divine within and foster that till it rises into a sufficient flame.

Chapter Two

The Psychic Opening

The Meaning of Psychic Opening

The psychic in the ignorant human being is always behind a veil and can act on the mind or vital but not in its own power, for that is limited and obscured by the instruments. A psychic opening means the removal of the veil and the increasingly direct action of the psychic.

*

The present nature is ignorant and full of wrong actions and reactions. But there is a being within you, the psychic, which answers to the Truth and not to the Ignorance. If one turns to the Divine and becomes open, then this psychic being shows itself and gives to the nature the true thoughts, feelings, will, action. This is the first change to be made.

*

What you feel is the true psychic opening and it is that for which you should always aspire and reject other things until it becomes your normal base of consciousness. Once that is there, it is possible to call down through it a strength from above which will make the vital strong and remove the weakness. Your sadhana is still too mental and therefore difficult and slow; it is the psychic opening that makes a more satisfying and rapid progress possible.

*

It does not matter if strenuous meditation leads to experiences or not. Remember what I told you that it is the psychic growth and not experiences that are the road for you just now. That means three things — 1st, the drawing back from the vital ego and its perturbations to a quiet attitude of faith and surrender; 2nd, the

growth of something within that sees what is to be changed in the nature and gives the impulse to change it; 3rd, the psychic feeling in sadhana which presses towards the growth of bhakti, feels it a joy simply to think, feel, write, speak of, remember the Divine, grows full of a quiet self-upliftment towards the Divine and lives in that more than in outward things. When the consciousness is full of these things altogether, i.e. when there is the full psychic state or opening, then experiences begin to come of themselves. The first two at least had started of themselves in you — let them grow and the third should necessarily follow. The psychic opening first, the higher consciousness and its experiences afterwards.

*

What you desire about the self-giving free from demand is sure to fulfil itself when there is the full opening of the psychic.

*

X has been always like that. It is the activity of his mind which is very restless; sometimes he gets a psychic opening and is all right, then the mind comes across and he becomes confused and miserable. Going away will not cure him; “thinking over things” will only make him more confused and lost. He is a man who can be rescued from all that only by a complete and permanent psychic opening, through the heart not the mind.

Conditions for the Psychic Opening

It is good that you go back from this struggle towards the quiet foundation that helps the opening. All this struggling and confusion and harassing self-depreciation is the old wrong way of proceeding; it is mental and vital and cannot succeed; it is in the quiet mind that the opening must come. Then the psychic being, the soul in you, begins to come forward. The soul knows and sees the Truth; the mind and vital do not — until they are enlightened by the soul’s knowledge.

*

Then only can the psychic being fully open when the sadhaka has got rid of the mixture of vital motives with his sadhana and is capable of a simple and sincere self-offering to the Mother. If there is any kind of egoistic turn or insincerity of motive, if the Yoga is done under a pressure of vital demands, or partly or wholly to satisfy some spiritual or other ambition, pride, vanity or seeking after power, position or influence over others or with any push towards satisfying any vital desire with the help of the Yogic force, then the psychic cannot open, or opens only partially or only at times and shuts again because it is veiled by the vital activities; the psychic fire fails in the strangling vital smoke. Also, if the mind takes the leading part in the Yoga and puts the inner soul into the background, or, if the bhakti or other movements of the sadhana take more of a vital than of a psychic form, there is the same inability. Purity, simple sincerity and the capacity of an unegoistic unmingled self-offering without pretension or demand are the conditions of an entire opening of the psychic being.

*

If desire is rejected and no longer governs the thought, feeling or action and there is the steady aspiration of an entirely sincere self-giving, the psychic usually after a time opens of itself.

An Experience of Psychic Opening

It was certainly an experience and as X very accurately described it an experience of great value, a psychic experience par excellence. A feeling of velvety softness within — an *ineffable plasticity within* is a psychic experience and can be nothing else. It means a modification of the substance of the consciousness especially in the vital emotional part, and such a modification prolonged or repeated till it became permanent would mean a great step in what I call the psychic transformation of the being. It is just these modifications in the inner substance that make transformation possible. Farther, it was a modification that made a beginning of knowledge possible — for by knowledge

we mean in Yoga not thought or ideas about spiritual things but psychic understanding from within and spiritual illumination from above. Therefore the first result was this feeling “that there was no ignominy in not understanding it, that the true understanding would come only when one realised that one was completely impotent”. This was itself a beginning of true understanding, a psychic understanding, something felt within which sheds a light or brings up a spiritual truth that mere thinking would not have given, also a truth that is effective bringing both the enlightenment and solace you needed — for what the psychic being brings with it always is light and happiness, an inner understanding and relief and solace.

Another very promising aspect of this experience is that it came as an immediate response to an appeal to the Divine. You asked for the understanding and the way out and at once Krishna showed you both — the way out was the change of the consciousness within, the plasticity which makes the knowledge possible and also the understanding of the condition of mind and vital in which the true knowledge or power of knowledge could come. For the inner knowledge comes from within and above (whether from the Divine in the heart or from the Self above) and for it to come the pride of the mind and vital in the surface mental ideas and their insistence on them must go. One must know that one is ignorant before one can begin to know. This shows that I was not wrong in pressing for the psychic opening as the only way out. For as the psychic opens, such responses and much more also become common and the inner change also proceeds by which they are made possible.

*

What was meant [by “*plasticity within*”], I suppose, was the psychic plasticity which makes surrender possible along with a free openness to the Divine working from above — plasticity within as opposed to the rigidity which insists on maintaining one’s own ideas, feelings, habitual ways of consciousness as opposed to the higher things from above or from the psychic within.

The Psychic Opening and the Inner Centres

There is no doubt that the inner being and the psychic in you are opening and that the psychic is influencing all including the physical centre.

As to the centres. The psychic is placed behind the heart-lotus, the centre of the emotional being, the Anahata chakra — it is therefore the opening of the Anahata that is most important for the unveiling of the psychic. The Manipura (navel centre) and the Swadhisthana below it are the seats of the vital being, the Muladhara is the seat of the physical. The opening of the Manipura gives one the free play of the inner vital consciousness and it is very helpful, no doubt, for the influence of the psychic on the vital, but it is not the direct or first condition of the psychic opening itself. But so also the opening of the higher centres is helpful for the influence of the psychic on the mental being. All the centres have to open, because otherwise the inner consciousness is not opened out and liberated to its full working in all its parts.

There is however no invariable rule as to the order of the opening. By concentration on the heart centre that can open first liberating the psychic action, which is veiled by the emotional, into free play. In many there is first some opening of the vital centre and for a long time there is an abundant but unpurified play of experiences on the vital plane. In the Tantric discipline there is a process of opening all the centres from the Muladhara upward. In our Yoga very often the Power descends from above and opens the Ajnachakra first, then the others in order. But it is perhaps the safest to open by concentration the heart-lotus first so as to have the psychic influence from the beginning.

The psychic cannot lose its consciousness in the enjoyment of experiences; when it is in free action, it has the unfailing discrimination of which you speak. It has besides no push to outward enjoyment, though it has Ananda. It is the vital that is carried away by enjoyment and carries away with it the mind and other lower parts — and it can also cover up the psychic; but then what happens is not that the psychic loses its own

consciousness, which is impossible, but that the sadhak loses for the time being the full possession of the psychic consciousness. But it can always be recovered by a rectification of the wrong movement. But if one lives firmly in the psychic, there is not much danger of this aberration. What one must not do is to throw oneself out into the mind and vital; one must live within and from there command one's experience.

“Opening” and “Coming in Front”

In using the expression “opening of the psychic” I was thinking not of an ordinary psychic opening producing some amount of psychic (as opposed to vital) love and bhakti, but of what is called the coming in front of the psychic. When that happens one is aware of the psychic being with its simple spontaneous self-giving and feels its increasing direct control (not merely a veiled or half-veiled influence) over mind, vital and physical. Especially there is the psychic discernment which at once lights up the thoughts, emotional movements, vital pushes, physical habits and leaves nothing there obscure, substituting the right movements for the wrong ones. It is this that is difficult and rare, more often the discernment is mental and it is the mind that tries to put all in order. In that case, it is the descent of the higher consciousness through the mind that opens the psychic, instead of the psychic opening directly.

*

Nobody said it [*the opening of the psychic*] must be done necessarily from above. Naturally it is done direct and is most effective then. But when it is found difficult to do direct, as it is in certain natures, then the change begins from above, and the consciousness descending from there has to liberate the heart centre. As it acts on the heart centre, the psychic action becomes more possible.

*

The direct opening of the psychic centre is easy only when

the ego-centricity is greatly diminished and also if there is a strong bhakti for the Mother. A spiritual humility and sense of submission and dependence is necessary.

Chapter Three

The Emergence or Coming Forward of the Psychic

The Meaning of “Coming to the Front”

What is meant by [*the psychic's*] coming to the front is simply this. The psychic ordinarily is deep within. Very few people are aware of their souls — when they speak of their soul, they usually mean the vital + mental being or else the (false) soul of desire. The psychic remains behind and acts only through the mind, vital and physical wherever it can. For this reason the psychic being except where it is very much developed has only a small and partial, concealed and mixed or diluted influence on the life of most men. By coming forward is meant that it comes from behind the veil, its presence is felt clearly in the waking daily consciousness, its influence fills, dominates, transforms the mind and vital and their movements, even the physical. One is aware of one's soul, feels the psychic to be one's true being, the mind and the rest begin to be only instruments of the inmost within us.

The inner mental, vital, physical are also veiled, but much nearer to the surface and much of their movements or inspirations get through the veil (but not in any fullness or purity) in the lives of developed human beings, something even in the lives of ordinary people. But these too in Yoga throw down the veil after a time and come in front and their action predominates in the consciousness while the external is no longer felt as one's own self but only as a front or even a fringe of the being.

*

Awakening [*of the psychic being*] is a different thing [*from its coming to the front*], it means the conscious action of the psychic from behind. When it comes to the front it invades the mind

and vital and body and psychicises their movements. It comes best by aspiration and an unquestioning and entire turning and surrender to the Mother. But also it sometimes comes of itself when the Adhar is ready.

*

That is what we speak of as the psychic being coming in front — to psychicise the whole consciousness, i.e. make it subject to the psychic truth and full of the psychic nature. At the same time the ordinary vital being has to disappear and be changed into the true vital.

*

The soul in itself contains all possible strength, but most of it is held behind the veil and it is what comes forward in the nature that makes the difference. In some people the psychic element is strong and in others weak; in some people the mind is the strongest part and governs, in others the vital is the strongest part and leads or drives. But by sadhana the psychic being can be more and more brought forward till it is dominant and governs the rest. If it were already governing, then the struggles and difficulties of the mind and vital would not at all be serious; for each man in the light of the psychic would see and feel the truth and more and more follow it.

Signs of the Psychic's Coming Forward

It is the psychic being in you that has come forward — and when the psychic being comes forward all is happiness, the right attitude, the right vision of things. Of course in one sense it is the same I that puts forward different parts of itself. But when these different parts are all under the control of the psychic and turned by it towards the reception of the higher consciousness, then there begins the harmonisation of all the parts and their progressive recasting into moulds of the higher consciousness growing in peace, light, force, love, knowledge, Ananda which is what we call the transformation.

*

The psychic being in you is open always to the Divine Power, and when it comes in front, your spiritual capacity awakens and you are fully within the protection and can be moved by the Mother's force. The other parts are divided and can be carried away by the wrong movements of the ordinary nature. Especially if you trust your physical mind and mistake its ideas and suggestions for the true inspiration, you are liable to fall into serious errors both in your attitude and your choice of action and may lose the results of the protection and of the Force. Aspire to live always in your psychic being and to be open to the Mother; let the psychic part in you dominate the instruments, mind, life and body. Then the habit of the true intuition and the true impulse to action will come and you will be able to live in conscious communion, to feel her presence and be moved only by her Force. This is your true way in the Yoga.

*

A central love, bhakti, surrender, giving everything, a sight within that sees always clearly what is spiritually right or wrong and automatically rejects the latter—a movement of entire consecration and dedication of all in one to the Mother [*are the signs of the psychic's coming forward*].

*

It is your psychic being which came in front, probably, or else it is the true vital being in you which was able to come in front because you took the psychic attitude. When the psychic being comes in front, then there is an automatic perception of the true and untrue, the divine and the undivine, the spiritual right and wrong of things and the false vital and mental movements and attacks are immediately exposed and fall away and can do nothing; gradually the vital and physical as well as the mind get full of this psychic light and truth and sound feeling and purity and such violent attacks as you have are impossible. When the true vital being comes forward, it is something wide and strong and calm, an unmoved and powerful warrior for the Divine and the Truth repelling all enemies, bringing in a true strength and

force and opening the vital to the greater Consciousness above. It has to be seen which of the two it is you feel within you.

*

That is good. It means that the psychic has come up again. When the psychic is in the front, the sadhana becomes natural and easy and it is only a question of time and natural development. When the mind or the vital or the physical consciousness is on the top, then the sadhana is a tapasya and a struggle.

*

Excuse me, — if it [*the soul*] goes on with its karma, then it does not get liberation. If it wants only farther experience, it can just stay there in the ordinary nature. The aim of Yoga is to transcend karma. Karma means subjection to lower Nature; through Yoga the soul goes towards freedom.

You are describing the action of the ordinary existence, not the Yoga. Yoga is a seeking (not a mental searching), it is not experimenting in contraries and contradictories. It is the mind that does that and the mind that analyses. The soul does not search, analyse, experiment — it seeks, feels, experiences.

The only grain of truth is that the Yoga is very usually a series of ups and downs till you get to a certain height. But there is a quite different reason for that — not the vagaries of the soul. On the contrary when the psychic being gets in front and becomes master, there comes in a fundamentally smooth action and although there are difficulties and undulations of movement, these are no longer of an abrupt or dramatic character.

*

It is very good; all you write is a strong sign of the psychic emergence of which I spoke in yesterday's letter. There is at once the deep plunge into the psychic and the emergence of the psychic influence in mind and heart. The depth of the plunge is the reason why action has become so slow, because the consciousness is too much inside to act swiftly on outside things. This is a stage which one passes through in the process of the

inner change. At the same time the ideas in the mind and the perceptions and the mental and vital attitude towards things and happenings and people are becoming more and more of a psychic character. Love and devotion to the Divine is the central feeling of the psychic nature and that is growing in you towards the Mother, pervading your being. A psychic love towards all is also emerging; this love is a thing inward and does not seek to express itself outwardly like the vital love which men usually have. The psychic and spiritual attitude is also not dependent on the good and bad in beings, but is self-existent regarding them as souls who carry the Divine in them however thickly concealed and are children of the Mother.

*

Once the condition has come in which the thoughts that cross are not believed, accepted or allowed to govern the conduct, it must be understood that the vital mind is no longer dominant—for the nature of the vital mind is always to cloud the true mind's perception and drive it towards action. Neither the vital mind nor the physical mind are things that have to be got rid of, but they must be quietened, purified, controlled and transformed. That will take place fully when the thinking mind becomes fully conscious and when the psychic comes forward and leads and governs both it and the vital and physical being. Your thinking mind is becoming more and more conscious; that is shown by what you write, for the perceptions there expressed are quite clear-seeing and correct and show an increasingly right understanding. Moreover what is making you conscious is the increasing pressure of the psychic behind to come forward. For what you felt as trying to come out from behind was the psychic itself. The feeling of flowers and fragrance and a coolness and peace are always sure signs that the psychic is becoming active. It has been developing in you for some time past, only it was covered over by rushes of the old vital mind which did not want to lose its hold or its place. Now that the vital mind is quiet, it is again the psychic that is pressing to come forward and establish its influence.

The thoughts that came afterwards about the defects of your action towards others, repentance and the reasons why you could not establish proper relations with others were the result of this psychic emergence. For when the psychic comes forward or when it strongly influences mind or vital, then one begins to see clearly and rightly about one's own nature and action and about things and about others and to have the right feelings. It was under this pressure of the psychic also that while the mind got these right thoughts and perceptions, the vital felt repentance for what had been done and wished to ask forgiveness. But while this readiness to ask forgiveness was in itself a right feeling, to do so physically would not have been quite the wisest or best action. So the psychic itself at once told you what was the true thing to do, to ask forgiveness instead from the Mother. What was necessary having been done in the mind and vital, the psychic then cleared the whole consciousness and brought back its own quiet and peace. I explain all that to you so that you may begin to understand how these things work within and what is meant by the psychic and its action and influence.

The vision you had of the other luminous and peaceful and beautiful world was a sort of symbolic image of the true physical consciousness and the world in which it lives, the physical consciousness as it is when it is directly under the control of the psychic, and the character of the world which it tends to create for itself.

The Psychic and the Relation with the Divine

The psychic knows that the Divine is and affirms its knowledge against all appearances.

*

The direct relation with the Divine can only grow from within — it is there in the soul and it has to come out by sadhana — that is indeed the reason for doing sadhana. The natural mind of man follows its own ideas, the vital clings to its own desires, the physical follows its own habits — these divide from the Divine.

It is only when the psychic being grows and comes forward and governs the mind and vital and physical and changes them that this veil of personal ideas, desires and habits can fall — then the direct relation and nearness grows in the being till the whole consciousness is united with the Divine. When you go deep into the psychic, then you begin to feel the Mother near — when the mind or vital is under the influence of the psychic this sense grows in them also. That is the way in which it must come.

*

The realisation of the psychic being, its awakening and the bringing of it in front depend mainly on the extent to which one can develop a personal relation with the Divine, a relation of bhakti, love, reliance, self-giving, rejection of the insistences of the separating and self-asserting mental, vital and physical ego.

*

It may be either way [*that the psychic comes to the front — before the realisation of the Divine or after it*]. There is a touch and the realisation comes and the psychic takes its proper place as the result; or the psychic may come to the front and prepare the nature for the realisation.

Means of Bringing Forward the Psychic

Aspiration constant and sincere and the will to turn to the Divine alone are the best means of bringing forward the psychic being.

*

There is no approved method of bringing forward the psychic being. It depends on the aspiration, the growth of faith and devotion, the diminution of the hold of the mental and vital ego and their movements — at a certain point in this development the screen between the psychic and the rest of the nature thins and begins to break, the psychic becomes more and more visible and active and finally takes over charge. Sometimes it may come

suddenly, but there is no rule for that.

*

There is no process for it [*getting the psychic in front*]. It comes like the other things — you have to aspire for it and it can only happen when you are sufficiently advanced.

*

It [*the psychic*] comes forward of itself either through constant love and aspiration or when the mind and vital have been made ready by the descent from above and the working of the Force.

*

It [*the dynamic descent from above into the heart*] can help the psychic to come forward, but it does not always do so automatically — it at least creates better conditions for the psychic.

*

To bring the psychic forward, selfishness and demand (which is the base of the vital feelings) must be got rid of — or at least never accepted.

*

Nothing done in the past or present can prevent the psychic from coming forward if there is the true will to get rid of these things and live in the psychic and spiritual consciousness.

*

If there is the will to surrender in the central being, then the psychic can come forward.

*

There is absolutely no reason why you should return when you have come with the intention of staying here for a sufficient time and it is better to keep to your intention.

It is not necessary to make an effort to bring your psychic being to the front; all that is necessary is a steady and quiet

aspiration; if that is there always, all that is necessary to prepare for the result will be done by degrees and the psychic being will come fully to the front when all is ready and it is time. It happens usually that much in the mental, vital and physical has to be prepared before it can happen. This preparation cannot fail to be hastened by your stay here.

Bhakti and love are part of the psychic movement, a large part of it; in aspiring for the psychic change, you are aspiring for bhakti and love. But it is not useful to restrict your aspiration by a single movement like that of the Vaishnava sadhana; for this Yoga is more ample and contains, but is not confined to, what is essential in the Vaishnava sadhana. Whether you visit the physical Brindavan or not does not matter; what is necessary is to find the inner union through love and bhakti.

As for weeping, there is nothing against the tears that come from the inner aspiration; it is only when it is vital, outward, too much on the surface that it becomes a movement of disturbance and emotional disorder. Intensity of prayer is not at all to be rejected; it is one of the most powerful means of the sadhana.

As for the obstacle to meditation or experience, it would usually be when some part of the being is dealt with which has still to be prepared and to open. Such periods always occur in sadhana and one has to meet these with a patient and persistent aspiration and a quiet vigilance of self-introspection that will bring about the necessary opening. It should not awaken depression or lead to any relaxation of will and the effort of sadhana. Open yourself more and more, that is all that is needed.

Obstacles to the Psychic's Emergence

You have been keeping the psychic in the background during a thousand lives and indulging the vital. That is why the psychic is not strong.

*

The mind and the vital have always been dominant and developed themselves and are accustomed to act for themselves. How

do you expect an influence [*of the psychic*] coming forward for the first time to be stronger than they are?

*

Of course the ego and the vital with its claims and desires is always the main obstacle to the emergence of the psychic. For they make one live, act, do sadhana even for one's own sake and psychicisation means to live, act and do sadhana for the sake of the Divine.

*

The psychic being emerges slowly in most men, even after taking up sadhana. There is so much in the mind and vital that has to change and readjust itself before the psychic can be entirely free. One has to wait till the necessary process has gone far enough before it can burst its agelong veil and come in front to control the nature. It is true that nothing can give so much inner happiness and joy — though peace can come by the mental and vital liberation or through the growth of a strong samata in the being.

*

It is the action of the psychic being, not the being itself, that gets mixed with the mental, vital and physical distortions because it has to use them to express what little of the true psychic feeling gets through the veil. It is by the heart's aspiration to the Divine that the psychic being gets free from these disabilities.

*

Even when the psychic is in front, there may be and are likely to be mental and vital difficulties — only then, there is also the right psychic power and perception behind to deal with them.

*

It [*the flow of love and joy from the heart centre*] can be misused on a large scale only if there is a strong and vehement vital ego not accustomed to correction or else a vital full of the *kāma*vāsanā. On a small scale it can be misused by the small

selfishnesses, vanities, ambitions, demands of the lower vital supporting themselves upon it. If you are on guard against these things then there is no danger of misuse. If the psychic puts forth psychic discernment along with the love, then there is no danger, for the light of psychic discernment at once refuses all mixture or misuse.

*

That is of course the difficulty, even when one sees what is to be done and wishes to do it. One forgets at the moment when the control is needed. The habit of remembering and applying one's knowledge at the right moment comes only by a great patience and perseverance which refuses to be discouraged by frequent failure. Only if the psychic being is in front, then it reminds the mind and the thing can be more quickly done. It was your physical ill-health combined with the difficulty of the physical consciousness (which is always a thing of habits and repeats and clings to the old habits even when the mind wants to get rid of them) that prevented the emergence of the psychic from completing itself. With the disappearance of ill-health the difficulty may be more successfully tackled and achieved. As for the long period of seven years without the spiritual success there is nothing unusual in that — the old Yogins used to say that one must be ready for 12 years of preparation before the old nature will be sufficiently modified to allow of the spiritual opening. That is of course not inevitable; it can be done more briefly; but still it takes usually a long time — it has done so with most in the Asram. But in your case the first opening did come, it is only temporarily and not altogether closed, awaiting a second opening which should free the nature for the external as well as the inner change.

*

It [*the psychic*] may and does retire from the front or gets clouded over, but once it has been in front it is never relegated back behind the veil altogether and it can always return to the front with comparative ease.

*

The conversion which keeps the consciousness turned towards the light and makes the right attitude spontaneous and natural and abiding and rejection also spontaneous is the psychic conversion. That is to say, man usually lives in his vital and the body is its instrument and the mind its counsellor and minister (except for the few mental men who live mostly for the things of the mind, but even they are in subjection to the vital in their ordinary movements). The spiritual conversion begins when the soul begins to insist on a deeper life and is complete when the psychic becomes the basis or the leader of the consciousness and mind and vital and body are led by it and obey it. Of course if that once happens fully, doubt, depression and despair cannot come any longer, although there may be and are difficulties still. If it is not fully, but still fundamentally accomplished, even then these things either do not come or are brief passing clouds on the surface — for there is a rock of support and certitude at the base, which even if partially covered cannot disappear altogether.

Mostly however the *constant* recurrence of depression and despair or of doubt and revolt is due to a mental or vital formation which takes hold of the vital mind and makes it run round always in the same circle at the slightest provoking cause or even without cause. It is like an illness to which the body consents from habit and from belief in the illness even though it suffers from it, and once started the illness runs its habitual course unless it is cut short by some strong counteracting force. If once the body can withdraw its consent, the illness immediately or quickly ceases — that was the secret of the Coué system. So too if the vital mind withdraws its consent, refuses to be dominated by the habitual suggestions and the habitual movements, these recurrences of depression and despair can be made soon to cease. But it is not easy for this mind, once it has got into the habit of consent, even a quite passive and suffering and reluctant consent, to cancel the habit and get rid of the black circle. It can be done easily only when the mind refuses any longer to believe in the suggestions or accept the ideas or feelings that start the circle.

The facts or arguments you put forward to support your diffidence or depression cannot stand in the light of the Yoga experience of others—if they were enough to justify discouragement, how many would have had to turn back from the way who are now far on towards the goal? I cannot now deal with them in detail, but they do not, any of them, justify your inference [*of unfitness for Yoga*].

Also, your psychic being does not deserve the censure you have bestowed upon it. What prevents it from coming out in its full power is the crust of past habits, formations, active vibrations of the mind-stuff and vital stuff which come from a mind and life which have been more creative and outgoing and expansive than indrawn and introspective. In many who are like this—active men and intellectuals—the first stage of Yoga is long and difficult with slow development and sparse experiences, most of the work being done in the subliminal behind the veil—until things are ready.

When the time comes for the definite opening and removal of the purdah between the inner and the outer man, I think I can promise you that you will find your power of Yoga and Yogic experience at least as unexpectedly complete as you, and others, have found your power for poetry—though necessarily its working out will take time, because it is not a detail but the whole life and the whole nature in which there must be the divine victory.

Chapter Four

Experiences Associated with the Psychic

The Psychic Touch or Influence

The psychic influence in the ordinary life of man tries to bring the truth of the soul into human action, human thought and feelings. When it is spiritualised, it tries to turn the human towards the Divine.

*

These are movements of the vital under the psychic touch. If there is the firm psychic foundation underneath, it will be felt as an underlying quietude and confidence or a fixed spirit of surrender.

*

The demands were there already — when the psychic touches there is an intensification of love but the lower vital mixes up the love with all sorts of demands.

*

The soft feeling [*in the head and below*] must be that of the psychic being spreading itself through the higher centres. Faithfulness is one of the first characteristics of the psychic being.

The Psychic Condition

What you describe shows that things are going on very well within, it is the psychic condition that is being gradually prepared as a basis for the sadhana. The special experiences of the burning of the psychic fire, descent of peace etc. are always

intermittent until this basis is ready, but they help it to grow.

*

It is this freedom from all ties and entire and sole turning to the Mother that is the deepest psychic condition. It is coming to you as touches of that condition from the psychic, therefore there is not yet the permanent state; but these touches prepare the future permanence.

The fire which you feel in the chest must surely be the psychic fire, for it is there that is the seat of the psychic and the fact that it burns strongly when you sit alone points to the same thing.

The Psychic Fire

The psychic fire is the fire of aspiration, purification and tapasya which comes from the psychic being. It is not the psychic being, but a power of the psychic being.

*

The psychic being is a Purusha, not a flame — the psychic fire is not the being, it is something proper to it.

*

It [*a flame in the heart as big as a man's thumb*] is the psychic fire kindled in the heart. The psychic being in the heart is described by the Upanishads as of the size of a thumb, *aṅguṣṭha-mātrah puruṣo'ntarātmā* — it may manifest first as this psychic flame.

*

The fire [*one feels within*] is always the fire of sacrifice and self-offering, the fire of aspiration or the fire of tapasya.

*

That the constant fire of aspiration has to be lit is true; but this fire is the psychic fire and it is lit or burns up and increases as the psychic grows within and for the psychic to grow quietude is needful. That is why we have been working for the psychic to

grow in you and for the quietude also to grow and that is why we want you to wait on the Mother's working in full patience and confidence. To be always remembering the Mother and always with the equal unwavering fire within means itself a considerable progress in sadhana and it must be prepared by various means such as the experiences you have been having. Keep steadfast in confidence therefore and all that has to be done will be done.

*

The experience of the Fire is quite correct, — it is the great fire of purification and concentration (i.e. gathering up of the consciousness and turning it fixedly towards the Divine), the psychic fire which all must pass through so as to reach the Mother permanently and completely.

*

It is egoistic if the ego thinks that it is the psychic fire. If the consciousness feels identified with the psychic fire and becomes conscious that the fire can burn out all impurities, then it is a true experience.

*

The central fire is in the psychic being, but it can be lit in all the parts of the being.

The Psychic Fire and Some Inner Visions

The fire you saw was the fire of the psychic being, the fire of aspiration and tapasya, burning under the earth, that is to say, in the subconscious. It opens the earth, the physical consciousness to the Divine Light. Moonlight may symbolise the spiritual consciousness and the room your own personal being or individual physical consciousness. With these clues it will be easy for you to understand the significance of your experience.

*

The fire you saw was again the psychic fire of purification and

tapasya and the garland was the offering it was preparing for the Mother, the psychic and divine consciousness (pearl and diamond) in the sadhak. The beautiful place was also probably a symbol of the psychic and the lotus indicated the opening of the psychic consciousness.

The twelve-petalled lotus and the twelve-rayed sun indicate the same thing, the complete Truth-consciousness of the Divine Mother. It was rising but only half risen. The red colour was the sign of Power.

*

All these things are signs, now often repeated, of the process that is going on. The heat is the result of the psychic fire burning away obstacles—the coolness and complete quietude come as a result. The tendency to sleep is really a tendency to go inside into the depths of the inner consciousness due to the pressure for the change.

The wideness of light you saw was the wideness of the true consciousness liberated from the narrow limits of the human mind, human vital, human body consciousness. It is true that the mind is narrow, not only yours, but all human minds even the most developed,—compared with the wideness of the true consciousness which has no limits. It is precisely this wideness which will come by the sadhana and which these processes are preparing. The rain of flowers means a plenty of the psychic qualities and movements and the white flower of mental victory indicates the step towards it which is now being led up to—the victory in the mind of the inner light over the outer ignorance.

*

The difficulty in giving up habits is common to the physical mind in all people; nothing is more difficult to it. The fire you feel must be what we call Agni, the fire of purification acting on this physical mind to change it.

The bridge you saw was the symbol of transition from the ordinary to the spiritual consciousness; the wide plain was a symbol of the large peace and silence which comes with the

spiritual consciousness when one rests in the Divine.

The perfumes you felt were true perfumes but not of the physical world. This body of flesh and blood is not the whole of ourselves; there is unseen by the eyes a subtle body also and one becomes aware of it when the inner consciousness opens. It was from deep within there that the perfumes came, perfumes of purity, of love and surrender (rose) etc. It is there deep within that the psychic being dwells and it is there that you are trying to go when the inward-going impulse or pressure comes; it is why you felt more and more peaceful, because you were going deeper and deeper into the psychic from which these fragrances came.

*

The heat in the body is due simply to the working that is going on within; it is what is called the heat of tapas — there is nothing unhealthy in it as in the heat of fever. The beautiful scent that you get is a subtle or psychic fragrance, just as the vision of the lotus is a subtle or psychic sight.

The psychic being is often seen or felt within in the form of a child, — it is perhaps that that you are feeling within you; it is calling for a complete sincerity, but sincerity is used here in the sense of opening to nothing but the divine influences and impulses. It does not mean that you have committed any fault, but only that the psychic in you wants you to be completely under its sole government, so that all in you may be for the Divine only. The feeling of sorrow is probably a response of the vital in you to this demand — thinking that it must have erred; but such a feeling of sorrow is not necessary. The vital can quietly wait for the psychic working to do all that is needed in due time.

Agni

It is the Agni fire that you feel. Agni is at once a fire of aspiration, a fire of purification, a fire of tapasya, a fire of transformation.

*

Agni in the form of an aspiration full of concentrated calm and surrender is certainly the first thing to be lighted in the heart.

*

It [*a feeling of warmth in the heart*] comes sometimes from the approach of Agni fire, sometimes from that of love or Ananda, sometimes simply from a touch of the Force.

*

The fear of the fire you saw is misplaced, for it is the fire of the purifying Agni that you see burning and that does no harm; it only clears away what should not be there. That is why it is followed by a lightness or an emptiness. You have only to be quiet and let the fire do its work. The heat one feels at that time is not the heat of fever or any other morbid heat. Afterwards, as you felt, all becomes cool and light.

*

The burning is sometimes the heat of a difficulty and resistance, but then it disturbs. When it does not disturb, it is usually the purifying fire of Agni.

*

It may be pressure of the Agni fire that you feel [*around the head and shoulders*] as the heat — especially if there is something that has to be purified or a difficulty burned away. The cool spray on the other hand comes as an accompaniment of the sense of purification.

*

The Fire [*felt in the forehead and eyes*] is the power of the Yoga — Yogashakti.

*

That kind of pull [*towards the Divine*] is not the same thing as the lighting of Agni. Agni meets men who are not leading the religious life at all but who have Agni burning in them and are

intent to keep the fire ablaze — scientists, artists etc. who have the intense will of perfecting what they do and all their central energies are thrown into this flame. The same intense fire should burn in the Yoga.

*

It is the Mother's Force that works in the Agni.

Agni and the Psychic Fire

If it is in the heart it may be psychic fire — it is possibly not the joy that created the fire, but the decision you had come to to believe in the Mother's action whether the mind understood or not. Such an attitude encourages the opening of the psychic and would therefore bring at once the psychic joy and the kindling of Agni in the psychic centre.

*

It is some association in the mind probably coupling Agni with the psychic. Of course the individual Agni fire has its starting-point in the psychic, but the mere burning of the fire does not show that the psychic is coming forward.

When it burns in the heart, it is the fire *in* the psychic. The psychic fire is individual and takes usually the form of a fire of aspiration or personal tapasya. This Fire is universal and it came from above.

*

The psychic fire may burn in the vital. It all depends on whether it is the fire of the general Force that comes from above or the fire of your soul's aspiration and tapasya.

*

All that [*fire in the heart and elsewhere*] is simply the burning of the Agni in various parts of the being. It prepares it for transformation. But the coming forward of the psychic is another matter and its signs are psychological.

*

Agni is the psychic fire—it is not the Divine Presence. If the psychic is active and open, the Presence may be felt—it is not necessary for that that it should be in the front. Also it may be in the front, but the Divine Presence in the heart may not be felt as yet, there may be only the aspiration, bhakti, self-giving. There is no fixed law about these things—it develops differently in different natures.

Psychic Joy

It [*a feeling of joy, intense but calm and pure*] is not mere vital excitement or heightened nerve sensation, it is an attempt of the psychic to emerge from behind the veil and what you feel is the psychic joy. (The psychic is seated behind the heart, behind the emotional centre.) But when this psychic joy comes, it communicates itself to the mind, the vital and the body. You have then to be careful that no mixture comes in from the vital and the physical—such as the sex impulse. The mind, the vital, the physical must receive the psychic Ananda and make it their own, but not bring in their own deviations or any degraded mixture into it.

*

There is a dynamic joy as well as the self-existent joy in the soul itself.

Psychic Sorrow

There is a psychic sorrow which usually comes when the soul feels how strong is the resistance in the world and how much the Forces in it rage against the Mother.

*

It is the soul, the psychic being in you, behind the heart, that is awake and wants to concentrate the mind on the Divine. It is the nature of the mind to go out to other things, but now when it does that, there is the unease in the heart, the psychic sorrow because the heart feels at once that this is wrong and the head

also aches because of the resistance to the Divine Force at work. This is a thing that often happens at an early stage, after the opening of the consciousness to the sadhana.

*

The vital took it up perhaps and gave it a more vehement and turbid expression — otherwise there is nothing disturbing in a psychic sorrow.

*

The psychic sadness is of a purifying and not a depressing kind.

*

There are many things that are spiritual that are not the essence of the higher consciousness. All that tends towards the transformation and helps to prepare it is spiritual. Psychic sorrow is a spiritual movement, but sorrow is not part of the essential character of the higher consciousness. Resignation, the ego's submission to the divine will, is a spiritual movement, but the higher consciousness has no need of resignation and a submitted ego is not a part of its essence, for it has no ego.

Psychic Tears or Weeping

Yes, there is a psychic sorrow of that kind [*tears of longing for the Mother*] — but psychic tears need not be sorrowful, there are also tears of emotion and joy.

*

The tears probably come from the inner psychic being (behind the heart) which is touched in this state of quietness and peace. It is the sign of an aspiration and devotion in the soul which is trying to come to the surface. If the psychic being can come to the surface and a harmony be established in the nature, all of it being turned towards the Divine, this kind of expression will cease.

*

The weeping that comes to you comes from the psychic being — it is the tears of psychic yearning and aspiration. At a particular stage it so comes to many and is a very good sign. The other feelings and tendencies are also from the same source. They show that the psychic is exercising a strong influence and preparing, as we say, to come in front. Accept the movement and let it fulfil itself.

*

A weeping that comes with the feeling you speak of is the sign of a psychic sorrow — for it translates as an aspiration of the psychic being. But depression and hopelessness ought not to come. You should rather cling to the faith that since there is a true aspiration in you — and of that there can be no doubt — it is sure to be fulfilled, whatever the difficulties of the external nature. You must recover in that faith the inner peace and quietude while at the same time keeping the clear insight into what has to be done and the steady aspiration for the inner and outer change.

*

It is quite correct that [*ordinary*] weeping brings in the forces that should be kept outside — for the weeping is a giving way of the inner control and an expression of vital reaction and ego. It is only the psychic weeping that does not open the door to these forces — but that weeping is without affliction, tears of bhakti, spiritual emotion or Ananda.

Your experience was a very beautiful one — the inner being realises by such experiences that which must be established in the waking state as the foundation of the spiritual consciousness and spiritual life.

Psychic Yearning

The yearning of the heart may be there but it should not disturb the peace.

*

I think it is better to stop it [*the yearning of the heart*] for the present. It is very possible that the vital is taking advantage of it to create dissatisfaction with the progress of the sadhana. The psychic yearning brings no reaction of impatience, dissatisfaction or disturbance.

*

Your new attitude towards food and outward things is the true attitude, the psychic attitude and shows that the psychic is already controlling the vital physical as well as the other parts of the vital nature.

As for the heart, the movement of longing for the Divine, weeping, sorrowing, yearning is not essential in this Yoga. A strong aspiration there must be, an intense longing there may very well be, an ardent love and will for union; but there need be no sorrow or disturbance. The quiet and silence you feel in your heart is the result of the pressure of the higher consciousness to come down. That always brings a quietude in mind and heart and as it descends a great peace and silence. In the silent heart and mind, there must be the true attitude and thus you have the feeling that you are the Mother's child, the faith and the will to be united with her. Along with that there may be an aspiration or silent expectation of what is to come. That also you seem to have. All therefore is well.

Psychic Intensity

I have read your letter of explanation of the "strange" ideas. I still maintain that your views on the lack of all intensity in the psychic things or in the spiritual or their inferiority to vital pleasure *are* strange, because they contradict all psychic and spiritual experience except that of the mere vairagis and make the choice of the spiritual life itself (Nirvana seekers excepted) quite inexplicable. Your arguments are not convincing. What have Ramakrishna's excesses or the fluctuations of Vivekananda's vital receptivity between exaltation and depression or Chaitanya's *viraha* to do with the question in issue? These are difficulties

of the body and the vital. The question was of the intensity of *psychic* and *pure spiritual* experience — psychic devotion and love, peace, Ananda. You cannot base a general denial on your own particular experience, because you have only the initial experiences of calm etc. and have *not* got to the intensities as I have done and others before me have done. It is only when one lives centrally in the psychic with the mental, vital and physical as provinces held under its rule that one knows what psychic intensity is. It is only when the higher consciousness comes down in its floods that one can know what can be the intensities or ecstasies of spiritual peace, light, love, bliss. You can say, “I have not yet had these intensities”, but you cannot say in a sweeping way, “They do not exist and I shall never have them”, or “They are only tepid quiet little things, soothing and more capable of lasting, but not intense and glorious like the vital joys and pleasures.” Do not cling to these notions born of the past limitations, but keep yourself open and plastic to greater possibilities in the future.

My own experience is *not* limited to a radiant peace; I know very well what ecstasy and Ananda are from the Brahmananda down to the *śārīra ānanda*, and can experience them at any time. But of these things I prefer to speak only when my work is done — for it is in a transformed consciousness here and not only above where the Ananda always exists that I seek their base of permanence.

The Psychic and Uneasiness

The psychic is not uneasy, it makes you uneasy when you do the wrong thing.

*

The uneasiness created by the psychic is not depression — it is in the nature of a rejection of the wrong movement.

If the uneasiness causes depression or vital dissatisfaction, it is not psychic.

*

The uneasiness is simply a reminder to you to be more vigilant in future.

*

The unhappiness is not necessary or inevitable in the sadhana, but it comes because your inner nature feels the touch of the Divine Presence indispensable to it and uneasy when it does not feel it. To feel it always a certain constant detachment within allowing you to remain within and do everything from within is necessary. This can more easily be done in quiet occupations and quiet contacts. For it is quietness and inwardness that enable one to feel the Presence.

Chapter Five

The Psychic and Spiritual Transformations

Psychisation and Spiritualisation

Psychisation means the change of the lower nature, bringing right vision into the mind, right impulse and feeling into the vital, right movement and habit into the physical — all turned towards the Divine, all based on love, adoration, bhakti — finally, the vision and sense of the Mother everywhere in all as well as in the heart, her Force working in the being etc., faith, consecration, surrender.

The spiritual change is the established descent of the peace, light, knowledge, power, bliss from above, the awareness of the self and the Divine and of a higher cosmic consciousness and the change of the whole consciousness to that.

*

Between psychisation and spiritualisation there is a difference. The spiritual is the change that descends from above, the psychic is the change that comes from within by the psychic dominating mind, vital and physical.

*

The psychic is the first of two transformations necessary — if you have the psychic transformation it facilitates immensely the other, i.e., the transformation of the ordinary human into the higher spiritual consciousness — otherwise one is likely to have either a slow and dull or exciting but perilous journey.

*

I never said anything about a “transformation of the psychic”; I have always written about a “psychic transformation” of the

nature which is a very different matter. I have sometimes written of it as a psychisation of the nature. The psychic is in the evolution, part of the human being, its divine part — so a psychisation will not carry one beyond the present evolution but will make the being ready to respond to all that comes from the Divine or Higher Nature and unwilling to respond to the Asura, Rakshasa, Pishacha or Animal in the being or to any insistence of the lower nature which stands in the way of the divine change.

*

It is not the psychic but the mind that gets raised and transformed and its action intensified by the intuitivising of the consciousness. The psychic is always the same essence and adapts its action without need of transformation to any change of consciousness.

*

I have read your account of your sadhana. There is nothing to say, I think, — for it is all right — except that the most important thing for you is to develop the psychic fire in the heart and the aspiration for the psychic being to come forward as the leader of the sadhana. When the psychic does so, it will show you the “undetected ego-knots” of which you speak and loosen them or burn them in the psychic fire. This psychic development and the psychic change of mind, vital and physical consciousness is of the utmost importance because it makes safe and easy the descent of the higher consciousness and the spiritual transformation without which the supramental must always remain far distant. Powers etc. have their place, but a very minor one so long as this is not done.

The Psychic and the Higher Consciousness

What you see above is of course the true or higher consciousness — the Mother’s — in which one sees all the world as one, a vast free consciousness full of freedom, peace and light — it is that that we speak of as the higher or divine consciousness. Even if it comes and goes, yet its effect on the heart shows that a

connection has been established through the psychic — for the psychic is behind the heart. It is there above the head that the consciousness has to ascend and remain, while it also descends into the head and heart and lower vital and physical and brings there its wideness, light, peace and freedom.

*

It is the union of the consciousness above with the awakened psychic being that makes the true connection between what is above and the universe.

*

There is something in you that has become aware of the higher consciousness and gone up there — above the head where the ordinary consciousness and the higher planes meet. That has to be developed till the whole source of the consciousness is there and all the rest directed from there — with, at the same time, a liberation of the psychic so that it may support the action from above in the mind, the vital and the physical parts.

*

If the development of a higher consciousness did not bring things that were not before heard of by the mind, it would not be good for much. The unification of the psychic and the higher consciousness forces and activities is indispensable for the sadhana at one time or another.

*

Complete psychisation brings entire openness of the being to the Divine and to the Higher Consciousness and an entire inability to accept anything untrue and undivine.

*

The psychic when it acts as the main power, acts through a certain feeling and inherent psychic sense which repels the falsehood. But the ranges of mind above mind do not act in that way — there it is discrimination and will that act and their action is

wider but less sure and less automatic so to speak.

*

When the concentration is at the top of the head, it means that the mental being is joining the higher consciousness there and there is not much resistance or none. The other place indicates the joining is of the psychic being to the higher consciousness, hence the greater silence, as the psychic is more central than the mental being; but also there is the attempt to join through the psychic the rest of the lower consciousness to the higher and there there is a resistance. The mental joining does not affect the vital and physical, so they remain quiet or can do so for the present — the psychic joining puts on them a pressure to which the first reaction is the sense of fatigue and the last might be a turmoil. But the psychic joining if effectual is much more powerful for the change of the whole being.

The Psychic and Spiritual Movements

The two feelings are both of them right — they indicate the two necessities of the sadhana. One is to go inward and open fully the connection between the psychic being and the outer nature. The other is to open upward to the Divine Peace, Force, Light, Ananda above, to rise up into it and bring it down into the nature and the body. Neither of these two movements, the psychic and the spiritual, is complete without the other. If the spiritual ascent and descent are not made, the spiritual transformation of the nature cannot happen; if the full psychic opening and connection is not made, the transformation cannot be complete.

There is no incompatibility between the two movements; some begin the psychic first, others the spiritual first, some carry on both together. The best way is to aspire for both and let the Mother's Force work it out according to the need and turn of the nature.

*

The experiences you describe are coherent with each other and very clearly explicable. The first shows that some part of your

mind was open and this aided by an opening in the psychic enabled you to ascend into the regions above, the ranges of the liberated spiritual mind with the infinite path of the spirit leading to the highest realisation. But the rest of the nature was not ready. The straining to recover the experience was not the right thing to do then; what should have been done was the aspiration for the purification and preparation of the nature, the permanent psychic opening and the increase of the higher spiritual opening above till there could be a total release of the being. The vehemence of the action of the forces was due to the resistance and the breaking of the knots in the head and different parts of the nature was their working for the release. The “electricity” passing through the spinal column was the passage of the Force making its way down through the centres. Obviously it is the dark resisting force of the vital, the desire nature, that rises up and clouds all up to the heart. On the other hand the flow from above and the silence it creates is a sign of the opening above being still there; for the silence, the quietude of the nature is a touch from above and very necessary for purification and release. What is lacking is the full opening of the psychic being behind the heart — for that could liberate the heart from the dark force and make possible a cleaning of the rest by a quiet and steady rather than a vehement working attended by chaotic action and struggle. When there is an opening in the spiritual mind but not a sufficient psychic change, there is or can be this kind of vehement force-action and resistance; when the psychic opens, then it acts on the whole nature, mind, vital, physical, governing them from within, to transform themselves and become ready for the complete spiritual opening and spiritual consciousness. Devotion and a more and more complete inner consecration are the best way to open the psychic.

*

It is very good. The ideas and feelings that came up from within you were those of the newborn psychic nature.

The feeling you had in the afternoon of the cessation of thought and the sensation of something within you going up

above the head is part of the movement of the sadhana. There is a higher consciousness above you, not in the body, so above the head, which we call the higher, spiritual or divine consciousness, or the Mother's consciousness. When the being opens then all in you, the mind (head), emotional being (heart), vital, even something in the physical consciousness begin to ascend in order to join themselves to this greater higher consciousness. One has when one sits with eyes closed in meditation the sensation of going up which you describe. It is called the ascension of the lower consciousness. Afterwards things begin to descend from above, peace, joy, light, strength, knowledge etc. and a great change begins in the nature. This is what we call the descent of the higher (the Mother's) consciousness.

The unease you felt was because of the unaccustomed nature of the movement. It is of no importance and quickly goes away.

The Psychic Consciousness and the Descent from Above

As I have written often, there are two transformations in this Yoga. The first is when the psychic being comes forward and controls and changes the nature. This is what has happened in you with great rapidity; it must complete itself, but that it will do naturally. The second is the descent of the Mother's consciousness from above the head and its transformation of the whole being and nature. This also is now preparing in you. It is the reason of the pressure, the silence in the heart etc. What you experienced this time when you went above was the wideness of the higher being in that higher consciousness above with the Light coming down through it. That wideness and that light will afterwards come down into you and your consciousness will be changed into the light and wideness and all that is in them.

*

It is evident from what you write that the true consciousness is growing in you and that when it is there all is right—for what you describe in this morning's letter is the true psychic consciousness come up in some fullness. This fullness was not

there before, so that is a very encouraging progress. But its remaining seems to depend on the concentration on the Mother. When there is the concentration on the Mother, then the progress can be smooth and continuous; when there is a failure of the concentration, you come into the outward physical mind and at once there is a conflict between the growing quietude and the inner psychic fire and the physical consciousness. The quietude seeks to hold and control the physical consciousness and the fire to burn out the wrong activities and imperfections, but the consciousness finds the pressure hard to bear; it feels dull and troubled by the heat. For when the fire has won, all is cool; when it has to burn the resistances, then there is heat, it becomes a fire of tapasya. This seems to be the explanation of these alternating conditions. It is important therefore to keep the concentration and remain fixed in the Mother; nothing else for the time has any importance comparatively with that.

As for the experience at the Pranam it was the other thing, the descent of the higher consciousness (the Mother's consciousness) from above, with its light, peace and wideness. When the individual consciousness is enveloped in that, rests in it, then you feel that you are lying in the Mother's lap. As the psychic consciousness grows from within, it becomes more and more possible for this to descend from above.

*

The concentration in the heart which is intended to bring out the psychic being and the calling down of the descent from above are two sides of the same thing and are complementary and can go naturally together.

*

Certainly the concentration in the heart is very necessary for the full transformation. When peace is established in the heart, it is possible for the psychic being to come forward and rule the mind, life and body. The descent from above prepares the being, but unless the psychic acts fully it cannot change by itself the outer being, though one can have a settled inner peace,

freedom, light, not disturbed by the outer movements, but the outer movements will remain. It is only the combined action of the psychic and the spiritual power that can change it.

*

It is by meditation, by concentration, by the constant turning or call [*that aspiration and openness may be cultivated*] — secondly, by the keeping of the mind and vital still for the descent of the Presence, peace, light, Ananda and for the psychic being to emerge. When the psychic being is in front, the descent constant, then the constant feeling of the Divine in you and of yourself in the Divine becomes more easy to have.

*

One can receive [*forces from above*] always through the psychic part of the being, even before the veil is broken.

The Psychic and the Supermind

You were quite right in what you wrote about the supermind — people here do indeed use the “big word” much too freely as if it were something quite within everybody’s grasp. The first thing to be done is the psychic change and until that has progressed sufficiently, supermind is a far-off thing and people need not think of it at all. You have certainly progressed, but the change of the outer nature is always a slow movement, so that need not distress you.

*

To merge the consciousness in the Divine and to keep the psychic being controlling and changing all the nature and keeping it turned to the Divine till the whole being can live in the Divine is the transformation we seek. There is farther the supramentalisation, but this only carries the transformation to its own highest and largest possibilities — it does not alter its essential nature.

*

The psychic when sufficiently developed can be strong enough to make the preliminary clearance [*of the lower vital*].

It is the supramental alone that can transform the material being, but the physical mind and physical vital can be very much changed by the action of the psychic and of the overmind. The entire change however is made only when there is the supramental influence. But for the present the psychic is the force that may be relied on for the preliminary purification of the lower nature.

Section Three

Spiritual Experiences and Realisations

Chapter One

Experiences of the Self, the One and the Infinite

Peace, Calm, Silence and the Self

That [*state of vast peace and calm*] is the basic experience of the higher consciousness — it is what is called the realisation of the Atman (the Self).

*

It is the Atman, the spiritual being above the mind — the first experience of it is a silence and calm (which one perceives afterwards to be infinite and eternal) untouched by the movements of mind and life and body. The higher consciousness lives always in touch with the Self — the lower is separated from it by the activities of the Ignorance.

*

When one becomes aware of the Self calm, silent, wide, universal, it is no longer covered over by the ignorance; when one identifies with the Self and not with the mind, life and body and their movements or with the small ego, that is the release of the Self.

*

And how is the outer nature to rise into the higher Prakriti before you realise the Self? The higher nature is that of the higher consciousness of which the first basis is the peace and wideness and realisation of the Self, the One that is all.

*

The gaining of peace makes it easier to get the experience of the pure and free Self.

*

If not aspiration, at least keep the idea of what is necessary — (1) that the silence and peace shall become a wideness which you can realise as the Self, (2) the extension of the silent consciousness upwards as well so that you may feel its source above you, (3) the presence of peace etc. all the time. These things need not all come at once, but by realising what has to be in your mind, any falling towards a condition of inertia can be avoided.

*

What one feels first [*in the silence*] is the pure existence of the self, without any idea, characteristic or movement — existence pure and simple, Sat Brahman — or else one feels that and a vast peace and wideness. Afterwards other things are felt such as Ananda, but always with this as the basis.

*

A great wave (or sea) of calm and the constant consciousness of a vast and luminous Reality — this is precisely the character of the fundamental realisation of the Supreme Truth in its first touch on the mind and the soul. One could not ask for a better beginning or foundation — it is like a rock on which the rest can be built. It means certainly not only a Presence, but *the* Presence — and it would be a great mistake to weaken the experience by any non-acceptance or doubt of its character.

It is not necessary to define it and one ought not even to try to turn it into an image; for this Presence is in its nature infinite. Whatever it has to manifest of itself or out of itself, it will do inevitably by its own power, if there is a sustained acceptance.

It is quite true that it is a grace sent and the only return needed for such a grace is acceptance, gratitude and to allow the Power that has touched the consciousness to develop what has to be developed in the being — by keeping oneself open to it. The total transformation of the nature cannot be done in a moment; it must take long and proceed through stages; what is now experienced is only an initiation, a foundation for the new consciousness in which that transformation will become possible. The automatic spontaneity of the experience ought by

itself to show that it is nothing constructed by the mind, will or emotions; it comes from a Truth that is beyond them.

*

The vastness, the overwhelming calm and silence in which you feel merged is what is called the Atman or the silent Brahman. It is the whole aim of many Yogas to get this realisation of Atman or silent Brahman and live in it. In our Yoga it is only the first stage of the realisation of the Divine and of that growing of the being into the higher or divine Consciousness which we call transformation.

*

A sadhak of integral Yoga who stops short at the Impersonal is no longer a sadhak of integral Yoga. Impersonal realisation is the realisation of the silent Self, of the pure Existence, Consciousness and Bliss in itself without any perception of an Existent, Conscient, Blissful. It leads therefore to Nirvana. In the integral knowledge the realisation of the Self and of the impersonal Sachchidananda is only a step, though a very important step, or part of the integral knowledge. It is a beginning, not an end of the highest realisation.

The True Self Within

The experience described in your letter is a glimpse of the realisation of the true Self which is independent of the body. When this settles itself there is the liberation (*mukti*). Not only the body, but the vital and mind are felt to be only instruments and one's self is felt to be calm, self-existent and free and wide or infinite. It is then possible for the psychic being to effect in that freedom the full transformation of the nature. All your former experiences were preparing for this, but the physical consciousness came across. Now that you have had the glimpse of the self separate from the body, this physical difficulty may soon be overcome.

*

The experience you have is the experience of the true self. Untouched by grief and joy, desire, anxiety or trouble, vast and calm and full of peace, it observes the agitations of the outer being as one might the play of children. It is indeed the divine element in you. The more you can live in that, the firmer will be the foundation of the sadhana. In this self will come all the higher experiences, oneness with the Divine, light, knowledge, strength, Ananda, the play of the Mother's higher forces. It does not always become stable from the first, though for some it does; but the experience comes more and more frequently and lasts till it is no longer covered by the ordinary nature.

The Self and the Sense of Individuality

Yes, the sense of individuality can disappear altogether when all is peace and wideness. One feels that the peace and wideness are oneself, but not in an individual sense — for it is the “Atman” of everybody else also. Afterwards there can come an experience of another kind of I, but it is a universalised I which contains everybody else and is in unison with everybody else and is itself contained in the Divine. This is what Yogins sometimes call the “large” as opposed to the small Aham. I have written of it as the true Person.

*

The Self is essentially universal; the individualised self is only the universal experienced from an individual centre. If what you have realised is not felt to be one in all, then it is not the “Atman”; possibly it is the central being not yet revealing its universal aspect as Atman.

*

The Self is felt as either universal, one in all, or a universalised individual the same in essence as others, extended everywhere from each being but centred here. Of course centre is a way of speaking, because no physical centre is usually felt — only all the action takes place around the individual.

*

All is in the self; when identified with the universal self, all is in you.

Also, the microcosm reproduces the macrocosm — so all is present in each, though all is not expressed (and cannot be) in the surface consciousness.

*

There is the experience of the microcosm (the universe in oneself) in which all that is in the macrocosm (the larger universe) is present. All these things are for experience, for knowledge and must be taken as such. No merely personal turn should be given to them.

The Disappearance of the “I” Sense

The essential “I” sense disappears when there is the stable realisation of the one universal Self in all and that remains at all moments in all conditions under any circumstances. Usually this comes first in the Purusha consciousness and the extension to the Prakriti movements is not immediate. But even if there are “I” movements in the Prakriti reactions, the Purusha within observes them as the continued running of an old mechanism and does not feel them as his own. Most Vedantists stop there, because they think that those reactions will fall away from one at death and all will disappear into the One. But for a change of the nature it is necessary that the experience and seeing of the Purusha should spread to all the parts, mind, vital, physical, subconscious. Then the ego movements of Prakriti can also disappear gradually from one field after another till none is left. For this a perfect samata even in the cells of the body and in every vibration of the being is necessary — *samam hi brahma*. One is then quite free from it in works also. The individual remains but that is not the small separative ego, but a form and power of the Universal which feels itself one with all beings, an acting centre and instrument of the Universal Transcendent, full of the Ananda of the presence and the action but not thinking or moving independently or acting for its own sake. That cannot be called egoism. The Divine can

be called an ego only if he is a separate Person limited as in the Christian idea of God by his separateness (though even there esoteric Christianity abolishes the limitation). An I which is not separate in that way is no I at all.

The Self and the Cosmic Consciousness

One has first to become aware of the Self and its wide silence and eternal peace and acquire the cosmic consciousness in which one is aware of the whole universe as one with oneself and to live in that. One has at the same time to be aware — it becomes possible when one lives in the cosmic consciousness, cosmic Self and cosmic Nature, — of the different beings in oneself, psychic, mental, vital, physical, and then there appears also the central being which stands above all of them and is the source of all the surface personalities. It is only then that one can know the aspect or bhava one is intended to manifest.

*

The Cosmic Spirit or Self contains everything in the cosmos — it upholds cosmic Mind, universal Life, universal Matter as well as the Overmind. The Self is more than all these things which are its formulations in Nature.

A Vision of the Universal Self

What you saw in the vision was the wide and luminous infinite of what is called the universal Self or spirit. It is that which is one of the fundamental things into which one enters when one reaches the higher consciousness and goes above. The personal being naturally feels itself as something very small and insignificant in that Infinite. But in that Infinite there are higher and higher levels and it is to these levels that the Mother was leading you when she took you by the hand. This often happens in meditation or trance when one has once gone upward into the spiritual infinity. The reason why you did not see the Mother's form was not that the Mother hid herself or anything in you came between, but

that you were both moving in the formless Infinite as spiritual beings and so it was easier to feel the presence than to see any physical form. Not that the form cannot be there, but it is less insistent and therefore not so soon seen as on the physical plane.

The silence in the head and heart and the emptiness are both necessary and desirable. When they are there, the consciousness finds them natural and they give it the sense of lightness and release; that is why the thoughts or speech of the old kind are foreign to it and when they come give fatigue. This silence and emptiness must grow, so that the higher consciousness with its knowledge, light, Ananda, peace can come down in it and progressively replace the old things. They must indeed occupy not only head and heart but the whole body.

The Self Experienced on Various Planes

It is probably the true Cosmic Self or spirit with its cosmic consciousness and power that you feel on a plane above the ordinary mind or vital or physical — what plane is not as yet clear — for what you describe is common to this Self on whatever plane it manifests; it is felt like that as soon as the being or any part of the being detaches itself from the surface Ignorance.

*

The Self is met first on the level of the Higher Mind, but it is not limited to one station — it is usually felt as something outspread in wideness, but one may also feel a centralising consciousness in the Sahasrara or above it.

*

A complete silence makes realisation of the Self more possible — but that can be had on the Higher Mind level far below Overmind.

The Self and Time

In the self or pure existence there is no time or space — except

spiritual space or wideness.

*

Yes — in the silence of the self there is no time — it is *akāla*.

*

Yes, that is correct. In the first realisation of silence in the higher consciousness there is no Time — there is only the sense of pure existence, consciousness, peace or a strong featureless Ananda. If anything else comes in it is a minor movement on the surface of this timeless self-existence. This and the sense of liberation that comes with it is the result of the mind's quiescence. At a higher level this peace and liberation remain, but can be united with a greater and freer dynamic movement.

The Self and Life

It is always possible to have realisations of a kind on the mental-spiritual plane even if the vital is still impure. There is a sort of separation of the mental Purusha and Prakriti which results in a knowledge that has no transforming effect on the life. But the theory of these Yogis is that one has to know the Self; life and what one does in life do not matter. Have you not read of the Yogi who came with his concubine and Ramakrishna asked him, "Why do you live like that?" He answered, "All is Maya, so it does not matter what I do so long as I know the Brahman." It is true Ramakrishna replied, "I spit on your Vedanta", but logically the Yogi had a case. For if all life and action are Maya and only the silent Brahman is real — well!

Experiences of Infinity, Oneness, Unity

What you felt as a strong subtle air was the concrete expression of consciousness or conscious existence in itself independent of the body. As yet the experience is still limited by the body, but when it is felt without that limit then it is a sense of a wide ether filling all space, Akash Brahman. As this grows, the body sense

disappears and when the mind also is quite inactive, one feels oneself to be that spreading out to all Infinity.

*

The feeling you have of all being one and not this a tree or that such and such an object, seems to be a first touch of the realisation of all being One. For it is so that one sees things then, — all seems to be One and not something separate like a tree or a house. The tree or house is only a form in the One; the tree is really that One.

*

It is only by feeling all things as one spiritual substance that one can arrive at unity [*of matter, energy and mind*] — unity is in the spiritual consciousness. The material point is only one point among millions of millions — so that is not the base of unity. But once you get the unity in consciousness, you can feel through that the unity of mind substance, mind force, etc., the unity of life substance (mobile) and life force, the unity of material substance and energies. Being — consciousness of being — energy of consciousness — form of consciousness, all things are really that.

*

The spiritual consciousness [*mentioned in the preceding letter*] is that which is in contact with Sachchidananda, that is, with the pure existence, consciousness and bliss of the Divine. Any contact with Sachchidananda must bring either peace or bliss.

Living in the Divine

There can be no mental rule or definition [*of the kind of life possible after union with the Purushottama*]. One has first to live in the Divine and attain to the Truth — the will and awareness of the Truth will organise the life.

*

To be always merged in the Divine is not so easy. It can be done only by an absorption in one's own inner self or by a consciousness that sees all in the Divine and the Divine in all and is *always* in that condition. There is none [*here*] who has attained to that yet.

Chapter Two

Experiences on the Higher Planes

The Higher or Spiritual Consciousness

It [*the consciousness above the head*] is what we call the higher or spiritual consciousness — it contains or supports all the higher planes, the higher worlds. When one begins to feel this always above, it is a great step forward in the sadhana; then the consciousness can go up there and from there see, discern and control all that is in the mind, vital and body. It is the meeting-place of the ascending and descending forces, as you see.

Breaking into the Spiritual Consciousness

Of course, Krishnaprem's view about the canalisation of Niagara is my standpoint also.¹ But for the human mind it is difficult to get across the border between mind and spirit without making a forceful rush or push along one line only and that must be some line of pure experience in which, especially if it is the bhakta way, one gets easily swallowed up in the rapids (did not Chaitanya at last disappear in the waters?) and goes no farther. The first thing is to break into the spiritual consciousness, any part of it, anyhow and anywhere, afterwards one can explore the country, to which exploration there can hardly be a limit, one is always going higher and higher, getting wider and wider; but there is a certain intense ecstasy about the first complete plunge which is extraordinarily seizing. It is not only the bhakta's rapture, but the jnani's plunge into Brahma-Nirvana or Brahmananda or release into the still eternity of the Self that is of that seizing and

¹ *In a letter to the correspondent, Krishnaprem said that there are two stages of bhakti. In the first stage of rapturous adoration, the light and bliss of Krishna rush down into the bhakta just as water rushes over Niagara Falls. In the second stage the water flows through great pipes into mighty turbines which supply a continent with power. — Ed.*

absorbing character—it does not look at first as if one could or would care or need to get beyond into anything else. One cannot find fault with the Sannyasi lost in his laya or the bhakta lost in his ecstasy; they remain there probably because they are constituted for that and it is the limit of their leap. But all the same it has always appeared to me that it is a stage and not the end; I subscribe fully to the canalisation of Niagara.

Wideness and the Higher Consciousness

The first experience there [*on the higher plane*] is peace and calm and wideness. It is not till these are settled that other experiences of that plane can come.

*

The experience you had of the wideness with many roads opening was an image of the higher consciousness in which all the movements of the being are open, true and happy—the ignorance and incapacity of the lower nature disappear. It is that that the light from above is bringing.

*

Wideness is necessary for the working of the higher consciousness—if the being is shut up in itself, there can be intense experiences and some opening to touches from the heights, but not the full stable basis for the transformation.

*

Wideness is a sign of the extension of the consciousness out of the ordinary limits—whiteness of the wideness means that it is the pure consciousness one is feeling, unless it is white light or luminous white which indicates the Mother's consciousness there or some influence of it. The subtle barrier you felt must have been the same thing that prevents your ascent from the heart and from it going beyond into the regions above. There is always a sort of lid there and it is only when that is opened or disappears that one can go freely above. One can be aware of

the “unseen wideness” but one is not oneself there until that is done.

*

If the workings are really those of the higher consciousness or if these predominate the ego fades out — but there is also often a wideness of opening to the universal mental, vital, physical existence and, if the sadhak responds more to these than to the higher consciousness, then he does not get free. Sometimes even the ego gets aggrandised. But if the psychic is awake, then there is not this danger; one finds one’s true being in place of the ego.

*

She has had experiences but on the mental and vital plane. It is only a real descent of the higher consciousness from above that can give a peaceful and beautiful merging of the atoms (?)² into the wideness of the Divine — that is to say one feels the very cells sharing in that peace and wideness. This is possible even if the material body is ill. In most cases it is the subtle body that feels like that, but as the subtle penetrates everywhere the gross physical, the physical body also feels like that. But then it does not feel disturbed by the pains or motions of the illness — they do not affect its peace or Ananda.

Degrees in the Higher Consciousness

The plane makes a considerable difference in the power and luminosity and completeness etc. of the experience. A mental realisation is very different from an overmental or supramental although the Truth realised may be the same. So also to know Matter as the Brahman has a very different result from knowing Life, Mind, Supermind or Ananda as the Brahman. If realising the Divine through the Mind was just the same as realising him on higher planes, there would be no meaning in this Yoga at all

² The question mark is Sri Aurobindo’s. The sadhika had written, “Every atom of the body is merging peacefully and beautifully into the wideness.” — Ed.

— there would be no need of ascending to Supermind or bringing Supermind down.

*

The consciousness which he calls supramental, is no doubt above the human mind, but it should be called the higher consciousness. In this higher consciousness there are many degrees, of which the supramental is the summit or the source. It is not possible to reach that summit or source all at once; first, all the lower consciousness has to be purified and made ready. That is the meaning of the Light he saw, whose inner body or substance is too dense and powerful to be penetrated at present.

*

The higher consciousness is that above the ordinary mind and different from it in its workings; it ranges from higher mind through illumined mind, intuition and overmind up to the border line of the supramental.

*

The Self governs the diversity of its creation by its unity on all the planes from the Higher Mind upwards, for there some realisation or vision of the One Truth or the Universal is the natural frame and basis of the whole consciousness. But the higher one rises upward, the more the spiritual view changes, the power of consciousness changes, the Light becomes ever more intense and potent. The essential static realisation of Infinity and Eternity and the Timeless One remains the same, but the vision of the workings of the One becomes ever wider and is attended with a greater instrumentality of Force and a more comprehensive grasp of what has to be known and done. All possible forms and constructions of things become more and more visible, more perfectly put in their proper place, more luminously utilisable. A clear spacious thought-knowledge in the Higher Mind becomes a mass of illuminations in the Illumined Mind and heightens into direct intimate vision on the Intuition level. But the Intuition sees in flashes and combines through a constant play of light

— through a chain or coordinated harmony of revelations, inspirations, intuitions, swift discriminations. The Overmind sees calmly, steadily, in great masses and deep and large extensions of space and time and relation, globally, in wholes; it has the universal touch not only in spirit but in its manner. It creates and acts in the same way — for the Overmind is the world of the great Gods, the divine Creators. But each Godhead creates in his own way; he sees all but that all is seen from his own divine viewpoint. There is not the absolute supramental harmony and certitude. These are some of the differences. I speak of these planes in themselves — for when they act in the human consciousness, they are necessarily much diminished in their working, for they have to work with and depend on the human instrumentation or man's smaller seeking mental intelligence, his passionate turbid vital and mental, his cabined and narrow physical intellect — their workings get badly mixed up with these inferior modes of consciousness and their diluted light of ignorance. Only when these lower impotencies are quieted can those higher powers get a fuller force and reveal more of their original luminous character.

The Higher Planes and the Supermind

The Ignorance can act from above the head — but not as part of the higher planes — it comes from outside. The higher planes just above the head are not however the absolute Truth; that you only get in the supermind.

*

Absolute certitude about all things can only come from the supermind. Meanwhile one has to go on with what knowledge the other planes give.

*

The Truth manifesting on all the planes is one thing, the Supramental is another, although it is the source of all Truth.

*

To go into the supermind is impossible for the human mind. One has to rise into the higher planes of consciousness above human mind and transform the human mind into that; only afterwards can we hope to touch the supermind.

*

One has to go by stages, and to reach and be conscious on the higher planes between mind and Overmind is already sufficiently difficult without insisting on Supermind as the immediate goal.

*

One has to know about Overmind and Supermind but there should be no ambition to reach them—it should be regarded as a natural end of the sadhana which will come of itself. The concentration should be all on the immediate step—whatever is being done at the time. So have the working of the Power and let it work all out step by step.

Levels of the Higher Mind

What you see is perfectly correct. These three are three levels of the higher Mind—on the lowest the consciousness is in connection with the Divine not directly but through the touch of the Light, Peace, Power and Knowledge, on the second it is in the Light etc. and already sees the Divine, on the third it is in union with the Divine and surrendered. These are three well known conditions of the higher consciousness in its approach to the Divine.

An Illumined Mind Experience

You probably went up into the illumined Mind which has a pale blue light and were receiving there lights from the higher planes and occasionally seeing the flash of the full orb of the Divine Truth.

It is always a mistake for the mind to become active and wanting to know while the experience is going on—it usually

stops the experience or disturbs or alters it in some way. The mind must remain passive till the experience is over.

Overmind Experiences

Overmind experience comes when one rises to the overmind plane and sees things as they are on that plane or as they look to the consciousness which sees the other planes from the overmind view. When one is in the mind, life or physical plane, then it is the overmind Influence that comes down and modifies the mind, life or physical workings in greater or less degree according to the possibilities or the thing to be done at the moment. It is not the sole power as it is in its own plane but works under mental, vital or physical conditions. Its power is more subjective than objective — it is easy for it to change our view and experience of the object and our knowledge about it, but not so easy for it to change the object or its nature or circumstances or the outward state of things in that plane.

*

It is perfectly simple, it is the attraction towards the Divine Oneness represented in concrete experience. Is it the concreteness of the experiences that puzzles you? All experience there [*in the Overmind*] tends to be concrete, there are no “abstract” truths as in the mind, — even thought in the Overmind is a concrete force and a palpable substance.

*

Yes — it is one aspect of the Truth: for in the Overmind there are many aspects of Truth, separate or combined together or arranged one above the other.

*

Both [*visions*] are true on different levels of the Overmind plane or in different cosmic formulations that come from the Overmind. All aspects are there in the Overmind, even those which the intellect considers contradictory to each other — in

the Overmind they are not contradictions, but complementary to each other.

*

It is perfectly natural. In these experiences you become aware of the consciousness proper to other planes. Thus you get the experience of being a form of the Divine Consciousness, the Mother, and while the experience lasts you feel her power — when the experience ceases, you come back to your normal state, the power withdraws. These experiences impregnate the consciousness with the Overmind knowledge and they prepare it for transformation.

*

The overmind experience does not necessarily deliver from the lower vital and physical movements — it changes them only to a certain extent and prepares them for a greater Truth.

Overmind Experiences and the Supermind

People talk very lightly of the overmind and the supermind as if it were quite easy to enter into them and mistake inferior movements for the overmental or supramental, thereby confusing the Truth and delaying the progress of the sadhana.

*

Certainly, it [*the overmind descent*] is necessary for those who want the supramental change. Unless the overmind opens, there can be no direct supramental opening of the consciousness. If one remains in mind, even illumined mind or the intuition, one can have indirect messages or an influence from the supramental, but not a direct supramental control of the consciousness or the supramental change.

*

It is only the supermind that has an absolute freedom from error. The Overmind presents truths in all sorts of arrangements

all of which taken together presents something like the whole truth — but these again are reflected in you in the terrestrial consciousness or conveyed to your terrestrial consciousness by the descent from the higher planes; but in receiving it the terrestrial consciousness can make mistakes in interpretation, in understanding, in application, in arrangement.

*

It is not very clear [*in the correspondent's letter*] what is meant by this Knowledge-Will. It is usually a description of the Supramental where there is no division between Knowledge and Will, each acting on each other or rather fixed together in oneness and therefore infallible. You say it has taken form in mind, vital and body; if that were so, it would mean the final and decisive transformation; so it cannot be the Supramental. It must be some overmind truth plane.

*

There are certain things in these three letters that are not correct, notably:

(1) He seems to say that beyond the overmind there is a plane of “higher luminous Intelligence”. This is impossible. Beyond the overmind there is the Supermind — the overmind is the highest of all the planes below the supramental, and he is not yet in touch with the supramental. What he calls here the overmind cannot be the true overmind. His experiences are those of the mind opening to the higher mental planes and trying to bring down something from them and their powers into the mind, life and body.

(2) E.g. his classification of four worlds (Parvati-Shankar etc.) is an attempt of the mind to interpret something he had seen, but it has not got it at all right. If Mahasaraswati stopped him at this moment, it must have been because his mind was making a wrong formation and it was no use carrying it any farther.

At this stage of his Yoga he must observe what is going on, but not attach a definitive or final importance to any such

classifications or mental arrangements. The mind at this stage sometimes gets these things correctly, sometimes makes formations of them which are not correct and have to be discarded or set right when a higher knowledge comes.

*

Your experience means manifestly the uniting of the Ishwara-Shakti sides of the manifestation — as in the Hara-Gauri figure — with the result of a universalisation of the individual consciousness indicated by the shooting out towards infinite distances. The currents are of course the currents of the double force working to make this liberation. The blue and gold must be the blue of Krishna and the gold of the Mother (Durga-Mahakali).

All this is not a supramental experience, but comes from the Overmind. But the overmind experiences must come first and liberate the consciousness. It is only after the overmind liberation that the true experience of the supermind can come.

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You must realise that the supramentalisation of the overmind is one of the most difficult things possible and proceed with great care so as to avoid haste and error.

Reflected Experience of the Higher Planes

One can get the experiences of a higher plane by reflection or some partial descent in the lower.

*

It is the experience of the transcendent planes as reflected on the higher planes of consciousness (Overmind, etc.), in relation to them; just as one can have an experience of Sachchidananda and these planes as reflected in the mind or vital or physical consciousness, so one can have it there — but on each plane it appears in a different way.

Trance and the Higher Planes

The higher planes are not planes on which man is naturally conscious and he is even not open to their direct influence — only to some indirect influence from those nearest to the human mind. He can reach them only in a deep inner condition or trance and the higher he goes the less easy is it for him to be conscious of them even in trance. If you are not conscious of your inner being, then it is more difficult to be conscious in trance.

Living in a Higher Plane

To live in a higher plane and see the action on the physical from it as something separate is a definite stage in the movement towards transformation.

Section Four

The Spiritual Transformation

Chapter One

Ascent and Descent

The Meaning of Spiritual Transformation

What I mean by the spiritual transformation is something dynamic (not merely liberation of the self, or realisation of the One which can very well be attained without any descent). It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness dynamic as well as static in every part of the being down to the subconscious. That cannot be done by the influence of the Self leaving the consciousness fundamentally as it is with only purification, enlightenment of the mind and heart and quiescence of the vital. It means a bringing down of Divine Consciousness static and dynamic into all these parts and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that. This we find unveiled and un-mixed above mind, life and body and not in mind, life and body. It is a matter of the undeniable experience of many that this can descend and it is my experience that nothing short of its *full* descent can thoroughly remove the veil and mixture and effect the full spiritual transformation.

*

The power of concentration above the head is to bring peace, silence, liberation from the body sense, the identification with mind and life and open the way for the lower (mental-vital-physical) consciousness to rise up to meet the higher Consciousness above and for the powers of the higher (spiritual or divine) Consciousness to descend into mind, life and body. This is what is called in this Yoga the spiritual transformation.

A Double Movement in the Sadhana

There is a double movement in the sadhana — the Divine Consciousness, Power, Light, Peace descending into all the body, the

consciousness from all parts of the body rising upwards to meet the Divine Consciousness above — the descent and the ascent.

*

The sadhana is based on the fact that a descent of Forces from the higher planes and an ascent of the lower consciousness to the higher planes is the means of transformation of the lower nature — although naturally it takes time and the complete transformation can only come by the supramental descent. Your experiences here are forms of the widening experiences of this process.

*

The practice of this Yoga is double — one side is of an ascent of the consciousness to the higher planes, the other is of a descent of the power of the higher planes into the earth consciousness so as to drive out the Power of darkness and ignorance and transform the nature.

*

All the consciousness in the human being who is the mental embodied in living matter has to rise so as to meet the higher consciousness; the higher consciousness has also to descend into mind, into life, into matter. In that way the barriers will be removed and the higher consciousness will be able to take up the whole lower nature and transform it by the power of the supermind.

The earth is a material field of evolution. Mind and life, supermind, Sachchidananda are in principle involved there in the earth consciousness, but only matter is at first organised; then life descends from the life plane and gives shape and organisation and activity to the life principle in matter, creates the plant and animal; then mind descends from the mind plane, creating man. Now supermind is to descend so as to create a supramental race.

*

There are two movements — one an ascension of the lower consciousness to meet the higher, the other the descent of the

higher consciousness into the lower. What you first experienced was an uprush of the lower consciousness from all parts so strong as to break the lid of the inner mind—that was the splitting of the skull—and to enable the joining of the two consciousnesses above to be complete. The result was a descent. Usually the first thing that descends from the higher consciousness is its deep and entire peace—the second is the Light, here the white light of the Mother. When the higher consciousness descends or is intensely felt, there is very usually an opening of the limited personal being into the cosmic consciousness—one feels a wide and infinite being which alone exists, the identification with the body and even the sense of the body disappears, the limited personal consciousness is lost in the Cosmic Existence. You had all this first in the impersonal way, but after the burning up of the psychic fire, you felt the Personal wideness, the cosmic consciousness of the Divine Mother and received her blessing.

*

If your consciousness rises above the head, that means that it goes beyond the ordinary mind to the centre above which receives the higher consciousness or else towards the ascending levels of the higher consciousness itself. The first result is the silence and peace of the Self which is the basis of the higher consciousness; this may afterwards descend into the lower levels, into the very body. Light also can descend and Force. The navel and the centres below it are those of the vital and the physical; something of the higher Force may have descended there.

Both Ascent and Descent Necessary

The lower consciousness ascends towards the higher to join it—the higher descends into the lower to transform it. It is the rule of the consciousness in this sadhana.

*

A going up and up higher, though a part of the total necessary

movement, does not by itself have any effect on the outer being. It only divides the consciousness into two and its only logical outcome is Nirvana. I have always written that the descent is necessary to change the nature; ascent is useful to open the higher planes and exalt the level of the consciousness, but it does not change the lower being except superficially by opening to it certain possibilities it had not before. But the descent must first take place in the inner being. When the higher consciousness is settled in the inner being, then it can change the outer. But necessarily the descent must be dynamic, not merely that of a static peace; the inner peace must itself become dynamic.

The descent whether of peace or force or light or knowledge or Ananda must occupy the whole inner being down to the inner physical. Without that how is the outer to be transformed at all? It is an amazing idea to suppose that the outer can be changed while the inner is left to itself. What you had in the inner being was a static stillness which did not even entirely occupy the inner physical except at times — that was why the dynamic descent was necessary, but in the inner being or if possible the whole being, the inner outflowing into the outer, not in the outer being to the exclusion of the inner.

*

In the physical consciousness the descent is the most important. Something of the subtle physical can always go up — but the external physical consciousness can only do it when the force from above comes down and fills it. There is then a sort of unification made when the higher consciousness and the physical are one undivided consciousness and there is an ascent of forces from below and descent from above, simultaneous and mutually interpenetrating.

*

I am not speaking of mere rising above [*as the means of changing the external nature*]. The rising above has to be followed by the descent of the higher consciousness into the different parts of the being. That aided by the psychic development and aiding it

changes the external nature.

*

It was an experience (by ascension) of the spiritual plane of being above in which there is absolute peace and light and Ananda. It is this that has to descend into the mind, vital and body and be the constant condition and the basis for the final transformation of the consciousness and nature.

*

There are two movements that are necessary — one is the ascent through the increasing of peace and silence to its source above the mind, — that is indicated by the tendency of the consciousness to rise out of the body to the top of the head and above where it is easy to realise the Self in all its stillness and liberation and wideness and to open to the other powers of the Higher Consciousness. The other is the descent of the peace, silence, the spiritual freedom and wideness and the powers of the higher consciousness as they develop into the lower down to the most physical and even the subconscious. To both of these movements there can be a block — a block above due to the mind and lower nature being unhabituated (it is that really and not incapacity) and a block below due to the physical consciousness and its natural slowness to change. Everybody has these blocks but by persistent will, aspiration or *abhyāsa* they can be overcome.

The Order of Ascent and Descent

There is no fixed rule in such things. With many the descent comes first and the ascension afterwards, with others it is the other way; with some the two processes go on together. If one can fix oneself above so much the better.

*

I think the descent is more usual than the ascent. Some sadhaks finish the ascent first or ascents and descents but more often the descents come first and the ascent (above the head) takes place

only when there has been much working of peace, force, Ananda etc. in the body.

*

The movement of ascension cannot finish so long as the movement of descent is not ready to finish.

Ascent and Descent of the Kundalini Shakti

The spine is the main channel of the descent and ascent of the Force, by which it connects the lower and the higher consciousness together.

*

The sensation in the spine and on both sides of it is a sign of the awakening of the Kundalini power. More precisely, it is felt as a descending or an ascending current or currents, or both at the same time. There are two main nerve channels for the currents, one on each side of the central channel in the spine. The descending current is the Energy from above coming down to touch the sleeping Power in the lowest nerve centre at the bottom of the spine; the ascending current is the release of energy going up from the awakened Kundalini. This movement as it proceeds opens up the six centres of the subtle nervous system and by the opening one escapes from the limitations of the surface consciousness bound to the gross body, and great ranges of experience proper to the larger subliminal self, mental, vital, subtle-physical, are shown to the sadhaka. When the Kundalini meets the higher consciousness, as it ascends through the summit of the head, there is an opening to the higher superconscious reaches above the normal mind. It is by ascending through these in our consciousness and receiving a descent of their energies that it is possible ultimately to reach the supermind. This is the psycho-physical method which is elaborately systematised in the Tantra. In our Yoga it is not necessary to go through the systematised method, — for this psycho-physical process is only a part of the movement of the Yoga and it takes place spontaneously according to need by the force of the aspiration

and the call for the workings of the Divine Power. As soon as there is an opening, the Divine Power descends and conducts the necessary working, does what is needed, each thing in its time, and the Yogic consciousness begins to be born in the sadhaka.

*

The force which you felt must evidently have been a rising of the Kundalini ascending to join the Force above and bring down the energy needed to ease the depression and then again rising to enforce the connection between the Above and the lower centres. The seeming expansion of the head is due to the joining of the mind with the consciousness of the Self or Divine above. That consciousness is wide and illimitable and when one rises into it the individual consciousness also breaks its limits and feels wide and illimitable. At such times one often feels as if there were no head and no body but all were a wide self and its consciousness, or else the head or the body is only a circumstance in that. The body or the physical mind is sometimes startled or alarmed at these experiences because they are abnormal to it; but there is no ground for alarm, — these are usual experiences in the Yoga.

*

There is a Yoga Shakti lying coiled or asleep in the inner body, not active. When one does Yoga, this force uncoils itself and rises upward to meet the Divine Consciousness and Force that are waiting above us. When this happens, when the awakened Yoga Shakti arises, it is often felt like a snake uncoiling and standing up straight and lifting itself more and more upwards. When it meets the Divine Consciousness above, then the force of the Divine Consciousness can more easily descend into the body and be felt working there to change the nature.

The feeling of your body and eyes being drawn upwards is part of the same movement. It is the inner consciousness in the body and the inner subtle sight in the body that are looking and moving upward and trying to meet the divine consciousness and divine seeing above.

*

Yoga means union with the Divine—a union either transcendental (above the universe) or cosmic (universal) or individual or, as in our Yoga, all three together. Or it means getting into a consciousness in which one is no longer limited by the small ego, personal mind, personal vital and body but is in union with the supreme Self or with the universal (cosmic) consciousness or with some deeper consciousness within in which one is aware of one's own soul, one's own inner being and of the real truth of existence. In the Yogic consciousness one is not only aware of things, but of forces, not only of forces but of the conscious being behind the forces. One is aware of all this not only in oneself but in the universe.

There is a force which accompanies the growth of the new consciousness and at once grows with it and helps it to come about and to perfect itself. This force is the Yoga shakti. It is here asleep and coiled up in all the centres of our inner being (chakras) and is at the base what is called in the Tantras the Kundalini shakti. But it is also above us, above our head as the Divine Force—not there coiled up, involved, asleep, but awake, scient, potent, extended and wide; it is there waiting for manifestation and to this Force we have to open ourselves—to the power of the Mother. In the mind it manifests itself as a divine mind-force or a universal mind-force and it can do everything that the personal mind cannot do; it is then the Yogic mind-force. When it manifests and works in the vital or physical in the same way, it is then apparent as a Yogic life-force or a Yogic body-force. It can awake in all these forms, bursting outwards and upwards, extending itself into wideness from below; or it can descend and become there a definite power for things; it can pour downwards into the body, working, establishing its reign, extending into wideness from above, link the lowest in us with the highest above us, release the individual into a cosmic universality or into absoluteness and transcendence.

Ascent and Descent and Problems of the Lower Nature

If one can remain always in the higher consciousness, so much

the better. But why does not one remain always there? Because the lower is still part of the nature and it pulls you down towards itself. If on the other hand the lower is transformed, it becomes of one kind with the higher and there is nothing lower to pull downwards.

Transformation means that the higher consciousness or nature is brought down into the mind, vital and body and takes the place of the lower. There is a higher consciousness of the true self which is spiritual, but it is above; if one rises above into it, then one is free as long as one remains there, but if one comes down into or uses mind, vital or body — and if one keeps any connection with life, one has to do so, either to come down and act from the ordinary consciousness or else to be in the self but use mind, life and body — then the imperfections of these instruments have to be faced and mended; they can only be mended by transformation.

You say you rise a little above into this higher consciousness, but where do you rise? Into the quieted mind and above the vital or above the mind itself into something always calm and pure and free?

*

No. I did not intend any sarcasm by my question [*at the end of the preceding letter*]. You had written that by rising a little above the ordinary consciousness one was free from difficulties and that this was what one felt — I thought you meant that this was your own experience. So I put the question, as the experience of the quiet mind is one that can easily be broken by the invasions of the vital or the inertia of the physical being. The experience of the deeper freedom and calm which belongs to the self remains, but it can be covered up by the lower consciousness.

*

That [*thoughts about others*] can be only a temporary result of past activities. The endeavour should now be to make the ascent above into the silence of the Self in the higher universal consciousness above, for that was evidently what was trying

to come when the disturbance broke in. That would probably bring also the descent of the permanent spiritual peace into all the being as a basis for the higher activities.

*

That you should be able to keep your consciousness uplifted is already something. As for the opening its coming and apparent closing is a normal experience — it needs several openings before the thing is settled by a permanent poise of the consciousness above and an increasing descent into the head and below. It is the pull from below that should get no indulgence — for that, though most do indulge in it, is a wrong crabby way of doing it. One must be safely stationed above before one can descend without a tumble. Not that the tumble if it comes precludes a going up again — it does not; but that is no reason for letting it happen.

*

Even if the permanent opening does not come at once, you have only to wait and it is bound to come. It is certainly a pity that the restlessness of the vital should kick so much against vacancy of the consciousness; for if you could stand it this emptiness, now neutral, and therefore not interesting to the vital, would become positive and be the peaceful recipient of the pouring from above. The difficulty is that the vital has always been accustomed either to doing something or to something doing and when it is doing nothing or nothing is doing (or it seems like that on the surface), it gets bored and begins to feel and talk or to do nonsense. However even with this obstacle, the Descent can come down — it need not wait for the Supramental.

*

Yes. To ascend is easier than to bring down; the higher consciousness gets entangled and impeded in the physical and the mind and vital.

*

Rising higher and higher and bringing down is the method of

the Yoga; but it is not possible to do it with full effect until one has so prepared oneself that one can rise above the head to the Self in the higher mind. It was the point you had reached but could not confirm before the difficulties came in from the physical consciousness.

Experiences of Ascent and Descent

The ascent of the consciousness in the lower centres into the higher and the descent of the higher powers and the white light indicates a farther preparation of the vital and physical being and its forces by spiritualisation of the centres.

*

All these are different actions of the Force on the adhar with the one intention of opening it up from above and below and horizontally also. The action from above opens it to the descent of forces from above the Mind and the ascent of consciousness above the lid of the ordinary human mind. The horizontal action opens it to the cosmic consciousness on all its levels. The action from below helps to connect the superconscient with the subconscious. Finally the consciousness instead of being limited in the body becomes infinite, rises infinitely above, plunges infinitely below, widens infinitely on every side. There is besides the opening of all the centres to the Light and Power and Ananda that has to descend from above. At present only the mind centres seem to receive fully the descent of Force, while the upper vital centres are being prepared with a minor action on other parts of the body. It is a matter of time and perseverance for the way to be entirely open.

*

The experience you feel is that of the Atman, the cosmic Self supporting the cosmic consciousness — not yet clear but in its first impression. When the consciousness goes down from that condition, it brings something of it into the vital and physical consciousness and the result is either that these parts or at least

the vital open and get into touch with what has been brought down. The inert *tāmasikatā* or the unease in the legs comes because the physical is not able to receive or assimilate. This will disappear when that part opens and receives and is able to assimilate.

It was there the occasional descent of the Force to establish a connection — here the descent is taking another form intended to establish the fundamental experiences of the Realisation.

*

It is the beginning of a very decisive experience and realisation — first, the Ascent above the mind (head) into the spiritual plane. It is here that one releases and is released into the vastness, fullness, solace, freedom, peace and joy of the Infinite and becomes aware of the universal Self and the Divine. Its realisation is the foundation (when it is fixed and when one rises constantly above the body in the wideness of the infinite Being) of the spiritual state and the beginning of the spiritual transformation of the nature. What you have been having up to now is the psychic change; when the psychic and spiritual join together, then the transformation can be complete. For this the Descent is necessary and that is the second thing you are feeling, — the descent of the higher, spiritual or divine consciousness and energy into the whole system down to the bottom of the spine where is the Muladhara or centre of the physical consciousness. The Energy descends through all the levels and centres, mind centres, vital centres, physical centre and fills the whole body with the higher existence and consciousness. The ascent is the liberation (*mukti*) and when once this ascends, one is liberated from the body consciousness, one no longer feels the body as a form, no longer feels contained in the body, but widens out into the formless Vastness of the Divine. Or sometimes the body is felt as something very small in this vastness. In the Descent the body is felt but not as a confining form so much as an instrument and receptacle for this larger consciousness. Your description of the experience is unmistakable. All the elements are there. What has to happen is to get fixed in the wideness, freedom, stillness, peace

of the consciousness above and for the Descent to continue till it has fixed the higher power of being everywhere below — in the body and in the subconscious below it and also all round the body so that one lives enveloped in this new consciousness and being.

*

The experiences you relate mark a great progress — the passage from the perception of the ascending Force to that of the descending Shakti. For the spiral coils of Light you saw and whose effects you felt — the merging in silence and peace, the peace of the Atman or the Brahman consciousness — are usually a first effect, they are visual forms of the dynamic descent of the Divine Force from above; also the passage from the realisation of the static Brahman with the sense of the unreality of the world-existence to the realisation of the status of the dynamic one. This is a considerable step in the integral Yoga.

The Brahman consciousness is sometimes described as a static one, but it has two aspects, static and dynamic, and it is when both are united that it becomes integral. This is the greater consciousness I speak of in the sentence quoted by you, greater than either that which perceives the Brahmic silence and immobility alone or that which perceives the cosmic existence and action alone.

Chapter Two

Ascent to the Higher Planes

Contact with the Above

These are the ordinary normal experiences of the sadhana when there is an opening from above — the contact with the peace of the Brahman, Self or Divine and the contact with the higher Power, the Power of the Mother. He does not know what they are, quite naturally, but feels very correctly and his description is quite accurate. “How beautiful, calm and still all seems — as if in water there were not even a wave. But it is not Nothingness. I feel a Presence steeped in life but absolutely silent and quiet in meditation”, — there could hardly be a better description of this experience, — the experience of the peace and silence of the Divine or of the Divine itself in its own essential peace and silence. Also what he feels about the Force is quite correct, “something from above the manifested creation (mind-matter), a Force behind that is distinct from that which gives rise to emotions, anger, lust which are all purified and transformed gradually”, in other words, the Divine or Spiritual Force, other than the cosmic vital which supports the ordinary embodied consciousness; that is also very clear. I suppose it is only a contact yet, but a very true and vivid contact if it gives rise to so vivid and true a feeling. It looks as if he were going to make a very good beginning.

*

One may get influences from above, but so long as the mind is not full of the higher calm, peace, silence, one cannot be in direct contact. These influences get diminished, mentalised, vitalised and are not the powers of the higher planes in their native character. Nor is this sufficient to get control of the hidden forces of all the planes of consciousness, which is perhaps what he means by occultism.

*

Indirect connection [*with the Divine*] is when one lives in the ordinary consciousness without being able to go up above it and receives influences from above without knowing where they come from or feeling their source.

*

Sometimes one feels an ascension above the head. I think he has had that, but that is the mind going up (when it is not simply a going out of the body) into the higher mental planes. To be above the mind one must first realise the self above the mind and live there.

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Do you realise it [*the higher being*] as wide and infinite? When you are there do you feel it spread through infinity? Do you feel all the universe within you, yourself one with the self of all beings? Do you feel the one cosmic Force acting everywhere? Do you feel your mind one with the cosmic mind? your life one with the cosmic life? your matter one with the cosmic Matter? separative ego unreal? the body no longer a limitation? What is the use of merely saying that the higher being is wide and infinite? Do these realisations come when you are in the higher being and if not, why not? The inner being easily opens to all these realisations, the outer does not. So unless your inner being becomes conscious of itself, the mere ascent gives only height or some vague sense of other planes, not these concrete realisations.

Ascension or Rising above the Head

This is a fundamental experience of the Yoga. It is the free ascent of the consciousness to join the Divine. When, liberated from its ordinary identification with the body, it rises upward to have experiences of the higher planes, to link itself with the psychic or the true being or to join the Divine Consciousness, then there is this experience of ascension and of speeding or expanding through space. The joy you feel is a sign of this last movement, — rising to join the Divine; the passivity and expectancy of a

descent are signs of the openness to the Divine that is its result; there is also the sense of this openness, an emptiness of the ordinary contents of the consciousness, a wideness not limited by the narrow prison of the physical personality. There is too, usually or very often, a massive immobility of the body which corresponds to the silence that comes on the mind when it is released from itself—the Silence that is the foundation of spiritual experience. What you have felt (the former experiences were probably preparatory touches) is indeed the beginning of this foundation—a consciousness free, wide, empty at will, able to rise into the supraphysical planes, open to the descent of whatever the Mother will pour into it.

*

Nothing needs to be done to bring the ascension—aspiration is sufficient. The object of the ascension is for the lower nature to join the higher consciousness so that (1) the limit or lid between the higher and the lower may be broken and disappear, (2) the consciousness may have free access to higher and higher planes, (3) a free way may be made for the descent of the higher Consciousness into the lower planes.

*

The lower consciousness rises to meet the higher consciousness—when it joins there is the sense of unity and the feeling of the one cosmic Self with Ananda and Peace or both as the result. This is called the ascent of the lower consciousness—it cannot remain all the time but it can become more and more frequent until the descent of the higher consciousness is ready.

*

That [*rising above the head*] is very good. Such risings help to break down the lid between the higher and lower planes in the consciousness and prepare the consciousness.

*

The rising of the energies of the consciousness to the crown of

the head and beyond is a recognised movement of the sadhana. It is the forces of the lower Prakriti rising to connect themselves with the higher spiritual consciousness above. The hearing of bells is usually a sign of an opening of the consciousness; it is mentioned in the Upanishads as one of such significant sounds and is well known to Yogis.

*

(1) Freedom from cares, lightness of mind and body are very good results. They do not usually become permanent at once — it is sufficient if they are frequently or ordinarily there.

(2) Chest and head rising higher are sensations of the subtle body — it means that the mind and heart consciousness (thinking mental and emotional) are rising to meet the spiritual consciousness plane above the head.

(3) The sound is a sign of the opening of the consciousness and of the working of the inner Force. Such subtle sounds are very frequently heard by those who practise Yoga.

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Everything in the adhar in the sadhana has at one time the tendency to rise and join its source above.

*

The upward movement and the silence are indispensable for the Truth to manifest.

Ascent and Return to the Ordinary Consciousness

I may say that the opening upwards, the ascent into the Light and the subsequent descent into the ordinary consciousness and normal human life is very common as the first decisive experience in the practice of Yoga and may very well happen even without the practice of Yoga in those who are destined for the spiritual change, especially if there is a dissatisfaction somewhere with the ordinary life and a seeking for something more, greater or better. It comes often exactly in the way that she describes

and the cessation of the experience and the descent also come in the same way. This first experience may be followed by a very long time during which there is no repetition of it or any subsequent experience. If there is a constant practice of Yoga, the interval need not be so long; but even so it is often long enough. The descent is inevitable because it is not the whole being that has risen up but only something within and all the rest of the nature is unprepared, absorbed in or attached to ordinary life and governed by movements that are not in consonance with the Light. Still the something within is something central in the being and therefore the experience is in a way definitive and decisive. For it comes as a decisive intimation of the spiritual destiny and an indication of what must be reached some time in the life. Once it has been there, something is bound to happen which will open the way, determine the right knowledge and the right attitude enabling one to proceed on the way and bring a helping influence. After that the work of clearing away the obstacles that prevent the return to the Light and the ascension of the whole being and, what is equally important, the descent of the Light into the whole being can be begun and progress towards completion. It may take long or be rapid, that depends on the inner push and also on outer circumstances but the inner aspiration and endeavour count more than the circumstances which can accommodate themselves to the inner need if that is very strong. The moment has come for her and the necessary aspiration and knowledge and the influence that can help her.

Ascent and Dissolution

Once the being or its different parts begin to ascend to the planes above, any part of the being may do it, frontal or other. The *sanskara* that one cannot come back must be got rid of. One can have the experience of Nirvana at the summit of the mind or anywhere in those planes that are now superconscious to the mind; the mind spiritualised by the ascent into Self has the sense of *laya*, dissolution of itself, its thoughts, movements, *sanskaras* into a superconscious Silence and Infinity which it is

unable to grasp, — the Unknowable. But this would bring or lead to some form of Nirvana only if one makes Nirvana the goal, if one is tied to the mind and accepts its dissolution into the Infinite as one's own dissolution or if one has not the capacity to reorganise experience on a higher than the mental plane. But otherwise what was superconscient becomes conscient, one begins to possess or else be the instrument of the dynamis of the higher planes and there is a movement, not of liberation into Nirvana, but of liberation + transformation. However high one goes, one can always return, unless one has the will not to do so.

Ascent and the Psychic Being

Any part of the being can go upward and meet its source there. The central being is always above; the psychic is its counterpart below. If the psychic goes up it may be also to join its source in the central being.

*

The psychic being and other parts can go up to join the higher consciousness there. It is part of the movement of ascent. Naturally the psychic wants a deeper union than can be had so long as it is veiled by the old ignorant nature; it wants the higher consciousness to come down and occupy and transform it so that complete union may be possible.

The Shakti going up from the Muladhara must be the Shakti of the physical nature. It wants transformation also, I suppose, but it has not the quiet and luminous but ardent aspiration of the psychic being — its aspiration is more troubled and tinged with unease.

*

In your experience the ascent was into the regions of the calm and silent Self above; when you came down you went into the depths of the psychic being and found there the same calm and wideness. This experience is of great importance for it means that the way to both these is now open to you — and these two

are the fundamental experiences of our Yoga — the unveiling of the psychic and the self-realisation. Pursue your meditations in the same poise.

Ascent and the Body

The ordinary movement of sadhana is that of the inner being (mind, psychic, higher vital) rising towards the Divine Consciousness, — leaving the external being behind — but for this Yoga that is not enough, the physical and external being must also be able to rise into the Divine Consciousness.

*

What you have written is quite correct. The body is not connected ordinarily with the higher consciousness, it only receives what it can from the mind. It is being prepared for the direct connection by the ascent of the inner or subtle body into that plane and the descent from it of the higher Light.

*

No, the body itself cannot go up — how could it? The body is meant for keeping the consciousness linked to the physical world.

*

If all went up, there would be no more existence in the body. There is always some consciousness and therefore some self supporting the body.

*

When the consciousness is centred above, it can be said to be located above. That does not mean that there is no consciousness left in the lower parts.

Ascent and Going out of the Body

There are two different things. One is the consciousness actually going out of the body — but that brings a deep sleep or trance.

The other is the consciousness lifting itself out of the body and taking its stand outside it — above and spread round in wide-ness. That can be a condition of the Yogin in the waking state — he does not feel himself to be in the body but he feels the body to be in his wide free self, he is delivered from limitation in the body consciousness.

*

There are two different experiences which from your account would seem to have happened together.

(1) An exteriorisation of the consciousness out of the body. Part of the consciousness, mental, vital or subtle physical or all together rises out of the body, leaving it in a strongly internalised condition, sleep or trance and can move about above on other planes or in the room and outside on the earth plane. In such cases the body can be seen as lying below or in the room, seen clearly as one sees a separate object with the physical eyes. A fear such as you had can come in these exteriorisations and bring the consciousness back with a rush to the body.

(2) An ascension of the consciousness to a position which is no longer in the body but above it. The consciousness can thus ascend and rise higher and higher with the awareness of entering regions above the ordinary mind; usually it does not go very far at first but acquires the capacity to go always higher in repetitions of this experience. At the close of the experience it returns to the body. But also there comes a definitive rise by which the consciousness permanently takes its station above. It is no longer in the body or limited by it; it feels itself not only above it but extended in space; the body is below its high station and enveloped in its extended consciousness. Sometimes indeed the extension is felt only above on the higher level and the enveloping extension below comes only afterwards as a later experience. But the nature of it is to be definitive, it is not merely an experience but a realisation, a permanent change. This brings a liberation from identification with the body which becomes only a circumstance in the largeness of the being, an instrumental part of it; or it is felt as something very small or

even non-existent, nothing seems to be left but a wide practically infinite consciousness which is oneself — or, if not at once infinite, yet what is now called a boundless finite.

This new consciousness is open to all knowledge from above, but it does not think with the brain as does the ordinary mind — it has other and larger means of awareness than thought. No methodical opening of the centres is necessary — the centres are in fact open, otherwise there could not be this ascent. In this Yoga their opening comes automatically — what we call opening is not that, but an ability of the consciousness itself on the various levels to receive the descent of the Higher Consciousness above. By the ascent one can indeed bring down knowledge from above. But the larger movement is to receive it from above and let it flow through into the lower mental and other levels. I may add that on all these levels, in mind, heart and below there comes a liberation from the physical limitation, a wideness which no longer allows an identification with the body.

In this experience there is not usually the fear you had, unless it is in the body consciousness, as it were, which is alarmed by the unfamiliarity of the movement and fears to be abandoned or cast off. But this occurs rarely and does not usually repeat itself. It is therefore likely that there was an exteriorisation at the same time. You speak of being able to leave and enter the body at will; but this capacity is needed only for the phenomenon of exteriorisation — in the ascension of consciousness the ascent and coming down become easy and ordinary actions and in the definitive realisation of a higher station above there is really no more coming down except with a part of the consciousness which may descend to work in the body or on the lower levels while the permanently high-stationed being above presides over all that is experienced and done.

*

It [*walking around as if in a dream*] is a very usual experience. It means that for a moment you were no longer in your body, but somehow either above or outside the body consciousness.

This sometimes happens by the vital being rising up above the head or, more rarely, by its projecting itself into its own sheath (part of the subtle body) out of the physical attachment. But it also comes by a sudden even if momentary liberation from the identification with the body consciousness, and this liberation may become frequent and prolonged or permanent. The body is felt as something separate or some small circumstance in the consciousness or as something one carries about with one etc. etc.; the exact experience varies. Many sadhaks here have had it. When one is accustomed, the strangeness of it (dreamland etc.) disappears.

Fixing the Consciousness Above

It is the aim of the sadhana that the consciousness should rise out of the body and take its station above, — spreading in wideness everywhere, not limited to the body. Thus liberated one opens to all that is above this station, above the ordinary mind, receives there all that descends from the heights, observes from there all that is below. Thus it is possible to witness in all freedom and to control all that is below and to be a recipient or a channel for all that comes down and presses into the body, which it will prepare to be an instrument of a higher manifestation, remoulded into a higher consciousness and nature.

What is happening in you is that the consciousness is trying to fix itself in this liberation. When one is there in that higher station, one finds the freedom of the Self and the vast silence and immutable calm — but this calm has to be brought down also into the body, into all the lower planes and fix itself there as something standing behind and containing all the movements.

*

It [*a feeling of rising above the head in meditation*] is not merely a sensation; it is an actual happening and a most important one. The consciousness is usually imprisoned in the body, centralised in the brain and heart and navel centres (mental, emotional, sensational); when you feel it or something of it go up and take

its station above the head, that is the liberation of the imprisoned consciousness from the body-formula. It is the mental in you that goes up there, gets into touch with something higher than the ordinary mind and from there puts the higher mental will on the rest for transformation. The trembling and the heat come from a resistance, an absence of habituation in the body and the vital to this demand and to this liberation. When the mental consciousness can take its stand permanently or at will above like this, then this first liberation becomes accomplished (*siddha*). From there the mental being can open freely to higher planes or to the cosmic existence and its forces and can also act with greater liberty and power on the lower nature.

*

What you felt was not imagination at all, but the usual experience one has when the consciousness is lifted out of the body and takes its stand above the head. One is no longer bound then by the physical consciousness or the sense of the body — the body becomes only an instrument, a small part of the consciousness which has to be perfected. One enters into a larger free spiritual consciousness in place of the present bound and limited physical consciousness. If this lifting up above the body can be repeated always until it can be maintained, it will be a great landmark in your progress. It is the confinement in the physical consciousness that makes you (and everybody) narrow and selfish and miserable. Hitherto the higher consciousness with its peace etc. has been descending into you with great difficulty and fighting out the vital and physical resistance. If this release upward into the higher consciousness can be maintained, then there will be no longer the same difficulty. Much will still remain to be done, but the foundation will have been made.

*

There are various states of experience in which the expression “taken up out of the body” would be applicable. There is one in which one goes up from the centres in the body to a centre of consciousness extending above the physical head and takes up

a position there in which one is liberated from subjection to the body sense and its heavy hold and this is certainly accompanied by a general sense of lightening. One can then be in direct connection with the higher consciousness and its power and action. It is not altogether clear from the description whether this is what happened. Again, there are phenomena of the breathing which accompany states of release or of ascension. But the breath here perhaps stands, generally, for the Life Principle.

Ascent and Change of the Lower Nature

One can remain in the higher consciousness and yet associate oneself with the change of the lower nature. No doubt, it is the Mother's Force that will do what is necessary, but the consent of the sadhak, the association of his will with her action or at least of his witness vision is necessary also.

*

Your tendency was to go up and to leave the higher consciousness to deal with the lower nature without any personal effort for that. That could have worked all right on two conditions: (1) that the peace and force would come down and occupy all down to the physical, (2) that you succeeded in keeping the inner being unmoved by the outer nature. The physical failed to absorb the peace, inertia arose instead; force could not come down; the suggestions from the outer nature proved too strong for you and between their suggestions and the inertia they interrupted the sadhana.

*

I have not said [*in the preceding letter*] that you made a mistake. I have simply said what happened and the causes. If you had been able to remain above and let the Force come down and act while you were detached from the outer nature, it would have been all right. You were able to go up because the Peace descended. You were not able to remain above because the Peace could not occupy sufficiently the physical and the Force did not descend

sufficiently. Meanwhile the inertia arose, you got troubled more and more because of the vital suggestions in the outer nature and the rush of inertia, so you were unable to keep detached and let the Force descend more and more or call it down more and more. Hence the coming down into the physical consciousness.

*

It is simply that when you go high, or within, you enter into a higher consciousness than the ordinary one. Also then one feels the presence of the Divine, for the Divine is always there within and above in every human being. But to divinise the human consciousness entirely needs a long time — for the whole nature from top to bottom must be transformed.

Chapter Three

The Descent of the Higher Consciousness and Force

The Purpose of the Descent

The descent is that of the powers of the higher consciousness which is above the head. It usually descends from centre to centre till it has occupied the whole being. But at the beginning the action is very variable. It is only when the Peace from above has not only descended but established itself in the whole system that there is a continuous action. The descent comes in order to transform the consciousness but the transformation takes time. It is not done all in a moment.

*

The Force descends for two things:

- (1) To transform the nature.
- (2) To carry on the work through the instrument.

At first one is not conscious of either working, afterwards one becomes conscious of the Force working but not of how it works. Finally one becomes conscious entirely and in detail.

*

Naturally, when any of the higher consciousness descends it works to change the lower consciousness into a part of itself.

Calling in the Higher Consciousness

All limitations [*in one's nature*] can be surmounted, but if they are ingrained in the formation of the present being, it can only be done by calling in a higher power and consciousness than that of the personal mind and will. The higher consciousness

can by what it brings correct or rebuild what is defective in the personal nature.

*

The consciousness is always there above you. It is when one opens oneself and calls it that it descends and works — whether in meditation or in work.

*

What comes from above can come when one is in a clear mind or when the vital is disturbed, when one is meditating or when one is moving about, when one is working or when one is doing nothing. Most often it comes when one is in a clear concentrated state, but it may not, — there is no absolute rule. Moreover the pull or call may produce no immediate effect and yet there may be an effect when one is no longer actually pulling or calling. All these mental reasons alleged for its coming or going are too rigid — sometimes they apply, very often they don't apply. One has to have faith, confidence, aspiration but one cannot bind down the Force as to when, how and why it will act.

*

It [*the higher consciousness*] descends in the atmosphere, but for it to be effective the individual must receive and respond. It descends also in the individual independently of the atmosphere.

Preparatory Experiences and Descent

The illumination above the head as usually seen in this Yoga is the Light of the Divine Truth. It is above the head that there is perpetually the Divine Peace, Force, Light, Knowledge, Ananda. These begin to descend into the body when the personal consciousness is prepared sufficiently. The preparation is usually full of vicissitudes such as these [*illness, sleeplessness, an inability to concentrate*] but one has to persist patiently, opening oneself more and more till that is ready.

*

Why should it [*a sense of purity in the being*] be an imagination? When the higher consciousness touches it creates so long as it is there an essential purity in which all parts of the being can share. Or, even if the exterior being does not share actively in it, it may fall quiescent so that there is nothing to interfere with the whole inner being realising the truth of a certain experience. The state does not last because it is only a preparatory touch, not the full or permanent descent; but while it is there it is real. The sex-sensation is of course the thing in the external being, the perversion or false representation in nature, that is the chief obstacle to the experience becoming frequent and then normal. It usually happens that such an opposite tries to assert itself after an experience.

*

The experiences you have had from above are spiritual experiences. The experience has come, but not yet taken possession of the centres — it is touching them so as to prepare. The Truth consciousness is the consciousness which lives in the Truth or in constant touch with it and not, as the ordinary mind does, in the Ignorance.

*

The experiences you have are a good starting-point for realisation. They have to develop into the light of a deeper state in which there will be the descent of a higher Consciousness into you. Your present consciousness in which you feel these things is only a preparatory one — in which the Mother works in you through the cosmic power according to your state of consciousness and your karma and in that working both success and failure can come — one has to remain equal-minded to both while trying always for success. A surer guidance can come even in this preparatory consciousness if you are entirely turned towards her alone in such a way that you can feel her direct guidance and follow it without any other influence or force intervening to act upon you, but that condition is not easy to get or keep — it needs a great one-pointedness and constant

single-minded dedication. When the higher consciousness will descend, then a closer union, a more intimate consciousness of the Presence and a more illumined intuition will become possible.

*

It is good. The more you keep that dominant sense of the force and the calmness and increase it, the more the other feeling [*of inadequacy and restlessness*] will diminish and fade. It always happens that at first the Power and Peace only press, touch, invade at places, until a time comes when a part of the being always feels in that condition however much disturbance may assail the surface. Afterwards the disturbance is more and more pushed out till it is felt only outside the being, not in it. When that too goes, there is the complete peace and the full foundation.

*

Your letter of today makes it very clear what is happening. The Force that you felt had come down at first, came to open the way for the descent of the higher consciousness into the mind and body. That was why it descended with such force and the difficulty of holding or assimilating it was simply because the body was unaccustomed. But as often happens the Force is preparing its own reception and habituating the body to the descent. Having done that sufficiently it is coming down as a massive peace. The higher consciousness in its descent takes several fundamental forms — peace, power and strength, light, knowledge, Ananda. Usually it is the peace that descends first. This is not a mental, vital or physical peace of the ordinary kind, but something from above (spiritual), very firm, solid and concrete. It is its concreteness that makes you feel like a still massive block — a mass of the higher consciousness in place of the more tenuous substance of the ordinary nature. As for its being worth having, you can see that it is — it is indeed the beginning of the real transformation — all the rest hitherto has been mainly preparation and clearing of difficulties and impediments through all these years. This serene peace and massive stillness

has to stabilise itself, fill the whole nature, widen itself until all existence internal and external seems full of it. This may take time, but the beginning once there it is sure to take place, if one is steady and constant. It becomes besides the sure base on which all the rest, — power and strength, light and knowledge, Ananda and divine love, can come in and securely fill the consciousness.

The usual mental means to widen the consciousness is to think of and feel oneself as spreading out into space beyond the body — as a corrective to the thought and feeling of oneself as identified with the body and shut up in it. After a time this leads to a substantial experience of wide consciousness beyond the body. The means to quieten the physical consciousness is to detach oneself from all restless vibrations, not by any struggle or effort but by a simple easy will of quietude. However now that the higher Force is bringing quietude, these mental means may not be necessary — for the peace from above usually brings the wideness of the self — though for some it brings it at once, for others it takes time.

Anyhow, the spiritual opening has been clearly made in you; the rest is a matter of development and time.

The Order of Descent into the Being

It [*the higher consciousness*] enters usually first into the mind, then into the vital and then into the body, because it is these that have to be changed and that is the natural order.

*

Whatever comes from above the head, whether it is Presence, Peace, Ananda, or anything else, normally descends into the head first, then after occupying all the mental centres it comes down into the heart and from there goes down into the vital centres and occupies the whole body. If there is a resistance, it is felt as a weight and a pressure — when the way is open, the pressure disappears and there is only the thing itself. It enters each centre as soon as the way to it is open.

*

The Force usually comes down through the head and afterwards descends lower in the body to the heart, afterwards through the navel downwards.

The sadhak becomes restless under the Force only if he resists it—otherwise it brings peace and calm and happiness and strength.

It is probably some other part of the mind—the vital mind or physical mind—it is these usually that resist.

*

Usually the descent in the head helps to quiet the mind.

*

If you mean the descent of the higher consciousness, that is felt in the heart region, not only in the centre, just as it is felt in the head. The touching of the head is only a first pressure. Afterwards there is a feeling of a mass of peace, force, light, Ananda or consciousness coming down in the head directly and descending further to the chest and so to the navel and through the body. For some it takes weeks or months, in others it descends rapidly.

*

Yes, it was the same experience [*as an earlier one*]. You went inside under the pressure of the Force—which is often though not always the first result—went into a few seconds' samadhi according to the ordinary language. The Force when it descends tries to open the body and pass through the centres. It has to come in (ordinarily) through the crown of the head (Brahmarandhra) and pass through the inner mind centre which is in the middle of the forehead between the eyebrows. That is why it presses first on the head. The opening of the eyes brings one back to the ordinary consciousness of the outer world, that is why the intensity is relieved by opening the eyes.

*

When things come in this order the head opens up first and the heart afterwards—finally all the centres. So what is there

to be concerned about?¹ If you are satisfied only with peace, knowledge and mukti, then perhaps the heart centre may open to that only. But if you want the love, then the descending Power and Light will work for that also. So cheer up and don't get into a state of pother with imaginary difficulties.

*

The descent into the body first in the head, then down to the neck and in the chest is the ordinary rule. For many there is a big stop before it gets below the navel owing to some vital resistance. Once it passes that barricade it does not usually take long to come down farther. But there is no rule as to the time taken. In some it comes down like a flood, in others it goes through with a methodical and deliberate increase. I don't think the peace descent is in the habit of waiting for companions — more often it likes at first to be all by itself and then call down its friends with the message, "Come along, I have made the place all ready for you."

*

It is possible that there may have been too much haste in this attempt to open the navel and the lower centre. In this Yoga the movement is downward — first the two head centres, then the heart, then the navel and then the two others. If the higher experience is first fully established with its higher consciousness, knowledge and will in the three upper centres, then it is easier to open the three lower ones without too much disturbance.

The Effect of Descent into the Lower Planes

When a higher force comes down into a lower plane, it is diminished and modified by the inferior substance, lesser power and more mixed movements of that lower plane. Thus, if the Overmind Power works through the illumined mind, only part

¹ *The correspondent was concerned that he might receive knowledge but not love since his head centre seemed to be opening before his heart centre. — Ed.*

of its truth and force can manifest and be effective — so much only as can get through this less receptive consciousness. And even what gets through is less true, mixed with other matter, less overmental, more easily modified into something that is part truth, part error. When this diminished indirect Force descends farther down into the mind and vital, it has still something of the Overmind creative Truth in it, but gets very badly mixed with mental and vital formations that disfigure it and make it half effective only, sometimes ineffective.

*

(1) Part of it [*the descending higher consciousness*] is stored up in the frontal consciousness and remains there.

(2) Part of it goes behind and remains as a support to the active part of the being.

(3) Part flows out into the universal Nature.

(4) Part is absorbed by the Inconscient and lost to the individual conscious action.

Chapter Four

The Descent of the Higher Powers

The Descent of Peace, Force, Light, Ananda

The descent of Peace, the descent of Force or Power, the descent of Light, the descent of Ananda, these are the four things that transform the nature.

*

Light, Peace, Force, Ananda constitute the spiritual consciousness; if they are not among the major experiences, what are?

*

Presence, Peace, Force, Light, Ananda, these are five things that most commonly come down.

*

The being is not supposed to remain always empty. When the calm and peace of the pure existence is established, Force also has to descend as well as Light, Ananda and other things.

*

Wideness is only the first step — there must be the descent of light, knowledge, peace, force or power and the settling of these things and their constant development.

*

There is no rule, but the most normal course is for a certain Peace and Force and Light which is above the mind to descend and as the result of its workings the cosmic consciousness opens and in it higher and higher levels above mind. Many people get an opening into the cosmic consciousness first but without the basis of the higher Peace and Light it brings only a mass of unorganised experiences.

*

It is not really the plane that descends, it is the Power and Truth of it that descends into the material and then the veil between the material and it no longer exists.

Peace, Calm, Quiet as a Basis for the Descent

Peace and movement on the basis of peace are the first aspects of the One to establish themselves. Bliss and light do not fix so easily or so early — they have to grow.

*

The Peace, Purity and Calm of the Self must be fixed — otherwise the active Descent may find the forces it awakes seized on by lower Powers and a confusion created. That has happened with many.

*

It is not a matter of any particular act or feeling, but a sort of excited vibration with which the vital and physical consciousness meets the vital disturbance — it is evident in the tone and language of what you write when there is the stress of vital suggestion — but it used also to rise when you got the experiences in an excited vibration and bubbling of joy which would easily lapse into some rajasic movement or be replaced by the opposite excitement of suffering and disturbance. Quiet, quiet and more quiet, calm strength, calm gladness are what are needed in mind and nerves and body as a basis for the siddhi — precisely because the Force, the Light, the Ananda that come down are extremely intense and need a great stillness in the being to bear and support them.

*

It is the right fundamental consciousness that you have now got. The *tamas* and other movements of the lower universal Nature are bound to try to come in, but if one has the calm of the inner being which makes them felt as something external to the being, and the light of the psychic which instantly exposes and rejects

them, then that is to have the true consciousness which keeps one safe while the more positive transformation is preparing or taking place.

That transformation comes by the descent of the Force, Light, Knowledge, Ananda etc. from above. So you are right in your feeling that you should open with a quiet *śānta samāhita* aspiration or invocation for the descent of the Light from above. Only it must be an aspiration in this calm and wideness, not disturbing it in the least — and you must be prepared for the result being not immediate — it may be rapid, but also it may take some time.

*

Yes, when things begin to descend, they must come down on a solid basis. That is why it is necessary to have peace as the first descent and that it should become as strong and solid as possible. But in any case to contain is the first necessity — then more and more can come and settle itself. Once these two things are settled — peace and strength, one can bear any amount of everything else, Ananda, Knowledge, or whatever it may be.

*

The experience of this “solid block” feeling indicates the descent of a solid strength and peace into the external being, — but into the vital physical most. It is this always that is the foundation, the sure basis into which all else (Ananda, light, knowledge, bhakti) can descend in the future and stand on it or play safely. The numbness was there in the other experience because the movement was inward; but here the Yogashakti is coming *outward* into the fully awake external nature, — as a first step towards the establishment of the Yoga and its experiences there. So the numbness, which was a sign of the consciousness tending to draw back from the external parts, is not there.

*

It is good — the strength is the next thing that has to come down after the peace and join with it. Eventually the two become one.

The Descent of Peace

When one has gone so far that peace from above can descend, that is a considerable progress.

*

Yes, surely the peace can come into the outer consciousness also; it is meant to do so. It is perfectly possible for the body to bear the peace and stillness. It is more difficult for it to bear the full play of the Force; but if the peace is first established in it, then there is no difficulty of that kind.

*

It [*peace*] has to be brought down to the heart and navel first. That gives it a certain kind of inner stability — though not absolute. There is no method other than aspiration, a strong quiet will and a rejection of all that is not turned towards the Divine in those parts into which you call the peace — here the emotional and higher vital.

*

They [*the mind and vital*] are always more open to the universal forces than the material. But they can be more restless than the material so long as they are not subjected to the peace from above.

*

The movement of universality by itself cannot prevent the vital from disturbing — it is the complete surrender and the complete descent of peace into all the being down to the most material that can do it.

*

Nobody said that you should not take the higher being as a first station. The question was about enforcing the peace of the higher being in the lower parts down to the physical so as to (1) create that separateness which would prevent the inner being

from being affected by the superficial disturbance and resistance, (2) make it easier for the force and other powers of the higher being to descend.

*

Peace can be brought down into the physical to its very cells. It is the active transformation of the physical that cannot be *completely* done without the supramental descent.

*

The peace that descends from above can stop the lower action, if it settles in all the being. But that is not sufficient if one wants to develop the dynamic side of the being also on the lines of Yoga.

*

After the body is accustomed to the peace, the peace itself can become dynamic.

The Descent of Silence

What is trying to come down in you is the silence and peace of the Self — when that comes fully, then there is no ego-perception, it is drowned in the wideness of the silence and peace of the Self. But this realisation is at first in the static condition of the Self only — in the dynamic movements the ego may still be there owing to past habits — but each time an ego-movement is abandoned, the sense of the loss of ego becomes deeper and more complete. It is perhaps some impression of what is trying to come that has touched you.

*

It must have been the descent of the higher silence, the silence of the Self or Atman. In this silence one perceives, but the mind is not active, — things are sensed, but without any responsive connection or vibration. The silent Self is there as a separate reality, not bound or involved in the activity of Nature, aloof, detached and self-existent. Even if thoughts come across this

silence, they do not disturb it; the Self is separate from the thinking mind also. In this connection the feeling “I think” is a survival from the old consciousness; in the full silence what one feels is “thought occurs in me” — the identification with thoughts as well as with the perception of objects ceases.

*

To still the mind *absolutely* is not so easy. It can be done usually only by the descent of the Silence from above and even then it is not complete until the whole system has been occupied by the higher silence and peace.

*

It is the silence and calm of the higher consciousness pressing down into the body. When it comes down fully then there is the “still statue” feeling at first. Afterwards the calm or silence becomes free and normal.

*

It is the wideness and silence of the being which makes transformation possible, because the lower movements disappear and in the emptiness the Truth from above can descend.

*

Who told you that whenever there was silence or genuine silence knowledge would come down? The silence is a fit vessel for anything from above, but it does not follow that when there is silence, everything is bound to come down automatically.

*

In what may be called the first silence, it is like that — silence alone with no emotion or other inner activity. When it deepens one can feel the Nirvana of the Buddhists or the Atmabodha of the Vedantins. Both force and bliss or either can descend into the silence, filling it with calm Tapas or silent Ananda.

The Descent of Force or Power

The experiences you have had are very clear evidence that you have the capacity for Yoga. The first decisive experiences in this Yoga are a calm and peace that is felt, first somewhere in the being and in the end in all the being, and the descent of a Power and Force into the body which will take up the whole adhar and work in it to transform mind, life and body into the instrumentation of the Divine Consciousness. The two experiences of which you wrote in your letter are the beginning of this calm and the descent of this Force. Much has to be done before they can be established or persistently effective, but that they should come at this stage is a clear proof of capacity to receive. It must be remembered however that the Yoga is not easy and cannot be done without the rising of many obstacles and much lapse of time — so if you take it up it must be with a firm resolve to carry it through to the end with a whole-hearted sincerity, faith, patience and courage.

*

It is the Mother's force that descended to work in the system. There are two things that have to be established in order to make a foundation for the workings of the sadhana in the waking consciousness, 1st a descent of Peace from above, 2nd a descent of the Force. If one has these two things permanently established in the consciousness, then one has the basis.

*

By Force I mean not mental or vital energy but the Divine Force from above — as peace comes from above and wideness also, so does this Force (Shakti). Nothing, not even thinking or meditating can be done without some action of Force. The Force I speak of is a Force for illumination, transformation, purification, all that has to be done in the Yoga, for removal of the hostile forces and the wrong movements — it is also of course for external work, whether great or small in appearance does not matter — if that is part of the Divine Will. I do not mean any personal

force egoistic or rajasic.

*

Yes, it [*the Force*] is quite concrete. Usually at first it descends of itself from time to time — and also one calls it in face of a difficulty. But eventually it is always there supporting or determining all the action of the being.

*

The Force comes down as soon as it finds an opening and acts in the Adhara whenever it is ready. What determines the descent cannot always be mentally fixed. Aspiration, call, will, prayer, etc. create a favourable precondition in the head or heart or anywhere else and are sometimes the determining cause.

*

What you feel in the head is probably the first conscious descent into the body of the divine Force from above. Up to now it must have been working unfelt by you from behind the heart. If the concentration takes place naturally in the head you must allow it to do so, but the possibility of this has been prepared by the previous concentration in the heart, so that also need not be discontinued unless the force working in you insists on the upper concentration only. Aspiration can be continued in the same way until the conduct of the sadhana by the Mother's power is clearly felt and becomes to you the normal thing.

*

The experience you had was simply the descent of the Divine Force into the body. By your attitude and aspiration you called for it to work in you, so it came. Such a descent brings naturally a deep inward condition and a silence of the mind, and it may bring much more — peace, a sense of liberation, happiness, Ananda. It is very often attended as in this experience by a light or luminosity. It was felt enveloping the upper part of the body down to the cardiac centre, because it is these centres, the head and heart centres that are first invaded and occupied by

whatever descends from above, Consciousness, Force, Light or Ananda. Usually, there is at first a pressure from above on the head, then one feels something entering the higher part of the head and then the whole head is occupied, as you feel now with the *fournillement* at the time of concentration. Once the head with its mental centres is open and occupied, the Force descends rapidly to the heart centre, unless there is some obstacle or a resistance in the higher vital parts. From there it sends its stream into the whole body and begins to occupy the vital and physical centres — from the navel to the Muladhara. The coming of this experience, occupation of the body by the Force from above, is a great step forward in the sadhana.

The fear of a syncope was due only to the sanskara in the mind; it must be dismissed. The Force can very well come down in the full waking consciousness; if it brings a kind of samadhi, it is usually a conscious inner condition — the consciousness taken away from outward things, but in full power within. Even if a trance came, it would be a trance and not a swoon.

*

The good condition of openness with the Force descending and the constant remembrance — or whatever other form the condition takes — is the beginning of the true consciousness and its duration is always short at the beginning, because the ordinary consciousness is not accustomed to it, but to something else. But it always increases in duration and power until it is able to maintain itself even when the outer consciousness is occupied with other things. At first it remains there as something behind which emerges as soon as the outer preoccupation ends; afterwards it remains behind, but as something just felt, and in a later stage it is always there, so that there are two consciousnesses, the inner consciousness always connected with the Mother and full of her working or her presence or both and the surface consciousness occupied with outer things. Finally, even the surface consciousness begins to feel the direct connection in action itself. One need not mind if there are intervals when the true condition is not there. It does not prove that you are unfit; it is only a period

in which what is not yet changed comes up to be worked upon and prepared for change. When the inner consciousness is well established, then these periods take place only in the surface consciousness and are no longer troublesome as before.

P. S. Probably the difficulty you feel is in the externalising mind the centre of which is in the throat. When there is no resistance there, the Force comes down to the heart level and below.

*

As for the dynamic descent, you say that the Force has descended to your forehead (inner mind) centre. It seems to be very slow in coming through. It has to come down to the heart centre and below before it can begin to be fully effective. Probably there must be something either in the physical mental (throat) or the emotional vital that obstructs the descent. That may be the reason of the union of the upper Agni and the psychic fire and the push on the psychic centre — something is trying to remove the difficulty.

*

The Power above the head is of course the Mother's — it is the power of the Higher Consciousness which is preparing its way of descent. This Higher Consciousness carrying in it a sense of wide and boundless existence, light, power, peace, Ananda etc. is always there above the head and when something of the spiritual Force comes down to work upon the nature, it is from there that it comes. But nothing like the full descent of the peace, bliss etc. can come so long as the being is not ready. Very usually the first preparation is to work on the mind and vital and physical nature in such a way that the soul, the psychic being can have a chance of manifesting itself and influencing the rest of the nature; for that purpose all the main darknesses in the mind and vital have to be combated and thrown out and the physical also prepared in an initial way so that the descent may be possible. This is what has been done so long in you. It has to be made stronger and more complete; but sufficient has been done for it to be possible to prepare the descent of the higher consciousness. There are two

things that take place; an ascent of one's consciousness to the higher levels in and above the head, and a descent of the higher consciousness which is above into one's mind, vital and body. How it is done or by what stages or how long it will take varies with each person. But this new consciousness is very different from the ordinary one and many things happen in its coming which would not happen to the mind and might seem strange to it — e.g. the dissolution of the ego and the opening into a wider self or spirit not limited by the body, to which the body is only a small instrument and nothing more. One must therefore dismiss all fear of new things and accept with calm and confidence each field of new experience, relying on the Divine Mother-Force for guidance and support and protection throughout the change.

*

The sadhana is a difficult one and time should not be grudged; it is only in the last stages that a very great and constant rapidity of progress can be confidently expected. As for Shakti, the descent of Shakti before the vital is pure and surrendered, has its dangers. It is better for him to pray for purification, knowledge, intensity of the heart's aspiration and as much working of the Power as he can bear and assimilate.

*

Power can be everywhere, on any plane. What descends from above is power of the higher Consciousness — but there is a Power of the vital, mental, physical planes also. Power is not a special characteristic of the psychic or of the spiritual plane.

The Descent of Fire

The fire is the divine fire of aspiration and inner tapasya. When the fire descends again and again with increasing force and magnitude into the darkness of human ignorance, it at first seems swallowed up and absorbed in the darkness, but more and more of the descent changes the darkness into light, the ignorance and unconsciousness of the human mind into spiritual consciousness.

The Descent of Light

The descent of the Light producing a concrete illumination of the consciousness is always one of the decisive experiences of the sadhana.

*

You can tell her that Light like peace is one of the things that come down from the higher consciousness. It is the light of the Truth that is there — it is sometimes golden, sometimes white, sometimes blue of various shades, sometimes sunlight.

*

It is a true experience and the Light that you felt is the Light of the Truth from above. These things indicate that there is already an opening, but it takes time to become constant and complete. That always happens at first — there are periods in which the consciousness or something in it opens, there are others in which the opening is clouded until something more opens. This goes on until the whole consciousness has been sufficiently worked upon for the full opening and lasting experience to be there.

*

These are special forces of the Light and there is a play of them according to need, but the Light in itself can be lived in as much as one can live in Peace or Ananda.¹ As Peace and Ananda can pour through the whole system and fully stabilise themselves so that they are in the body and the body and the whole being are in them — one might almost say, are that, are the Peace and Ananda — so it can be with Light. It can pour into the body, make every cell luminous, fix itself and surround on all sides in one constant mass of Light.

*

¹ *The correspondent asked how one can "live in" the different forces of the Light such as the white light of the Mother, the pale blue light of Sri Aurobindo, the golden light of the Truth and the pink light of the psychic. — Ed.*

It depends upon the colour of the Light. In any case it is the light of a Force from above. All lights are indications of a Force or Power. It is the work of the Lights and the Forces they represent to act in their descent on the lower nature and change it.

The Descent of Knowledge

The knowledge comes from above like the light and peace and everything else. As the consciousness progresses, it comes from a higher and higher level. First it is the higher or illumined mind that predominates, then the intuition, next the overmind, lastly the supermind; but the whole consciousness has to be sufficiently transformed before the supramental knowledge can begin to come.

The Descent of Wideness

Like everything else, peace, Light, Power, so wideness descends.

*

Ananda comes afterwards — even if it comes at the beginning it is not usually constant. Wideness does not come because the consciousness is not yet free from the body. Probably when what is felt above the head comes down, it will be liberated into the wideness.

The Descent of Ananda

It is quite possible that if a too intense Ananda is allowed before the purity and peace are in the nature, it may disturb the system — though I don't know whether there is any instance of madness as a consequence. At any rate it is a fact that normally Ananda comes (in the natural course, I mean, if not pulled down) only occasionally so long as the peace and purity are not there as a base. It is probably right that it should be so.

*

You are dealing in the right way with the sex feeling. As to why it rose when you were using the name there are two reasons. One is that when you use the name, it is the Mother's power that you call there and the first result often is that the difficulty rises like a snake whose head is touched to resist the pressure or — if you look at it from another point of view — it rises to be dealt with. The other is that when what is to be brought down is the Ananda — of the force, light etc., but especially of the love — then the vital-physical passion rises up to try and mix with and get hold of the Ananda hoping to turn it to a sort of sublimated vital pleasure. It is well known that this happens to Vaishnavas very often when they do the Sankirtan. In your case it is probably the first reason, because the love-Ananda or any other is not yet coming, so that explanation is improbable. As for the Force descending into the head, it has two sides to it — one is peace and when that is prominent, there is the sense of coolness; when there is a strong dynamic action instead, the feeling may be of heat, Agni-power. Most people feel these two things; they are not imagination.

*

I did not say it [*a descent of Ananda*] was vital and mental, but that it was Ananda manifesting itself in the mental and vital — a quite different thing — for the one Ananda (the true thing) can manifest in any part of the being.

The Flow of Amrita

It [*a flow of sweet liquid in the mouth*] is a form of the flow of Ananda from above — when it takes a quite physical form the Yogins call it Amrita.

*

Sudhā is nectar or Amrita, the food or drink of the gods. It is applied in Yoga to something that flows down from the Brahmaraṇḍhra into the palate when there is strong concentration. But this is psychological, so it must be the psychic sweetness flowing into the system.

Chapter Five

Descent and Other Kinds of Experience

Descent and Experiences of the Inner Being

It is good that you felt the peace within and the movement in the heart. That shows the force is working not only from above but inside you, and this promises a farther progress. The full opening will come in time — the important thing is that you are on the right way and advancing more quickly than you realise.

*

Your experiences seem to be sound. The first is that of the higher (Yogic or spiritual) consciousness coming down into the body from above the head. It is felt often like a current flowing through the head into the whole body and the first thing it brings is a descent of peace. One result of this descent is that one feels an inner being in oneself which is detached from the outer action, supports it from behind, but is not involved in it — that is the second experience. The third about the sleep is also felt when one has confidence in the Mother and goes to sleep under her protection, as if in her lap, surrounded by her presence. As for the dream the legs indicate the physical consciousness which is still under a double pull, one upward to the higher consciousness so that the physical consciousness may unite itself with the spiritual, the other downward towards the lower consciousness. The looking towards me indicates the choice of the being for the upward movement.

*

The Power and Peace that come down come down from the higher consciousness above your head, from a greater self of which your mind, the human mind generally, is unaware. They

are the power and peace of the Divine. When they envelop you from outside the body (therefore you feel them external), it is as a protection and an atmosphere. But also they descend into the body, into the head (mind), heart and navel (vital) and through the whole body working in you and doing what is necessary to change the consciousness. When you do not feel it there, when you feel it only as external, it is because you are very much in the external physical consciousness — but in reality it is there in your inner being working in you. When you recover the inner consciousness, you feel it again within and it wakes in you your own true consciousness, the psychic — and it is only the psychic that gives faith and devotion. It is however a great progress if, even when in the external physical consciousness, you feel the Peace enveloping you.

Descent and Psychic Experiences

The infinite calm you felt coming down was the calm of the Divine Consciousness — the higher or spiritual consciousness above the head, which descends as the higher parts of the being open to it. The experience of faith, love or aspiration come from the psychic being. It is when the psychic being is in front and governs all the nature and the Higher Consciousness descends through an open mind, vital and physical that the transformation of the nature begins to take place. The opposite experience of dryness, despair etc. comes from the resistance of the ordinary lower nature (lower vital, physical consciousness, especially). This resistance is to be got rid of — and one condition of that is never to indulge the desires of the lower vital and the body. You must turn them on the contrary wholly to the Divine.

*

The descent of the Silence is not usually associated with sadness, though it does bring a feeling of calm detachment, unconcern and wide emptiness, but in this emptiness there is a sense of ease, freedom, peace. The absorption as if something were drawing deep from within is evidently the pull of the inmost being, the

psychic. There is a psychic sadness often when this inmost soul opens and feels how far the nature and the world are from what they should be, but this is a sweet and quiet sorrow, not distressing. It must be something in the mind and vital which is not yet awake to what has happened within you and gives this colour of dissatisfied and distressed seeking.

*

It is only by peace and light coming down there [*into the subconscious*] and by the rule of the psychic being over the physical that the subconscious parts of the being can be changed entirely. Before that only a certain control can be established.

*

Your description of the solid cool block of peace pressing on the body and making it immobile makes it certain that it is what we call in this Yoga the descent of the higher consciousness. A deep, intense or massive substance of peace and stillness is very commonly the first of its powers that descends and many experience it in that way. At first it comes and stays only during meditation or, without the sense of physical inertness or immobility, a little while longer and afterwards is lost; but if the sadhana follows its normal course, it comes more and more, lasting longer, and in the end an enduring deep peace and inner stillness and release becomes a normal character of the consciousness, the foundation indeed of a new consciousness, calm and liberated.

Your idea of the psychic is certainly a mental construction which should be avoided. The psychic has indeed the quality of peace — but that is not its main character as it is of the Self or Atman. The psychic is the Divine element in the individual being and its characteristic power is to turn everything towards the Divine, to bring a fire of purification, aspiration, devotion, true light of discernment, feeling, will, action which transforms by degrees the whole nature. Quietude, peace and silence in the heart and therefore in the vital part of the being are necessary to reach the psychic, to plunge in it, for the perturbations of the vital nature, desire, emotion turned ego-wards

or world-wards are the main part of the screen that hides the soul from the nature. It is better therefore to be free from the mental constructions when you take the plunge and have only the sense of aspiration, of devotion, of self-giving to the Divine.

*

Yes, it is a very encouraging progress. If you keep the wideness and calm as you are keeping it and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all is safe — for it means the double foundation of the Yoga — the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, freedom and security from above and the openness of the psychic which keeps all the effort or all the spontaneous movement turned towards the true goal.

Descent and Other Experiences

The more important of the experiences you enumerate are those below.

(1) The feeling of calm and comparative absence of disturbing thoughts. This means the growth of quietude of mind which is necessary for a fully effective meditation.

(2) The pressure on the head and the movements within it. The pressure is that of the Force of the higher consciousness above the mind pressing on the mind (the mind centres are in the head and throat) and penetrating into it. Once it enters there it prepares the mind for opening to it more fully and the movements within the head are due to this working. Once the head centres and spaces are open one feels it descending freely as a current or otherwise. Afterwards it opens similarly the centres below in the body. The physical movement of the head must be due to the body not being accustomed to the pressure and penetration of the Force. When it is able to receive and assimilate, these movements no longer take place.

(3) The effect of the meditation in the heart extending itself to the head and creating movements there is normal — in whatever centre the concentration takes place the Yoga force

generated extends to the others and produces concentration or workings there.

(4) The sudden cessation of thought and all movements — this is very important, as it means the beginning of the capacity for the inner silence. It lasts only for a short while at the beginning of its manifestation but increases afterwards its hold and duration.

The direction of the sadhana is the right one and you have only to continue upon it.

We cannot say anything definitively about the outside affairs — I suppose in the circumstances you have to think about these things, but the sadhana has the greater importance.

We do not include Hathayoga practices in this sadhana. If you use only for health purposes, it must be as something separate from sadhana — on your own choice.

*

The last experience carries its own meaning. The first is a dream-experience in which the figures of the dream are probably symbols, — unless the Tibetan priest is an impression from a past life. The experience itself is that of concentration in a flame of aspiration with the result of an ascension into the higher planes of consciousness where the separative self disappears into the universal. The second is an experience of the descent of the higher consciousness through the spinal cord from the mental to the vital centres with the result of a momentary experience of that higher consciousness in its wide universality. The experience once had repeated itself but always with the same momentariness. It is the permanence of this experience that is in this Yoga the foundation of the spiritual consciousness and the spiritual transformation — as distinguished from the psychic which proceeds from the inner heart.

*

They are elementary experiences in the practice of Yoga and there is not much to be said about them, — still I will say this much, if it can help him.

(1) What does he mean by concentrating in the heart? I suppose not the physical heart? When we speak of concentrating in the heart in Yoga, we are speaking of the emotional centre and that like all the others is in the middle of the body in a line corresponding to the spinal cord. The places he speaks of are four centres — (1) crown of head = higher mental centre, (2) between the eyebrows = centre of will and vision, (3) throat = centre of externalising mind, (4) heart = (mental-vital) emotional centre with the psychic behind it (the soul, Purusha in the heart).

(2) The lights he sees indicate not some mere “physiological” phenomenon, but the first opening of an inner subtle vision which sees things that are not physical. At a later stage a descent of Light is one of the capital phenomena of the opening of the greater Yogic experience and of the working of the Divine Power on the adhar.

(3) What does he mean by chitta when he speaks of the force? Chitta as opposed to Chit or Vijnana etc. is only the basic mind-life consciousness out of which rises the stuff of (ordinary) thought, feelings, sensations etc. The Force which he feels is something quite different; it is the larger force exceeding the individual and when one feels it in its fullness, it is experienced as the cosmic force or something out of the cosmic force or else the Divine Force from above, according to its nature. His mind is not yet ready for the action of a greater Force, because it is full of mental notions and activities and it is for this reason that heat is generated in the friction between the two; when the other force withdraws and no longer tries to lay hold of the brain then the personal mind-action feels released (that is the reason for the sense of coolness) and goes about its ordinary motions. It is only in a silent (quiet — not necessarily empty) mind that the greater force can be received and work upon the system without too much reaction and resistance.

Chapter Six

Feelings and Sensations in the Process of Descent

Sensations in the Inner Centres

It [*a pressure felt in meditation*] is what we call the pressure of the Force (the Force of the higher spiritual or divine consciousness, the Mother's Force); it comes in various forms, vibrations, currents, waves, a wide flow, a shower like rain etc. It passes to each centre in turn, the crown of the head, the forehead centre, throat, heart, navel centres down to the Muladhara and spreads too throughout the body.

The rotatory movement is the movement of the Force when it is working and forming something in the being.

*

Pressure, throbbing, electrical vibrations are all signs of the working of the Force. The places indicate the field of action — the top of the head is the summit of the thinking mind where it communicates with the higher consciousness; the neck or throat is the seat of the physical, externalising or expressive mind; the ear is the place of communication with the inner mind centre by which thoughts etc. enter into the personal being from the general Nature. The sternum at the point indicated¹ holds the psychic and emotional centre, with its apex on the spinal column behind.

Pressure

When the Force comes down one at first feels a pressure. Afterwards it begins to enter the body, when once the way is open

¹ *The correspondent wrote that she felt electrical vibrations in the backbone at a point in the chest parallel to the bottom of the sternum. — Ed.*

for it. After entering the body it goes on working each time it descends, for the transformation of the nature.

*

This pressure on the head always comes at the beginning; it is the pressure of the Force on the adhar preparing to make its way into it. The feeling lasts so long as there is a resistance in the adhar to the entrance and working of the Force. If the mind opens to the Power, it will cease and you will feel the Power working in you or within you.

*

Tell him that the pressure on the head is a sign of the descent and working of the Force from above and of a certain resistance in the adhar which almost all sadhaks have at first. The calm is the result of the working. When the resistance disappears, the pressure is no longer felt but one becomes conscious of the working and of the calm descending into the body from centre to centre.

*

The pressure is that of the Divine Force which he calls by his prayer descending to do its work in the Adhar, its passage being marked by the current which he feels. The pain was due to some resistance in the Adhar; it disappears as soon as the system is accustomed to the descent and grows wide enough to admit it. The first result of the descent is the calm which he experiences; for it is only in a calm mind and vital (*manah-prāna*) that the Divine Shakti can do her work rightly.

*

When there is a pressure of the Force on the Adhar to work on it or enter, this [*feeling of heaviness in the head*] is often felt, especially if there is a working of the Force in the head. This heaviness disappears if the system receives and assimilates the Force and there is a free flow in the body — till then the pressure or some kind of heaviness is often felt at one centre or another

where the Force is working.

*

If it is only a weight or pressure on the head, it may be only the pressure of the Mother's Force. It comes like that to most people. Once the consciousness is open and the Force enters, there is no longer this feeling.

*

It is the pressure of the higher consciousness (planes of blue light beyond the ordinary mind) that has come down and is pressing upon the resistances down to the body and below. At the same time the weight of the subconscious Matter is being lifted up for release. That is the sense of these experiences.

*

A heaviness which gives strength is likely to be the indication of a descent. Sensations like a biting or pricking in the head often accompany it. It is usually a sign of some force from above trying to make its way through or to work in the physical stuff so as to prepare it for receiving.

*

That is some obstacle in the mind breaking under the pressure of Force, and each time there is a flash and a movement of the Force.

*

All that you note in your letter is very encouraging; it shows that the force is working in you and in the right way. There are two things that are necessary — the full connection of your mind and vital with your psychic being and the opening of the consciousness to Mother's consciousness above. Both of these are beginning. The voice that spoke was that of your soul, your psychic being; the impulse to go deep within was the movement to plunge into the depths of the psychic. The consciousness that rejected and threw away the anger and old movements was also that of the psychic.

The pressure you felt on the head comes always when there is the pressure from above of the Higher Consciousness, the Mother's consciousness, to come in and the coolness etc. you felt are also often felt at that time. The first result was the detachment from personal connections, the freedom, lightness, openness of heart, fearlessness, and also the sense of the Mother's presence. These things are signs of the true consciousness and part of the spiritual nature. They come first as experiences, afterwards they become more frequent, endure longer, settle into the nature.

*

It is the pressure of the Divine Power which you are feeling and it is that which gives you the sense of joy and living fullness. If you keep it and allow it to work in you, it will give you the positive experience and progress in sadhana which you need.

*

The pressure is usually felt only when the Force is acting on the consciousness in order to create an opening somewhere or for some other purpose. As soon as that is done, the pressure is not felt but instead a changed condition or else the working of the Force within but without any sense of pressure. When the condition of lightness, quietude, etc. comes, it means that something has opened to the psychic consciousness and become full of it. Emptiness is of several kinds, one when the consciousness is empty and free, which is a very good condition, another when it is empty and neutral, i. e. simply quiet without any positive power or psychic happiness, but not troubled or disturbed by anything, without any good or bad movement, and, finally, tamasic or inert emptiness. The first two conditions can be brought about by an action of the Force, and the first is a very good basis for spiritual experience and progress; the second also is not unfavourable and is often a needed stage, the consciousness becoming empty in order that it may be filled from within or from above with the true things. The third comes usually when the vital is quiescent and there is a complete inertia.

It is one of the two first that must be coming in you as a result of the action of the Force.

*

If the pressure is too great, the remedy is to widen the consciousness. With the peace and silence there should come a wideness that can receive any amount of Force without any reactions, whether heaviness or compulsion to remain withdrawn or the difficulty of the eyes etc.

*

The action of the Force does not always create a pressure. When it does not need to press, it acts quietly.

*

There is no necessity of feeling pressure. One feels force when something is being done or the force is flowing in or if it is there manifest in the body — but not when what is manifesting is peace and silence.

Perforation

If it is a feeling of a covering being perforated, then that is a sensation one often has when the Force is opening a way for itself through some resistance — here it must be in some part of the physical mind.

Keep full reliance on the Mother. When one does that, the victory even if delayed, is sure.

Vibration

An entire silence and inactivity of the mind cannot come at first — what is possible is a quietude of the mind, that is to say, a cessation of its absorption in its restless miscellaneous activity of ill-connected or unconnected thoughts and a concentration on the object of the sadhana. The imagination which the Mother recommended to you was a means of such concentration. A

mental idea of the omnipresence such as comes to you is a good help for that also, especially if it brings the strong faith and reliance. The feeling of the vibration of the Mother's Force around the head is more than a mental idea or even a mental realisation, it is an experience. This vibration is indeed the action of the Mother's Force which is first felt above the head or around it, then afterwards within the head. The pressure means that it is working to open the mind and its centres so that it may enter. The mind centres are in the head, one at the top and above it, another between the eyes, a third in the throat. That is why you feel the vibration around the head and sometimes up to the neck, but not below. It is so usually, for it is only after enveloping and entering the mind that it goes below to the emotional and vital parts (heart, navel etc.)—though sometimes it is more enveloping before it enters the body. To see the light in the heart one has to go deep, but one can see light elsewhere without going in deep there. Light is often seen between the eyebrows first or in front at that level, for there is the centre of inner vision and a slight opening of it is sufficient for that—so also light is often seen round the head or above it, outside.

*

If it was a Light, you would see the Light. Vibrations are either of a Force or a Presence.

Electricity

Electricity shock always indicates a passage of dynamic Force.

*

It [*the sensation of an electric current in the spine*] is the flowing of the force through the spine. In the Tantric system the spine is considered as the natural passage of the Force, because it is in the spine that all the six centres rest.

Waves

Whatever comes from above can come like that in waves — whether it is Light or Force or Peace or Ananda. In your case it was the Force working on the mind in waves. It is true also that when it was like that, not in currents or as a rain or as a quiet flood, it is Mahakali's Force that is working. The first necessity when it is so, is not to fear.

Flow or Stream

The descent of the Consciousness from above is often felt as a flow of water. Also the image of the drilling open of the head to receive it is frequent (it symbolises the opening of the mind to the higher consciousness).

*

The stream which you feel coming down on the head and pouring into you is indeed a current of the Mother's Force; it is so that it is often felt; it flows into the body in currents and works there to liberate and change the consciousness. As the consciousness changes and develops, you will begin yourself to understand the meaning and working of these things.

*

The quiet flow is necessary for permeating the lower parts. The big descents open the way and bring constant reinforcement and the culminating force at the end — but the quiet flow is also needed.

Drizzle or Shower

I am glad to hear that these experiences are coming — they are a sign of rapid progress coming. The descent as of a drizzling rain is a very characteristic and well-known way of descent of the higher Consciousness; it brings peace but it also brings all other possibilities of the higher Consciousness too and, as you

felt, the seeds of transformation of the physical consciousness — by the coming in it of the seeds of the powers and qualities of the higher Nature.

*

I am very glad that the experience we have been working to bring to you has come with such force and is increasing. It is the concrete descent of the higher consciousness, which once it settles marks always a definite turning-point in the sadhana. Even if it does not settle with a full stability at once, yet when it has once come with so much strength, there cannot be the least doubt that it will come more and more till it has done its work and is your permanent consciousness. The shower and drizzle, the hold² above the head and in the heart, the envelopment, the flaming of Agni within, the sense of firmness and solidity, the Peace and security and devotion, the sense of the Mother's hold are all signs of the descent — eventually it will penetrate everywhere and become something solid and stable occupying the whole consciousness and body.

Coolness

The coolness is always a quieting force making for peace.

*

This coolness [*felt in a passage rising from the heart to the head and then above it*] very often comes with the peace from above. If the passage is felt going up above the head, it means that there is now a direct communication with the higher Consciousness, the necessary opening having been made.

*

The coolness comes when the Force descends with peace and harmony into the vital and the body.

*

² The correspondent felt "as if held in a hand of the Power". — Ed.

A sensation of coolness indicates usually some touch or descent of peace. It is felt as very cold by the human vital because the latter is always in a fever of restlessness.

*

Pleasant coolness or coldness usually indicates a pacifying force bringing down calm or release. Knee to toe = the field of physical material consciousness.

*

If the coolness passed into dullness, it may well have been only physical. But perhaps there was an inflow, only afterwards came a reaction of the lower inertia which is the physical Nature's characteristic retort to peace and quietude. When the inertia comes up the old movements which the subconscious is prepared to supply always can mechanically come up with it. In a certain sense this inertia and the peace are the bright and dark counterparts of each other, *tamas* and *śama* — the higher Nature finding repose in peace, the lower seeking it in a relaxation of energy and a return towards the subconscious, *tamas*.

*

The coolness is a very common experience, but the cool smell is unusual. Sometimes people get a fragrance but without this close connection — perhaps they do not observe closely.

Stoniness

The feeling of stoniness is very usually a first impression in the body of the stillness in the cells which comes with the downflow of the Peace.

Sound

A sound³ does sometimes come with a particular descent of the

³ *In this case the correspondent heard the faint sound of dhūm . . . dhūm . . . dhūm.*
—Ed.

consciousness or force from above.

*

Your experience while going to the lawyers was an opening to the Force from above which, if sudden, is often attended by this kind of loud sound and the sensation of the opening of the head—it is in the subtle body that this opening of the head takes place though the sensation is felt as if physical. The Force came down and went up presided over by the Mother's forms of Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati and made the movement of ascent and descent (here in the spinal column which is the main channel of the Yogic force passing through the centres) which helps to join the higher with the lower consciousness. As a result came the feeling of identity with myself in your body. The cough shows probably some difficulty against concentration in the physical mind. The best is not to force concentration, but to remain quiet and call and let things work themselves out through the force of the Mother.

Chapter Seven

Difficulties Experienced in the Process of Descent

Alternations in the Intensity of the Force

Sometimes the descent comes with great force in order to open something, afterwards it becomes more quiet and normal until the consciousness is ready for a more sustained descent.

*

There are always alternations in the intensity of the Force at its work. It comes with great power and effects something that had to be done; then it is either concealed or retires a little or is felt but from behind a screen as you say, while something comes up that has to be prepared for illumination and then it comes in front again and does what has to be done there. But formerly while the support, help, even the deeper consciousness was always there, as you now rightly feel, yet when a veil fell, then it was all forgotten and you felt as if there was nothing but darkness and confusion. This happens to most sadhaks in the earlier stages. It is a great progress, a decisive advance if, at the time when the Force is working from behind the screen, you feel that it is there, that the help and support, the more enlightened consciousness is there still; this is a second stage in the sadhana. The third is when there is no screen and the Force and all else are always felt whether actively working or pausing during a transition.

The Need of Assimilation

When a new consciousness comes down, it is not possible at first to keep it all the time — the former consciousness has to get accustomed and receive and assimilate it, and that takes time.

*

It [*the need to rest*] may be simply the need of assimilation in the body. To remain quiet for a time after a descent of Force is the best way of assimilating it.

*

If the peace once becomes stable, there is no farther assimilation needed for that, as that means the whole system is sufficiently prepared to receive and absorb continuously. There may be periods of assimilation necessary for other things, but these periods need not interrupt the inner status. For instance if Force or Ananda or Knowledge begin to descend from above, there might be interruptions and probably would be, the system not being able to absorb a continuous flow, but the peace would remain in the inner being. Or there might even be something like periods of struggle on the surface, but the inner being would remain calm and still, watching and undisturbed and, if there is knowledge established within, understanding the action. Only for that the whole being vital, physical, material must have become open and receptive to the peace. Peace would then go on perhaps deepening and becoming wider and wider, but periods of interruption and assimilation would not be needed.

*

This feeling of being able to break a stone with the hand or for that matter break the world without anything at all except the force itself, is one that comes especially when the mind and vital have not assimilated the Power. It is the feeling of something extraordinary to them and omnipotent; the idea of breaking or crushing is suggested by the rajas in the vital. Afterwards when quietly assimilated this sensation disappears and only the feeling of calm strength and immovable firmness remains.

Pulling Down the Force

I mean [*by writing "let the Force come in"*] that you need not pull it down, but you should aid its entry by your full aspiration and assent.

*

This sort of giddiness and weakness and disturbance ought not to take place. When it comes it shows that more Force is being pulled down than is assimilated by the body. At such times you ought to rest till the disturbance has passed and there is a proper balance.

*

It is certainly a mistake to bring down the light by force — to pull it down. The supramental cannot be taken by storm. When the time is ready it will open of itself — but first there is a great deal to be done and that must be done patiently and without haste.

Shaking or Swaying of the Body

That [*shaking of the body*] sometimes happens when the Force is coming down. It must be allowed to pass off as the body becomes more quiet and assimilative.

*

The swaying motion takes place when the body is not accustomed to the descent; it tries by the movement to assimilate what is coming down.

*

The swaying is due probably to the body not being habituated to receive the Force — it should cease as soon as the body is accustomed.

*

Some have this swaying of the body when the peace or the Force begins to descend upon it, as it facilitates for it the reception. The swaying ceases usually when the body is accustomed to assimilate the descent.

The peace comes fully at the meditation time because the Mother's concentration at that time brings down the power of the higher consciousness and one can receive it if one is able to do so. Once it begins to come, it usually increases its force

along with the receptivity of the sadhak until it can come at all times and under all conditions and stay longer and longer till it is stable. The sadhak on his side has to keep his consciousness as quiet and still as possible to receive it. The Peace, Power, Light, Ananda of the higher spiritual consciousness are there in all veiled above. A certain opening upwards is needed for it to descend—the quietude of the mind and a certain wide concentrated passivity to the descending Influence are the best conditions for the descent.

Headaches Due to Resistance

What you saw was indeed a sun,—the sun of blue light which is the light of a higher mind than the ordinary human mind. The sun is the symbol of Light and Truth. This higher spiritual Mind is trying to wake in you, but at the beginning there is always a difficulty because the consciousness is not habituated to receive, so there is the sense of pressure deepening sometimes into a feeling of headache or this feeling of the head preparing to split. It is nothing but a sensation in the physical created by the inner mind (this part of the head is the seat of the inner mind) trying to open under the touch from above.

*

Headaches “produced by a pressure from above”, as you put it, are not due to the pressure or produced by it, but produced by a resistance. X’s headaches have nothing to do with Yoga or sadhana.

*

The pressure [*from above*] does not “bring” a resistance. “If there were no resistance there would be no headache” is the proper knowledge, not the reverse. So long as you think that it is the pressure that brings the resistance, the very idea will create the resistance. X’s case is not an example either of headache due to resistance or of headache due to pressure—it is due to ordinary physical and psychological causes.

*

To make people ill in order to improve or perfect them is not Mother's method. But sometimes things like headache come because the brain either tries too much or does not want to receive or makes difficulties. But these Yogic headaches are of a special kind and after the brain has found out the way to receive or respond, they don't come at all.

*

Headache is not a sign of the force descending, it is only a result sometimes of some difficulty in receiving it. If there is no difficulty in receiving, there is no headache. The signs of the force coming are the pressure to be quiet, the sense of peace coming or wanting to come and many others, such as a feeling in the head or body of something coming in like a stream or a current or shower etc.

*

Pain in the head and physical strain are due to resistance, but pressure and throbbing and electric sensation are only signs of the Force working, not of resistance. The sensation of coolness is a very good sign.

Talking Loudly

The sensations you describe in the crown of the head and the upper part of the forehead are such as one often gets when the higher consciousness or Force is trying to make an open passage through the mind for itself. So it is possibly that that is happening. As for the uneasiness or febleness there when you talk loudly etc., that also happens at such times. It is because the concentration of energy which is necessary for the inner work is broken and the energies thrown out, exhausting the parts by two inconsistent pullings. It is better when any working is going on inside to be very quiet in speech and as sparing as possible. At other times it does not so much matter.

Fear of the Descending Force

The first condition of progress in sadhana is not to fear, to have trust and keep quiet during an experience. What happened was simply that the Force came down and tried to quiet the mind and hold the body still so that it might work. If you had not feared, that would have happened. But your terror made the mind and body resist and get the impression that they were being tortured or in danger. The feeling of the tough body and great force like a hand upon it is quite usual in this kind of experience and does not terrify the sadhak, but brings a great joy and release. In future you must try to be quiet and not have any fear or imagination of danger. Naturally when you thought that you could not bear it, the Force withdrew as you are not ready to receive.

Desires and Descent

The descent of Light etc. is always impermanent at first. First the Peace and Force and Light have to be settled in the mind, then in the vital (heart, navel and below) and the physical. The desires etc. will then have been pushed out into a kind of environmental consciousness from which they try to return and must be driven out from there also. This will create a firm basis for the rest of the sadhana.

*

He is to be congratulated on the victory in the matter of sex — it is very important to have that when the intense definitive experiences are beginning. For if once the actual penetrative descent is felt, the less the higher consciousness is met by the sex force the better, for then a dangerous mixture may take place or else a struggle which is better avoided.

The description of the Power he feels — which is obviously the true thing — is very accurate — it is so, like rain or a fall of snow, that it often comes at first. I take it from his use of the word “around”, that it is an enveloping power that he feels. It does not begin for all in the same way — some only feel it above

their heads occasionally descending on them and entering.

Tiredness, Inertia and Sleep

It [*feeling tired and heavy*] is probably a passing symptom of the attempt of peace to come down. I have heard from several in the first stages that the body was disinclined or felt unable to move about. It is of course an unnecessary reaction — the body wants to translate the pressure for inner immobility into an outward immobility.

*

There is no connection between the descent of Peace and depression. Inertia there may be if the physical being feels the pressure for quietude but turns it into mere inactivity — but that cannot be called exactly a descent — at least not a complete one, since the physical does not share in it.

*

By the descent the inertia changes its character. It ceases to be a resistance of the physical and becomes only a physical condition to be transformed into the true basic immobility and rest.

*

You need not worry about that [*the body's tendency to sleep*]. When there is a strong inward tendency, the body not being yet conscious enough to share the experience in a waking state tries to assimilate the descending forces through sleep. This is a common experience. When it has assimilated enough, it will be more ready.

Mixing with the World

That [*problem of "mixture"*]¹ might apply to a sending out

¹ *The correspondent wrote that a person seeking transformation is different from others, like a red wave in the midst of the ordinary blue waves of the sea. Would such a wave, he asked, be dissolved and mixed with the ordinary waves or would it remain separate and transform them? — Ed.*

of the new waves upon the old sea, i.e. an attempt to transform the world. But the problem here is of self-transformation. Mixture comes by the old waves pressing in again; one has to prevent or get rid of the mixture. But the decisive movement is the descent of the things from above — when that becomes complete, then the being depends on the Above not on the Around. If the waves from the Around try to get in, it is they who are transformed (or rejected automatically), the roles are reversed.

Chapter Eight

Descent and the Lower Nature

The Resistance of the Lower Nature

If the habit of the ordinary nature is not any obstacle to the descent, then what is the need of sadhana? What prevents the whole higher consciousness from coming down and changing you into a superman in one second? It is because the things of the lower nature offer an obstinate resistance that long sadhana is necessary.

*

An uneasiness of that kind is always due to a resistance somewhere — something that remains closed and does not open when it is touched by the Force. It is due probably not so much to yourself as to other conflicting influences that are acting upon you.

*

If one brings down more force or light than some part of the being is ready for and that part resists — or if there is a struggle between descending and adverse forces in the body, then these things [*a burning sensation etc.*] can take place.

*

The feeling of resistance [*to the descent of the Force*] may be the result of the effort at response. When there is the free flow there is neither effort nor resistance.

*

The experience of the action in the three centres is perfectly all right (the opening to the higher consciousness and its characteristic action and results already beginning there) except for the pains which mean a resistance. These experiences are quite sound and according to the divine schedule. But the pain at the

bottom of the neck indicates that in trying to pass from mind to higher vital towards the heart, the Consciousness encountered an obstruction. However that too is in the day's work. It will be overcome in due time. So nothing to grumble — there at least.

The concentration is all right — since it is proceeding so well, the concentration in the higher centres should continue, but as the consciousness comes down or to help its coming down to the vital centres, more concentration in the heart may be necessary hereafter.

*

What usually comes is a descent of the Divine Power to work upon the nature and prepare it for the Divine Presence in the heart. There is much in human nature that has to be changed before it can hold what descends — incapacity and limitation of the mind, insufficient purity in the heart and elsewhere, restlessness etc. To contain the descent a quiet mind and pure heart are needed. That is why there is the restlessness and sense of incapacity in her. That is a quite common experience. If she wants to go farther, she must aspire for calm, peace, purity, etc. in the mental and emotional being and allow what is descending to establish it in her.

*

It must be the vital-physical that is in action. It is under the pressure of the Force that the resistance recedes lower and lower down and manifests so as to have the pressure brought there also specifically for its expulsion.

*

The Power that is above your head has not only to be in connection with you, but to occupy the consciousness with its influence. The restlessness is due to a resistance of the lower consciousness which is not accustomed to the process by which this is done and probably feels uneasy — as you say you feel everything unsure. The body becoming unreal and all of one seeming to disappear are very usual results of the higher consciousness taking hold of the mind and they are very good signs — so too the sensation

spreading from the head to the body is probably only the Power coming in. There should be no apprehension, for these things are quite normal in the transforming process. Probably the sense of unsureness is due to the part of the nature which founds itself on the body consciousness and feels nothing sure or solid except the body. In the new consciousness on the contrary what will be felt as sure and solid is the wide spiritual consciousness not limited by the body, in which the body is only a small circumstance hardly felt, an instrument only. The losing all consciousness must also be due to the consciousness going entirely inside as soon as the restlessness is forgotten or is no longer active.

*

That is good progress. As for the resisting part, there is for a long time a resistance from some layer of the physical — one layer opens, another beneath remains obscure. But if the pressure from above is continuous, the resistance gets exhausted at last.

The stillness of which you speak in the meditation is a very good sign. It comes usually in that pervading way when there has been sufficient purification to make it possible. On the other side, it is itself the beginning of the laying of the foundations of the higher spiritual consciousness.

*

You speak of a struggle (*yuddha*) beginning when the Force comes down, but such a result is not inevitable — it is not necessary that the progress should be through a struggle. That rather takes place before the Force is there in the being, while one is still making efforts to open oneself to it or when it is still pressing from above or has taken up something of the nature but not the whole. When the Force is there at work, the imperfections and weaknesses of the nature will necessarily arise for change, but one need not fight with them; one can look on them quietly as a surface instrumentation that has to be changed. It is not with “indifference” that one has to look at them, for that might mean inertia, a want of will or push or necessity to change; it is rather with detachment. Detachment means that one stands

back from them, does not identify oneself with them or get upset or troubled because they are there, but rather looks on them as something foreign to one's true consciousness and true self, rejects them and calls in the Mother's Force into these movements to eliminate them and bring the true consciousness and its movements there. The firm will of rejection must be there, the pressure to get rid of them, but not any wrestling or struggle.

When you felt the Force, the concentration, the peace, it meant evidently the true consciousness coming; that could not produce the restlessness at night. If the restlessness were the result of the Force coming, it would follow that the more the Force comes down, the more the restlessness must increase. But that would be absurd and is not the case. What happened was simply that with the Force came a beginning of the inner or spiritual peace; in the nerves the old restlessness which was lying dormant rose up as a resistance, trying as all these habitual things of the nature do to prolong itself. As the peace enters the vital and the nervous being, these things naturally diminish and are eliminated. One has only to remain quiet and detached and let the Force in its working bring in the peace there also. If the difficulty persists, you will let us know so that we may see to it.

Descent into the Mind and Vital

The danger of the mental forces is that when the higher consciousness descends they tend (unless there is a deep silence) to become active in the consciousness for forming ideas of a mental type which can always be misapplied. First, there should be a basis of entire calm, peace and silence—if there is activity, it should be that of a knowledge coming down and the mind silent receiving it accurately. This you can easily have, provided the mind is quiet.

The danger of the vital is that of taking hold of love, Ananda, the sense of Beauty and using it for its own purposes, for vital human relations or interchange or else some kind of mere enjoyment of its own.

The wideness is that of the higher consciousness, golden being the colour of the light of Truth, and the Cow is the symbol of the Light of the higher consciousness descending, turning all into the Truth light.

The state of wideness and of quietude unaffected by anything that happens is the natural result of the descent which you saw in this figure. The impartial condition towards work or not work is also a result of this descent. Usually it is the vital that pushes to work and without this vital push one can do very little. When the higher consciousness descends into the mind and vital, this push becomes silent, but the faculty of work remains, — afterwards when the new consciousness is settled it takes up the work and carries it on with another force which replaces the push of the vital and is much greater.

*

In the first condition you are receiving through the mind and it is drawn back upon itself to receive the Presence and grow in the Light and Power from above. The body or external consciousness is probably not sharing in its outward-going parts, there is no effectuating energy for any work other than what the external consciousness is habituated to do.

In the second the vital is receiving directly and transforming immediately into kinetic energy; for it is the direct reception by the vital or else the active participation of the vital in the Light, Power or Ananda that makes externalisation, effectuation, all kinds of work and action possible and easy.

*

The opening of the vital mind (or any part) does not mean that the vital mind is absolutely open or wholly converted so that there shall never again be any darkness or ignorance or error or resistance or anything else but the higher consciousness there. It only means that the higher consciousness is able to come down there and work and establish something of itself there — as has been done in the thinking mind. Each plane, one after the other, has to open initially in that way down to the physical. So long

as this initial opening is not made in all the parts, there can be no complete and final descent of the higher consciousness anywhere. If the nervous being and other physical parts are not open, even the thinking mind cannot be finally open, for it can be affected by resistance, darkness etc. from below. If the vital mind is open, that does not mean that it is open so wholly that it is already divine and is not feeling pride or other wrong movements.

As for the nervous being, it is part of the physical consciousness, below the physical mind and not above it — the nerves are part of the body.

*

The attitude which he describes, if he keeps it correctly, is the right one. It brought him at first the beginning of a true experience, the Light (white and golden) and the Force pouring down from the Sahasradala and filling the system; but when it touched the vital parts it must have awakened the prana energies in the vital centres (navel and below) and as these were not pure, all the impurities arose (anger, sex, fear, doubt etc.) and the mind became clouded by the uprush of impure vital forces. He says that all this is now subsiding, the mind is becoming calm and in the vital the impulses come but do not remain. Not only the mind but the vital must become calm; these impulses must lose their force of recurrence by rejection and purification. Entire purity and peace must be established in the whole *ādhāra*; it is only then that he will have a safe and sure basis for further progress.

The reason why the force flows out of him must be because he allows himself to become too inertly passive and open to everything. One must be passive only to the Divine Force, but vigilant not to put oneself at the mercy of all forces. If he becomes passive when he tries to see God in another person, he is likely to put himself at the disposal of any force that is working through that person and his own forces may be drained away towards the other. It is better for him not to try in this way; let him aspire for the Peace and Strength that come from above and for entire

purity and open himself to that Force only. Such experiences as the feeling of the Divine everywhere (not in this or that person only) will then come of themselves.

*

It is when the true contact and the Light and Force can be steadily brought down *into the whole being* (including the lower vital and body) that the basis and organisation [*of the being*] can be founded and settled.

Descent into the Physical Consciousness and Body

This is a very great progress — to be able to receive the higher consciousness while doing external things with the physical mind and body — it shows that the physical consciousness is fast opening. What you feel is indeed the Grace coming down and bringing the higher divine or spiritual consciousness with it with all that is there. All that (peace, power, Ananda) will develop afterwards more clearly.

*

It [*the descent of the higher consciousness into the most physical*] brings light, consciousness, force, Ananda into the cells and all the physical movements. The body becomes conscious and vigilant and performs the right movements, obeying the higher will or else automatically by force of the consciousness that has come into it. It becomes more possible to control the functionings of the body and set right anything that is wrong, to deal with illness and pain etc. A greater control comes over the actions of the body and even over happenings to it from outside, e.g. minimising of accidents and small mishaps. The body becomes a more effective instrument for work. It becomes possible to minimise fatigue. Peace, happiness, strength, lightness in the whole physical system. These are the more obvious and normal results which grow as the consciousness grows, but there are many others that are possible. There is also the unity with the earth-consciousness, the constant sense of the Divine in the physical, etc.

It is, of course, not easy to make the physical entirely conscious in this way — for it is the seat of unconsciousness and obscurity and inertia — but a partial and sufficiently effective introduction of the higher consciousness can be established as a basis and the rest of the ground conquered as its force increases in the body.

*

Your recent experiences are of considerable importance: the triple condition of the being, the sense of the Divine everywhere, that of the Divine Child in the universe. The last two are self-evident in their significance. As to the triple condition it indicates the proper direction of the realisation of the sadhana in three parts of the being. The mind has to merge in the one infinite consciousness of the silent self which will then envelop the whole being; the heart has by adoration and love and surrender to live in the dynamic Divine and be its dwelling place; the vital and physical (below the navel) have to be the instruments of the Divine Will, instruments pure, surrendered, expressing nothing but that Will.

The Blue Light coming below the level of the Muladhara means that it has entered into the physical (physical mental, physical vital, material) consciousness. The two main obstacles here are the mechanical mind with its memories and desires of the past and the most outward sex movements; these have to be overcome (especially the mechanical mind, for the other may be easily overcome if not supported by the vital proper) for the Light to possess all the physical consciousness. It is probably why it rose so strongly when the Light came to these parts.

*

That is to say, [*when there is sometimes stillness and sometimes mechanical thoughts*] the Power is still working on the physical consciousness (the mechanical mind and the subconscious) to bring stillness there. Sometimes the stillness comes but not complete, sometimes the mechanical mind reasserts itself. This oscillation usually takes place in a movement of the kind. Even if there is a sudden or rapid transforming shock or downrush,

there has to be some working out of this kind afterwards — that at least has always been my experience. For most, however, there comes, first, this slow preparatory process.

*

It is not a question only of the force working — but of the force descending into the body. The force descends in order to establish quietude, peace, light or whatever else comes from the higher consciousness. When the force comes only to do some work it comes and goes after doing its work. But this is a question of establishing something in the mind, vital and body.

*

It [*how the body receives the higher dynamism*] depends on the condition of the body or rather of the physical and the most material consciousness. In one condition it is tamasic, inert, unopen and cannot bear or cannot receive or cannot contain the force; in another rajas predominates and tries to seize on the dynamism, but wastes and spills and loses it; in another there is receptivity, harmony, balance and the result is a harmonious action without strain or effort.

*

Probably the accumulated Force became more than the physical being could receive. When that happens, the right thing to do is to widen oneself (one can learn to do it by a little practice). If the consciousness is in a state of wideness, then it can receive any amount of Force without inconvenience.

*

It was the descent of the higher consciousness not only into the mind but the whole body and the whole being. That is what you must get fixed in you, having it not only as a descent but as your normal consciousness. Of course that does not happen in a day (except in rare cases). The descent repeats itself until it is strong enough to hold the whole body.

*

What will happen when the supramental consciousness takes hold of the body fully, can be decided only by the descent itself — there must be no premature attempt to do it or decide it with the Mind, before the Descent is an accomplished reality — for that would only retard the Descent and perhaps spoil the body.

Experiences in the Subtle Body and the Physical Body

It [*the higher consciousness*] can come into the physical consciousness direct in the sense that the rest can remain passive, but it must pass through the subtle to reach the material.

*

All experiences that penetrate the centres are recorded in the body and seem to be the body's experiences,¹ but one has to distinguish between the reflection of the experiences there and the experiences that belong to the physical body consciousness itself. It is a matter of consciousness and fine discernment. There is no absolute law about the time.

*

It can be a rushing of Force into the subtle body which the physical records and feels the effect. When Force descends into the head it means that it has come down into the mind, when it is felt in the heart it means it has entered into the emotional vital, when it is in the Muladhara and below it means it is acting on the physical consciousness. The centres are all in the subtle body although there are corresponding parts in the gross physical.

*

I spoke [*in the preceding letter*] only of the fact that what one feels recorded in the physical body may be actually taking place only in the subtle body. Whether in a particular case it is that or a direct experience in the physical body also, is a matter to be

¹ *The correspondent wrote that he sometimes felt peace or silence or force as "tangibly present" in his body. — Ed.*

seen in each case. One must distinguish for oneself which it is.

*

Any reflection or outflowing [*of the Force*] from the subtle body into the physical would also be felt as tangible.

*

Why “mere” record? If you think the experiences in the subtle body are feeble vague things, you are mistaken — they can be quite as intense, swift, palpable, massive as those of the body.

Descent into the Subconscious and Inconscient

It [*the correspondent's experience*] is the approach of the higher consciousness to the subconscious through the psychic and vital which are the connecting links. Without the vital the action would not be complete, without the psychic it would not be possible.

*

I do not see what is your difficulty. That there is a divine force asleep or veiled by Inconscience in Matter and that the Higher Force has to descend and awaken it with the Light and Truth is a thing that is well known; it is at the very base of this Yoga.

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

LETTERS ON YOGA — III, the third of four volumes, contains letters in which Sri Aurobindo speaks about the experiences and realisations that may take place in the practice of his system of Yoga. The letters have been arranged in four parts dealing with these broad subject areas:

1. The Place of Experiences in the Practice of Yoga
2. The Opening of the Inner Senses
3. Experiences of the Inner Consciousness and the Cosmic Consciousness
4. The Fundamental Realisations of the Integral Yoga

The letters in this volume have been selected from the extensive correspondence Sri Aurobindo carried on with his disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Letters from this corpus appear in seven volumes of *THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO: Letters on Poetry and Art* (Volume 27), *Letters on Yoga* (Volumes 28–31), *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* (Volume 32), and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (Volume 35). The titles of these works specify the nature of the letters included in the volumes, but there is some overlap. For example, a number of letters in the present volume are also published in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. Another volume, *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest* (Volume 36), contains letters written by Sri Aurobindo before 1927, as well as some written after that date, mainly to persons living outside the Ashram.

The Writing of the Letters

Between 1927 and 1950, Sri Aurobindo replied to hundreds of correspondents in tens of thousands of letters, some of them many pages in length, others only a few words long. Most of his replies, however, were

sent to just a few dozen disciples, almost all of them resident members of his Ashram; of these disciples, about a dozen received more than half the replies. Sri Aurobindo wrote most of these letters between 1931 and 1937, the prime period of his correspondence. Letters before and after this period were written on a more restricted scale and confined to a few persons for special reasons.

Disciples in the Ashram wrote to Sri Aurobindo on loose sheets or sent him the notebooks in which they kept diaries as a record of their spiritual endeavour and a means of communicating with him. These notebooks and loose sheets reached Sri Aurobindo via an internal “post” once or twice a day. Letters from outside which his secretary thought he might like to see were sent at the same time. Correspondents wrote in English if they knew the language well enough, but a good number wrote in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi or French, all of which Sri Aurobindo read fluently, or in other languages that were translated into English for him. The disciples usually addressed their letters to the Mother, since Sri Aurobindo had asked them to do so, but most assumed that he would answer them. He generally replied in the notebook or on the sheets sent by the correspondent, writing beneath the correspondent’s remarks or in the margin or between the lines; sometimes, however, he wrote his reply on a separate sheet of paper. In some cases he had his secretary prepare a typed copy of his letter, which he revised before it was sent. For correspondents living outside the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo sometimes addressed his reply not to the correspondent but to his secretary, who quoted, paraphrased or translated the reply and signed the letter himself. In these indirect replies, Sri Aurobindo often referred to himself in the third person.

While going through Sri Aurobindo’s letters, the reader should keep in mind that each letter was written to a specific person at a specific time, in specific circumstances and for a specific purpose. The subjects taken up arose in regard to the needs of the person. Sri Aurobindo varied the style and tone of his replies according to his relationship with the correspondent; to those with whom he was close, he sometimes employed humour, irony and even sarcasm.

Although written to specific recipients, these letters contain much of general interest, which justifies their inclusion in a volume destined

for the general public. For the reasons mentioned above, however, the advice in them does not always apply equally to everyone. Aware of this, Sri Aurobindo himself made some cautionary remarks about the proper use of his letters:

I should like to say, in passing, that it is not always safe to apply practically to oneself what has been written for another. Each sadhak is a case by himself and one cannot always or often take a mental rule and apply it rigidly to all who are practising the Yoga.

The tendency to take what I lay down for one and apply it without discrimination to another is responsible for much misunderstanding. A general statement, too, true in itself, cannot be applied to everyone alike or applied now and immediately without consideration of condition or circumstance or person or time.

It is not a fact that all I write is meant equally for everybody. That assumes that everybody is alike and there is no difference between sadhak and sadhak. If it were so everybody would advance alike and have the same experiences and take the same time to progress by the same steps and stages. It is not so at all.¹

The Typing and Revision of the Letters

Most of the shorter items in this volume, and many of the longer ones, were not typed or revised during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime and are reproduced here directly from his handwritten manuscripts. A good number of the letters, however, as mentioned above, were typed for Sri Aurobindo and revised by him before sending. Other letters were typed by the recipients for their own use or for circulation within the Ashram. At first, circulation of the letters was restricted to members of the Ashram and others whom Sri Aurobindo had accepted as disciples.

¹ First and third passages: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 473 and 475. Second passage: *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, volume 32, p. 349.

When these letters were circulated, personal references were removed. Persons mentioned by Sri Aurobindo were indicated by their initials or by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. Copies of these typed letters were kept by Sri Aurobindo's secretary and sometimes presented to Sri Aurobindo for revision before publication. These typed copies sometimes contained errors, most of which were corrected by him while revising.

Sri Aurobindo's revision sometimes amounted merely to making minor changes here and there, sometimes to a complete rewriting of the letter. He generally removed personal references if this had not already been done by the typist. When necessary, he also rewrote the openings or other parts of the replies in order to free them from dependence on the correspondent's question. As a result, some of these letters have an impersonal tone and read more like brief essays than personal communications.

The Publication of the Letters

Around 1933, Sri Aurobindo's secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta began to compile selections from the growing body of letters in order to publish them. During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, four small books of letters were published: *The Riddle of This World* (1933), *Lights on Yoga* (1935), *Bases of Yoga* (1936) and *More Lights on Yoga* (1948). Sri Aurobindo revised the typescripts of most of the letters in these books. During this revision, he continued the process of removing personal references. A letter he wrote in August 1937 alludes to his approach to the revision:

I had no idea of the book being published as a collection of personal letters — if that were done, they would have to be published whole as such without a word of alteration. I understood the book was meant like the others [*i.e., like Bases of Yoga, etc.*] where only what was helpful for an understanding of things Yogic was kept with necessary alterations and modifications. . . . With that idea I have been not only omitting but recasting and adding freely. Otherwise as a book it would be too scrappy and random for public interest. In the other books things too personal were omitted — it seems

to me the same rule must hold here — except very sparingly where unavoidable.

A number of letters not included in the four books mentioned above were published in the mid and late 1940s in several journals associated with the Ashram: *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, *The Advent* and *Mother India*. Many letters in these journals were revised by Sri Aurobindo before publication.

By the mid-1940s a significant body of letters had been collected, typed and revised. In 1945 plans were made, with Sri Aurobindo's approval, to publish a collection of his letters. The work of compiling and editing these letters was done under his guidance. At that time, many typed or printed copies of letters, some revised, some not, were presented to Sri Aurobindo for approval or revision. The resulting material was arranged and published in a four-volume series entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*. Series One appeared in 1947, Series Two and Three in 1949 and Series Four in 1951. The first, second and fourth series contained letters on Yoga, the third letters on poetry and literature. In 1958, most of these letters on Yoga, along with many additional ones, were published under the titles *On Yoga II: Tome One* and *On Yoga II: Tome Two*, as Volumes VI and VII of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre collection. The first tome, with further additions, was reissued in 1969. In 1970 a new edition of the letters was published under the title *Letters on Yoga*; this edition contained many new letters not included in *On Yoga II*. The three volumes of the enlarged edition constituted volumes 22, 23 and 24 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library.

The present edition, also titled *Letters on Yoga*, incorporates most of the Centenary Library letters, but also contains a large number of letters that have come to light in the four decades between the two editions. One source of new letters is the correspondences of several disciples which were published in books after the Centenary Library edition had been issued. Govindbhai Patel's correspondence was published in 1974 in a book entitled *My Pilgrimage to the Spirit*; an enlarged edition appeared in 1977. Nagin Doshi's correspondence, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo: Letters to a Young Disciple*, was brought out in three volumes in 1974, 1976 and 1987. *Nirodbaran's Correspondence with*

Sri Aurobindo came out in two volumes in 1983 and 1984. Sahana Devi's correspondence came out in 1985 in a book entitled *At the Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*. Prithwi Singh's correspondence came out in 1988 as *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to Prithwi Singh*. Dilip Kumar Roy's correspondence was issued in four volumes in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2011 under the title *Sri Aurobindo to Dilip*. A second source of new material is individual letters and small collections of letters published in Ashram journals and elsewhere after the Centenary Library had been issued. A third source is letters transcribed from manuscripts or from early typed copies. Many unpublished letters were discovered while reviewing correspondences long held by the Ashram; some of these had never been assessed to find letters for publication; others had been assessed, but relatively few letters were selected at the time. Additional letters were received by the Ashram upon the passing away of disciples. From the three sources mentioned above, many letters have been found that are worthy of publication. The present edition contains about one-third more letters than appear in the Centenary Library.

The Selection, Arrangement and Editing of the Letters

In compiling the present edition, all known manuscripts, typed copies or photographic copies of manuscripts and printed texts of letters were checked. From these sources, letters that seemed to be of general interest were selected. Electronic texts of the letters were then made and carefully checked at least twice against the handwritten, typed, photocopied, and printed versions of the texts.

The selected letters have been arranged according to subject and placed in the four volumes of the present edition. Each volume is divided and subdivided into parts, sections, chapters and groups with descriptive headings; each group, the lowest unit of division, contains one or more letters devoted to the specific subject of the group.

The present volume consists of 1164 separate items, an "item" being defined as what is published between one heading or asterisk and another heading or asterisk. Many items correspond exactly to individual letters; a good number, however, contain only part of the individual letters; a small number consist of two or more letters (or

parts of them) that were joined together by early typists or editors and then revised in that form by Sri Aurobindo.

Whenever possible, the letters are reproduced to their full extent. In some cases, however, portions of the letters have been omitted because they are not of general interest. A number of letters, for example, begin with personal remarks by Sri Aurobindo unrelated to the more substantial remarks which follow; these personal openings have often been removed. In some letters, Sri Aurobindo marked the transition from one part of a letter to another with a phrase such as “As to”; these transitional phrases have often been retained and stand at the beginning of abbreviated letters — that is, letters in which the first part of the letter has been omitted or placed elsewhere.

A number of letters, or portions of them, have been published in more than one volume of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Most of this doubling of letters occurs between *Letters on Yoga* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. The form of these letters is not always the same in both places. In *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, the manuscript version of a given letter has often been used because it contains Sri Aurobindo’s remarks on himself or the Mother or members of the Ashram. These personal remarks, as noted above, were usually removed by Sri Aurobindo when he revised the letter for publication as a letter on Yoga. This revised form of the letter has generally been reproduced in *Letters on Yoga*. Thus, a number of letters are available both in their original form and their revised form.

As in previous collections of Sri Aurobindo’s letters, the names of Ashram members and others have often been replaced by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. In any given letter, X stands for the first name replaced, Y for the second, Z for the third, A for the fourth, and so on. An X in a given letter has no necessary relation to an X in another letter. Names of Ashram members to whom Sri Aurobindo referred not as sadhaks but as holders of a certain position — notably Nolini Kanta Gupta in his position as Sri Aurobindo’s secretary — are given in full. Sometimes the names of people who played a role in the history of the period are also given.

In his letters Sri Aurobindo sometimes wrote Sanskrit words in the devanagari script; these words have been transliterated into roman script in this edition. Words in Bengali script have likewise been

transliterated. This policy is in accord with the practice followed in Sri Aurobindo's lifetime.

The reader may note that Sri Aurobindo almost always spelled the word "Asram" without an "h" in his manuscripts. Around 1945, due to failing eyesight, he began dictating most of his writings to his amanuensis Nirodbaran; Nirodbaran sometimes spelled the word without an "h", sometimes with one. In the present edition, the word is always spelled as it occurs in the manuscripts, both those of Sri Aurobindo and of Nirodbaran. In headings and other editorial matter, the spelling "Ashram" has been used, since this is now the official spelling of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Letters on Yoga

IV



Sri Aurobindo

Letters on Yoga — IV

Transformation of Human Nature
in the Integral Yoga

VOLUME 31
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO
© Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust 2014
Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department
Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry
PRINTED IN INDIA

Publisher's Note

Letters on Yoga — IV contains letters written by Sri Aurobindo on the transformation of human nature, mental, vital and physical, through the practice of the Integral Yoga. It also includes letters on the difficulties encountered in the practice of this Yoga. This volume is the last of four volumes of *Letters on Yoga*, arranged by the editors as follows:

- I. Foundations of the Integral Yoga
- II. Practice of the Integral Yoga
- III. Experiences and Realisations in the Integral Yoga
- IV. Transformation of Human Nature in the Integral Yoga

The letters in these volumes have been selected from the large body of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Other letters from this period are published in *Letters on Poetry and Art*, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volumes 27, 32 and 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Letters written before 1927 are reproduced in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS.

During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, relatively few of his letters were published. Three small books of letters on Yoga were brought out in the 1930s. A more substantial collection came out between 1947 and 1951 in a four-volume series entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (including one volume of letters on poetry and literature). In 1958, many more letters were included in the two large tomes of *On Yoga* — II. A further expanded collection in three volumes entitled *Letters on Yoga* was published in 1970 as part of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. The present collection, also entitled *Letters on Yoga*, constitutes volumes 28–31 of THE COMPLETE WORKS. These volumes incorporate

previously published letters and contain many new ones as well. About one-third of the letters in the present volume were not published in the Centenary Library.

This volume is arranged by subject in four parts:

1. Sadhana on the Level of the Mind
2. Sadhana on the Level of the Vital
3. Sadhana on the Physical, Subconscient and
Inconscient Levels
4. Difficulties in the Practice of the Integral Yoga

The texts of all the letters have been checked against the available manuscripts, typescripts and printed versions.

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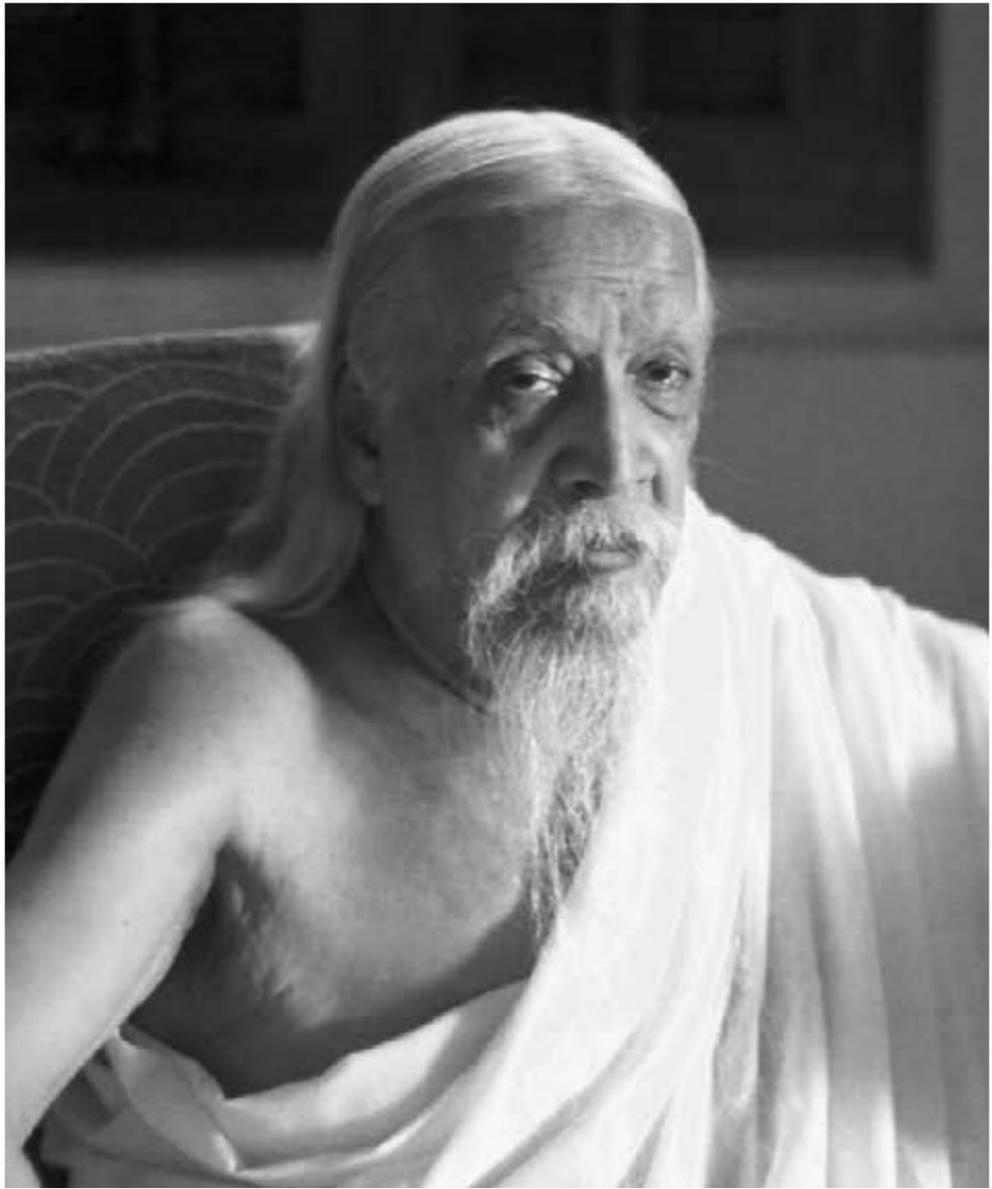
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Sri Aurobindo, 1950

Part One

Sadhana on the Level of the Mind

Section One

The Mind and Sadhana

Chapter One

The Mind and Other Levels of Being

The Mind and the Divine Consciousness

The ways of the Divine are not like those of the human mind or according to our patterns and it is impossible to judge them or to lay down for Him what He shall or shall not do, for the Divine knows better than we can know. If we admit the Divine at all, both true reason and bhakti seem to me to be at one in demanding implicit faith and surrender.

*

To understand divine movements one must enter into the divine consciousness; till then faith and surrender are the only right attitude. How can the mind judge what is beyond all its measures?

The Mind and the Supermind

The less pet ideas are petted and cherished, the better for the supramental Yoga. The mind is always building up ideas, some of which are wrong, some a mixture of truth and error, some true in their way, but true only in a certain field or in certain conditions or for some people, and it proceeds not only to make “pets” of them, but to try to impose them as universal and absolute truths or general standards which everybody must follow. The mind is a rigid instrument: it finds it difficult to adapt itself to the greater plasticity of the play of life or the freedom of the play of the Spirit. It wants to catch hold of either or both of these spontaneous powers and cut them into its own measures. It poses as the mediator and interpreter between life and the spirit; but it knows neither; it only knows itself and its own constructions out of life and its own deformations or half reflections of the truth of the Spirit. Only the supermind can be a true mediator and interpreter. But if you want the supramental

Light, you must not tie yourself to mental ideas, but draw back from them and observe them with an impartial equality in the silence of the spirit. When the supramental Light touches them, it will put them in their place and finally replace them by the true truth of things.

The Mind and Intuition

For the human thinking mind there are always many sides to everything and it decides according to its own bent or preference or its habitual ideas or some reason that presents itself to the intellect as the best. It gets the real truth only when something else puts a higher light into it — when the psychic or the intuition touches it and makes it feel or see.

*

It is very usual for intuitive suggestions to come like that and the mind to disregard them. It is because the mind is too accustomed to follow its own process and cannot recognise or have confidence in the intuition when it comes. The mind has to learn to look at these things when they come and give them value if experience confirms their truth.

*

Yes, the active mind in people with a very intellectual turn can be an obstacle to the deeper more silent spiritual movement. Afterwards when it is turned into the higher thought (intuitive or overmental) it becomes on the contrary a great force.

*

The intuitive perception or discrimination is self-sufficient — it does not need any reasoning or process of thought to justify it. The intellectual depends on data and steps, even if the steps are hurried over or the data rapidly seized and swallowed into the intelligence.

*

It [*the perception of an intuitivised mind*] is when, instead of seeing things as they appear to the external mind and senses, one begins to see things about them with a subtler physical mind and sense — e.g. seeing intuitively what is to be done, how to do it, what the object (even so-called inanimate objects) wants or needs, what is likely to happen next (or sometimes sure to happen), what forces are at play on the physical plane etc. etc. Even the body becomes intuitively conscious in this way, feels without being told by the mind what it has to do, what it has to avoid, what is near it or coming to it (though unseen) etc. etc.

*

The heart has its intuitions as well as the mind and these are as true as any mental perceptions. But neither all feelings nor all mental perceptions nor all rational conclusions can be true.

The Mind and Inspiration

There are different kinds of knowledge. One is inspiration, i.e. something that comes out of the Knowledge planes like a flash and opens up the mind to the Truth in a moment. That is inspiration. It easily takes the form of words as when a poet writes or a speaker speaks, as people say, from inspiration.

*

The pure inspiration and conception is something quite different [*from ordinary thought*] — it comes from deep within or from high above. This is the lower vital mind at work making formations. When the calmness is there all sorts of things may rise on the surface — they have not to be accepted, but simply looked at. In time the calmness will be so developed as to quell the vital and outer mind also and in that complete quietude the true perceptions will come.

The Mind and the Psychic

Most people begin with the power [*of Yoga*] working in the

mind — it is only when the mind and vital have been changed to some extent that the psychic is ready to come forward.

*

The chief obstacle in you is the mind. If you can quiet your mind and give the psychic being a chance, that will be your spiritual salvation. Your mind is inordinately active, too full of questionings, too shrewd, worldly and practical, too much given to doubt and self-defence. All that is very useful in worldly life, it helps to bring success, but it is not the way to succeed in Yoga. No doubt in Yoga, the critical rational mind (self-critical as well as critical of things outside you) is an element that has its value so long as the true inner discrimination does not come; but of itself it cannot carry you on the way, it will only make your progress slow and stumbling. There must be something in you that will open itself directly to the Truth and Light. The unregenerated vital being of man cannot do that because it demands of the higher Power that it shall satisfy the vital desires, demands, ambitions, vanity, pride, etc., before it will accept the Truth. The unilluminated mind also cannot do it because it refuses to recognise the Truth unless the Truth first satisfies its own judgments, ideas, opinions, critical or conventional standards, — unless in a word the Truth consents to narrow itself into the moulds of the mind's own ignorance. It is the psychic being alone that turns to the Truth directly, feels it instinctively behind all appearances and in spite of all disguises, accepts it without any egoistic demand or condition, is ready to serve it without reserve or refusal. It is the psychic being also that can at once feel and reject all imitations of the Truth, all shows, all pretences.

*

In the West the physical mind is too dominant, so that the psychic does not so easily get a chance — except of course in exceptional people.

*

It is the thoughts of the outer mind that have to be refused, the suggestions and ideas that end by disturbing the sadhana. There are also a number of thoughts of all kinds that have no interest, but which the mind is accustomed to allow to come as a habit, mechanically, — these sometimes come up when one tries to be quiet. They must be allowed to pass away without attending to them until they run down and the mind becomes still; to struggle with them and try to stop them is no use, there must be only a quiet rejection. On the other hand if thoughts come up from within, from the psychic, thoughts of the Mother, of divine love and joy, perceptions of truth etc., these of course must be permitted, as they help to make the psychic active.

*

When it [*one's inner perception*] is at the heart, it is probable that the psychic or at least the psychic mental thought is replacing the ordinary mental. Yogic thought comes from two sources, the psychic behind the heart and the higher consciousness from above the head.

*

Your nature has always been very self-centred and the mind active — in such a nature it is easier for the higher mind to act than for the psychic.

The Mind and the Lower Nature

It is necessary first to found the higher consciousness in the mind and heart. To deal with the lower nature before that means to fall into the struggle and confusion and disorder of the vital, for it all comes up. With the mind and heart prepared, one can deal with the vital without all that superfluous trouble.

*

So long as the mind is not entirely transformed, that is, penetrated and changed by the spiritual consciousness, things from below can always run into it more or less and dim the vision of

the higher levels. If you can keep the vision always, even though dimmed, it is already a great progress.

*

There is only one sadhana for all parts, not a separate mental sadhana, vital sadhana or physical sadhana—but the action of the sadhana is applied sometimes separately to each part; sometimes on the contrary the action is on the mental and vital together, or vital and physical together, or all three together. But it is the same sadhana always.

Chapter Two

Intellect and the Intellectual

Limitations of the Intellect

Intellect is part of Mind and an instrument of half-truth like the rest of the Mind.

*

Intellectual activities are not part of the inner being — the intellect is the outer mind.

*

Its [*the intellect's*] function is to reason from the perceptions of the mind and senses, to form conclusions and to put things in logical relation with each other. A well-trained intellect is a good preparation of the mind for greater knowledge, but it cannot itself give the Yogic knowledge or know the Divine — it can only have ideas about the Divine, but having ideas is not knowledge. In the course of the sadhana intellect has to be transformed into the higher mind which is itself a passage towards the true knowledge.

*

It is no use trying to decide the things of the Spirit by the power and in the light of the intellect. The intellect can only reason and infer and its reasonings are partial and its inferences vitiated by error. One has to awaken the divinations in the soul, the psychic being, and wait for a higher knowledge which comes from above.

It is not safe to listen to or be influenced by the mental of other sadhaks. The Yoga aims at union with the Divine which will bring a spiritual oneness with other sadhaks, but a oneness in the Divine, in the Truth, not in the ignorance of the mind and the vital.

*

It is not by intellect that one can progress in the Yoga, but by psychic and spiritual receptivity—as for knowledge and true understanding it grows in sadhana by the growth of the intuition, not of the physical intellect.

*

The intellect can be as great an obstacle as the vital when it chooses to prefer its own constructions to the Truth.

*

What you have said is perfectly right. To see the Truth does not depend on a big intellect or a small intellect. It depends on being in contact with the Truth and the mind silent or quiet to receive it. The biggest intellects can make errors of the worst kind and confuse Truth and falsehood, if they have not the contact with Truth or the direct experience.

*

The intellect of most men is extremely imperfect, ill trained, half developed—therefore in most the conclusions of the intellect are hasty, ill founded and erroneous or, if right, right more by chance than by merit or right working. The conclusions are formed without knowing the facts or the correct or sufficient data, merely by a rapid inference and the process by which it comes from the premisses to the conclusion is usually illogical or faulty—the process being unsound by which the conclusion is arrived at, the conclusion also is likely to be fallacious. At the same time the intellect is usually arrogant and presumptuous, confidently asserting its imperfect conclusions as the truth and setting down as mistaken, stupid or foolish those who differ from them. Even when fully trained and developed, the intellect cannot arrive at absolute certitude or complete truth, but it can arrive at one aspect or side of it and make a reasonable or probable affirmation; but untrained, it is a quite insufficient instrument, at once hasty and peremptory and unsafe and unreliable.

*

Intellectual statements about these things do not lead very far, for the basis of true statement is a consciousness which sees things not as the mind sees them but with a direct inner view, and unless one enters into that consciousness itself, it is difficult really to understand the intellectual statement. It is by sadhana only that one can enter into that consciousness in which one sees the divine reality behind things.

*

The point is that people take no trouble to see whether their intellect is giving them right thoughts, right conclusions, right views on things and persons, right indications about their conduct or course of action. They have their idea and accept it as truth or follow it simply because it is *their* idea. Even when they recognise that they have made mistakes of the mind, they do not consider it of any importance nor do they try to be more careful mentally than before. In the vital field people know that they must not follow their desires or impulses without check or control, they know that they ought to have a conscience or a moral sense which discriminates what they can or should do and what they cannot or should not do; in the field of intellect no such care is taken. Men are supposed to follow their intellect, to have and assert their own ideas right or wrong without any control; the intellect, it is said, is man's highest instrument and he must think and act according to its ideas. But this is not true; the intellect needs an inner light to guide, check and control it quite as much as the vital. There is something above the intellect which one has to discover and the intellect should be only an intermediary for the action of that source of true Knowledge.

*

There is no reason why one should not receive through the thinking mind, as one receives through the vital, the emotional and the body. The thinking mind is as capable of receiving as these are, and, since it has to be transformed as well as the rest, it must be trained to receive, otherwise no transformation of it could take place.

It is the ordinary unenlightened activity of the intellect that is an obstacle to spiritual experience, just as the ordinary unregenerated activity of the vital or the obscure stupidly obstructive consciousness of the body is an obstacle. What the sadhak has to be specially warned against in the wrong processes of the intellect is, first, any mistaking of mental ideas and impressions or intellectual conclusions for realisation; secondly, the restless activity of the mere mind, *cañcalam manah*, which disturbs the spontaneous accuracy of psychic and spiritual experience and gives no room for the descent of the true illuminating knowledge or else deforms it as soon as it touches or even before it fully touches the human mental plane. There are also of course the usual vices of the intellect, — its leaning towards sterile doubt instead of luminous reception and calm enlightened discrimination; its arrogance claiming to judge things that are beyond it, unknown to it, too deep for it by standards drawn from its own limited experience; its attempts to explain the supraphysical by the physical or its demand for the proof of higher and occult things by the criterions proper to Matter and to mind in Matter; others also too many to enumerate here. Always it is substituting its own representations and constructions and opinions for the true knowledge. But if the intellect is surrendered, open, quiet, receptive, there is no reason why it should not be a means of reception of the light or an aid to the experience of spiritual states and to the fullness of an inner change.

The Intellect, the Pure Reason and Knowledge

The intellect is made up of imaginations, perceptions, inferences. The pure reason is quite another thing, but only a few are able to use it. As for knowledge, — in Yoga it comes first from the higher mind, but even that does not see the whole Truth, only sides of it.

*

Pure reason deals with things in themselves, ideas, concepts, the essential nature of things. It lives in the world of ideas. It is

philosophic and metaphysical in its nature.

Intellect, Intellectual and Intelligence

All depends on the meaning you attach to words used — it is a matter of nomenclature. Ordinarily one says a man has intellect if he can think well — the nature and process and field of the thought do not matter. If you take intellect in that sense, then you can say that intellect has different strata and Ford belongs to one stratum of intellect, Einstein to another — Ford has a practical and executive business intellect, Einstein a scientific discovering and theorising intellect. But Ford too in his own field theorises, invents, discovers. Yet would you call Ford an intellectual or a man of intellect? I would prefer to use for the general faculty of mind the word intelligence. Ford has a great and forceful practical intelligence, keen, quick, successful, dynamic. He has a brain that can deal with thoughts also, but even there his drive is towards practicality. He believes in rebirth (metempsychosis), for instance, not for any philosophic reason, but because it explains life as a school of experience in which one gathers more and more experience and develops by it. Einstein has on the other hand a great discovering scientific intellect, not like Marconi a powerful practical inventive intelligence for the application of scientific discovery. All men have of course an “intellect” of a kind, all for instance can discuss and debate (for which you say rightly intellect is needed); but it is only when one rises to the realm of ideas and moves freely in it that you say, “This man has an intellect.” Address an assembly of peasants, you will find if you give them scope that they can put to you points and questions which may often leave the parliamentary debater panting. But we are content to say that these peasants have much practical intelligence.

The power to discuss and debate is, as I say, a common human faculty — and habit. Perhaps it is here that man begins to diverge from the animal; for animals have much intelligence — many animals and even insects — even some rudimentary power of practical reasoning, but so far as we know, they don't meet

and put their ideas about things side by side or sling them at each other in a debate,¹ as even the most ignorant human can do and very animatedly does. There too is the beginning of intellect — for the reasons you allege. Also for the reason that it is a common faculty of the race, it can be specialised, so much so that a man whom it is dangerous to cross in debate in the field of literature or of science or of philosophy may yet make a fool of himself and wallow contentedly in a quagmire of blunders and fallacies if he discusses politics or economy or, let us say, spirituality or Yoga. His only salvation is the blissful depth of his ignorance which prevents him from seeing what a mess he has made. Again a man may be a keen legal or political debater, — the two very commonly go together, — yet no intellectual. I admit that a man must have some logical intellect to debate well. But after all the object of debate is to win, to make your point and you may do that even if your point is false; success, not truth, is the aim of debate. So I admit what you say, but with reservations.

I agree also that labels are unsatisfactory — even when applied to less developed persons; what we really do is to pick out something prominent and label with that as if it were all the person. But classification is impossible without that and man's intellect is driven always to classify, fix distinctions, set apart with a label. The philosophers have pointed out that Science does that too rigidly and in doing so cuts falsely across the truth of Nature. But if we don't do that, we can't have any Science.

*

X asked me the question and I answered it on the basis of the current meaning of “intellect” and “intellectual”. People in ordinary speech do not make any distinction between intellect and intelligence, though of course it is quite true that a man may have a good or even a fine intelligence without being an intellectual. But ordinarily all thinking is attributed to the “intellect”; an intellectual therefore is a man whose main business or activity it is to think about things — a philosopher, a poet, a

¹ Perhaps the crows do in the “Crow Parliament” sometimes?

scientist, a critic of art and literature or of life, are all classed together as intellectuals. A theorist on economy and politics is an intellectual, a politician or a financier is not, unless he theorises on his own subject or is a thinker on another.

Y's distinction is based on those I have made here, but these distinctions are not current in ordinary speech, except one or two and those even in a very imperfect way. If I go by these distinctions, then the intellectuals will no longer be called intellectuals but thinkers and creators — except a certain class of them. An intellectual or intellectual thinker will then be one who is a thinker by his reason or mainly by his reason — e.g. Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw, Wells etc. Tagore thinks by vision, imagination, feeling or by intuition, not by the reason — at least that is true of his writings. C. R. Das himself would not be an intellectual; in politics, literature and everything else he was an “intuitive” and “emotive” man. But, as I say, these would be distinctions not ordinarily current. In ordinary parlance Tagore, Das and everybody else of the kind would all be called intellectuals. The general mind does not make these subtle distinctions: it takes things in the mass, roughly and it is right in doing so, for otherwise it would lose itself altogether.

As for barristers etc., a man to succeed as a barrister must have legal knowledge and the power to apply it. It is not necessary that he should be a thinker even in his own subject or an intellectual. It is the same with all professional men — doctors, engineers etc. etc.: they may be intellectuals as well as successful in their profession, but they need not be.

P. S. Argument properly speaking needs some power of logical intellect; but it can be specialised in a certain line. The power of arguing does not by itself make a man an intellectual.

*

X's main grievance with respect to the intellectuals is that he is cut off from all discussion of mental things and mental stimulus and so his mental energies are becoming atrophied. But a man who has a mental life ought surely not to be dependent on others for it, since that life is found within — there ought to be springs

within that flow by their own force.

The Intellectual Man and the Emotional Man

If the intellectual [*man*] will always have a greater wideness and vastness [*than the emotional man*], how can we be sure that he will have an equal fervour, depth and sweetness with the emotional man?

It may be that *homo intellectualis* will remain wider and *homo psychicus* will remain deeper in heart.

*

Please do not confuse the higher knowledge and mental knowledge. The intellectual man will be able to give a wider and more orderly expression to what higher knowledge he gets than the *homo psychicus*; but it does not follow he will have more of it. He will have that only if he rises to an equal width and plasticity and comprehensiveness of the higher knowledge planes. In that case he will replace his mental by his above-mental capacity. But for many intellectuals, so-called, their intellectuality may be a stumbling block as they bind themselves with mental conceptions or stifle the psychic fire under the heavy weight of rational thought. On the other hand I have seen comparatively uneducated people expressing higher knowledge with an astonishing fullness and depth and accuracy which the stumbling movements of their brain could never have allowed one to suppose possible. Therefore why fix beforehand by the mind what will or will not be possible when the Above-mind reigns? What the mind conceives as “must be” need not be the measure of the “will be”. Such and such a *homo intellectualis* may turn out to be a more fervent God-lover than the effervescent emotional man; such and such an emotionalist may receive and express a wider knowledge than his intellect or even the intellect of the intellectual man could have harboured or organised. Let us not bind the phenomena of the higher consciousness by the possibilities and probabilities of a lower plane.

*

An unintellectual mind cannot bring down the Knowledge? What then about Ramakrishna? Do you mean to say that the majority of the sadhaks here who have not learned logic and are ignorant of philosophy will never get Knowledge?

*

Ramakrishna was an uneducated, nonintellectual man, yet his expression of knowledge was so perfect that the biggest intellects bowed down before it.

Chapter Three

Mental Difficulties and the Need of Quietude

The Activity of the Mind

This [*restless thinking*] is what we call the activity of the mind, which always comes in the way of the concentration and tries to create doubt and dispersion of the energies. It can be got rid of in two ways, by rejecting it and pushing it out, till it remains as an outside force only — by bringing down the higher peace and light into the physical mind.

*

It is the Light or the Force which comes from beyond the mind that keeps the mind truly concentrated. Otherwise the mind is naturally restless, unfixed, constantly changing from one thing to another.

*

Then for the tumultuous activity of the mind which prevents your concentration. But that or else a more tiresome obstinate grinding mechanical activity is always the difficulty when one tries to concentrate and it takes a long time to get the better of it. That or the habit of sleep which prevents either the waking concentration or the conscious samadhi or the absorbed and all-excluding trance which are the three forms that Yogic concentration takes. But it is surely ignorance of Yoga, its processes and its difficulties that makes you feel desperate and pronounce yourself unfit for ever because of this quite ordinary obstacle. The insistence of the ordinary mind and its wrong reasonings, sentiments and judgments, the random activity of the thinking mind in concentration or its mechanical activity, the slowness of response to the veiled or the initial touch are the ordinary

obstacles the mind imposes just as pride, ambition, vanity, sex, greed, grasping of things for one's own ego are the difficulties and obstacles offered by the vital. As the vital difficulties can be fought down and conquered, so can the mental. Only one has to see that these are the inevitable obstacles and neither cling to them nor be terrified or overwhelmed because they are there. One has to persevere till one can stand back from the mind as from the vital and feel the deeper and larger mental and vital Purushas within one which are capable of silence, capable of a straight receptivity of the true Word and Force as of the true silence. If the nature takes the way of fighting down the difficulties first, then the first half of the way is long and tedious and the complaint of the want of the response of the Divine arises. But really the Divine is there all the time, working behind the veil as well as waiting for the recognition of his response and for the response to the response to be possible.

*

If the thoughts are not regarded as one's own, it should become possible to look at them from a silent mind, detached and separate from the thoughts.

*

It is more difficult to separate oneself from the mind when it is active than from the body. It is quite possible however for one part of the mind to stand back and remember the Mother and receive her presence and the force while the other is busy with the work. Meanwhile what you are doing is the right way. Remember always that whatever the difficulties the Mother's love is with you and will lead you through.

Imaginations

The first necessity is not to allow yourself to be upset by this difficulty [*of a restless mind full of imaginations*]. It is one that often occurs, for these imaginations come easily to the human mind, but they can be got rid of in time, and even in a comparatively

short time if one faces them with calm resolution, detachment and patience. It is simply a habit that has taken hold of the mind — it can be dissolved and cease to recur.

It will help if you can cease to regard them as creations of your own mind — they are not, they are foreign matter thrown on it from outside. The physical mind which they attack has to learn to see and feel them as something foreign and refuse to accept them. Then they will go. For that you will receive my help and the Mother's. Keep yourself inwardly confident and open, all will be done.

*

The mind does not record things as they are, but as they appear to it. It catches parts, omits others; afterwards the memory and imagination mix together and make a quite different representation of it.

Confusion

The mind has to be remoulded and changed, but in a definite way, becoming more and more full of the Light and Truth. In that way it will begin to take on a luminous consistency and become “stronger and stronger till it is dependable”. A mere confused instability is not the right way. When the confusion comes, you should remain quiet, reject it and call in the Mother's light and force.

*

Who does not feel the confusion or ignorance somewhere in himself so long as the full light and the true force have not come? Your mistake is to be always thinking about the confusion and struggling with it, dwelling on it, magnifying it by thinking about it, treating it as if it were the only thing real and true. When you feel the force, turn to the force and let it act — it is that force and not you or your brooding and struggles that can get rid of the confusion and darkness. What is the use of examining whether your faith and confidence are of the “true” kind or not? To feel

the force, be quiet, let it act is all that is needed.

*

If you can stand back from all this [*mental commotion*] and observe calmly and clearly and precisely, this confusion of voices ought to stop.¹ It is only a part of the mind that is like that. But you get absorbed by this part and then it looks as if it were the whole mind that is confused. If you stand back from it and observe it with your *real* mind, then this small part will lose its power to confuse.

Worry

It is simply the habit of the mind when troubles come to worry about them. You must train your mind to remain calm and equal when troubles come — to do the thing that has to be done and rely on the Divine Power.

Hastiness

In the mind there is always a certain haste to seize quickly at what is presented to it as the highest Truth. That is unavoidable, but the more one is still in mind, the less this will distort things.

*

The attempt of the mind and vital to seize on the experience is always one of the chief obstacles.

*

It [*impulsive action*] is not any weakness of the will or the result of passivity, but an overhaste of decision upon a mental impulse. That is the usual movement of the mind — and it is sometimes the fruit of a certain kind of sattwic zeal. But owing to the haste there is not sufficient time taken to see the opposite side, the defects of the decision taken, or the possible objection that

¹ *The correspondent kept hearing the voices of persons who shouted abuses at him.*
—Ed.

might be made. Peace is the basis, but into it must come the action of a certain Light from above which shows each thing in its right proportions as a whole — for the mind at its best is incomplete and usually one-sided in its perceptions without the guidance of such a higher Light.

*

It is necessary to curb the mind's impatience a little. Knowledge is progressive — if it tries to leap up to the top at once, it may make a hasty construction which it will have afterwards to undo. The knowledge and experience must come by degrees and step by step.

Slowness

It is as you say and there is a certain element of inertia in it; the slowness of the mind and the nature to seize something new to it, the non-distinction between what is true and to be held and what is not true and not to be held, is due to a certain absence of quickness of movement in the being. But each human quality has its advantages and disadvantages. A quick mind is often unstable — it catches but does not keep; or it catches but only superficially and thinks it has got everything when it has got only a little and not enough. A slow mind that takes slowly but holds on to what it has got, can be slow but sure in its movement. The disadvantage of it is obstinacy, unwillingness to admit what it should receive, unwillingness to let go what is mistaken. Its advantage is steadiness, a firm hold when it gets the right thing. Therefore you should not mind if it takes long to absorb and hold the new consciousness — as a matter of fact, to hold takes long with everybody. Once you have got it well established, your nature is likely to hold it firmly. As for the lack of discrimination, that is only in the physical and lower vital mind — within you there is something that can discriminate, the psychic. The only thing is to get it out and keep it in front. When you had the psychic state or rather a touch of it from time to time, you saw things very clearly. When the psychic state fixes

itself, that discrimination also will become a part of the nature.

Opposing Points of View

Don't accept and hug and dandle these [*conflicting*] ideas. Everybody has thoughts opposing each other — it is the very nature of mind — one has to draw back from all that and fix on the straight things alone that lead to the Divine. The rest one must treat as external rubbish.

*

Many things are bad only in the way people look at them. Things which you consider all right, other people call bad; what you think to be bad, others find quite natural.

*

As for facts each mind always arranges them in its own way. It is a well-known phenomenon which psychologists constantly emphasise that each mind arranges facts according to its own impressions, predilections, convenience and, while this may be partly done with a conscious twist, conscious omissions and additions, it is quite or as often and more often done without any wilful intentions and by a sort of subconscious selection in the mental hinterland. That is why no three witnesses of an incident can give the same account of it — unless of course they have talked it over together — each tells a different story.

Silliness

People are exceedingly silly — but I suppose they can't help themselves. The more I observe humanity, the more that forces itself upon me — the abysses of silliness of which its mind is capable.

Analysis and Dissection

What the Mother spoke of was not self-analysis nor dissection.

Analysis and dissection are mental things which can deal with the inanimate or make the live dead—they are not spiritual methods. What the Mother spoke of was not analysis, but a seeing of oneself and of all the living movements of the being and the nature, a vivid observation of the personalities and forces that move on the stage of our being, their motives, their impulses, their potentialities—an observation quite as interesting as the seeing and understanding of a drama or a novel—a living vision and perception of how things are done in us which brings also a living mastery over this inner universe. Such things become dry only when one deals with them with the analytic and ratiocinative mind, not when one deals with them thus seemingly and intuitively as a movement of life. If you had that observation (from the inner spiritual, not the outer intellectual and ethical viewpoint), then it would be comparatively easy for you to get out of your difficulties; for instance you would find at once where this irrational impulse to flee away came from and it would not have any hold upon you. Of course, all that can only be done to the best effect when you stand back from the play of your nature and become the Witness-Control or the Spectator-Actor-Manager. But that is what happens when you take this kind of self-seeing posture.

*

You stick to your intellectual-ethical version of the inner self-vision? Dry? policeman? criminal? Great Lord! If it were that, it would cease to be self-vision at all—for in the true self-vision there is no policemen and no criminaldom at all. All that belongs to the intellectual-ethical virtue-and-sin dodge which is only a mental construction of practical value for the outward life but not a truth of real inner values. In the true self-vision we see only harmonies and disharmonies and set the wrong notes right and replace them by the true notes. But I say that for the sake of truth, not to persuade you to start the self-vision effort; for if you did with these ideas of it, you would inevitably start it on the policeman basis and get into trouble. Besides, evidently, you prefer in the Yoga to be the piano and not the pianist, which

is all right but involves total self-giving and the intervention of the supreme musician and harmonist. May it be so.

I am glad to know that your vital has been frightened into acquiescence in self-giving — even if only by the imaginary horror of being obliged to become the policeman of yourself. But to explain why these contradictions existed in you one has to have recourse to this very business of harmonies and disharmonies and the inner knowledge. You were in fact a piano played on by several pianists at a time each with his own different musical piece to play! In plain words and without images, every man is full of these contradictions because he is one person, no doubt, but made up of different personalities — the perception of multiple personality is becoming well-known to psychologists now — who very commonly disagree with each other. So long as one does not aim at unity in a single dominant intention, like that of seeking and self-dedication to the Divine, they get on somehow together, alternating or quarrelling or muddling through or else one taking the lead and compelling the others to take a minor part — but once you try to unite them in one aim, then the trouble becomes evident. One element wanted the Divine from the first, another wanted music, literature, poetry, a third wanted life at its best, a fourth wanted life — well, not at its best. Finally there was another element which wanted life not at all, but was rather disgusted with it and wanted either a better (diviner) life or something better than life. It was this element evidently that created the *vairāgya* and in the struggle between that and the life-partisans, a black element stole in (not one of the personalities, but a formation, a dark intrusion from outside), which wanted to turn the whole thing into a drama or tragedy of despair — despair of life but despair of the Divine also. That has to be rejected, the rest changed and harmonised. That is the only true explanation of the whole difficulty in your nature.

The Need of Quietude

There is no possibility of doing this Yoga, if one cannot give himself to the Divine Power and trust to its workings. If one

lives only in the mind and its questioning and ideas, it is not possible. The test of capacity is to be able to quiet the mind, to feel a greater Divine Power at work in one, the Power of the Mother, and to be able to trust to it and aid its workings by the rejection of all that contradicts them in the nature.

*

To quiet your mind means to stop thinking about the things that disturb you and let the peace and power manifest themselves and work. The “living inside” will come of itself in that case — that is to say, you will feel the inner peace and the consciousness that comes with it more and more as yourself and all else as something outer and superficial.

*

How can the mind find out or decide what is the right thing to do for your sadhana? The more it is active in that way, the more confusion there will be. In sadhana the mind has to be quiet, fixed in aspiration towards the Divine — the true experience and change will come in the quietude of the mind from within and from above.

*

It is also a mistake to take quietude for callousness. If you are no longer disturbed by what people say or do, then that is a great progress. If you have no abhiman against the Mother, that also is surely very desirable. Abhiman, disturbance etc. may be signs of life, but of a vital, not of the inner life. They must quiet down and give room for the inner life. At first the result may be a neutral quiet, but one has often to pass through that to arrive at a more positive new consciousness. When the mind thus falls quiet the thoughts of the past, all sorts of repetitive or mechanical thoughts begin to rise up — these come from the physical mind or the subconscious. One has to refuse them and let them pass away, aspiring for the complete mental quietude in which the new consciousness can reveal itself little by little. Remain firm and quiet with the right will in you and let the

Force do its work. That will may not bear recognisable fruit at once, but adhere to it and the fruit will come.

*

You should not belittle the inner quietness by calling it a foolish kind of quietness — quietness in itself, knowing or unknowing, is to be valued, for it means that even in the midst of confusion a basis has still been kept. The understanding is at present covered over by a remnant of the old ignorance and confusion, but if a fundamental quietude is maintained or remains of itself, that will make it easier for this recurrence to pass.

As for the thought of your mother, it is always a symbol in your consciousness of the old nature and the old life — that is why it gets force when the confusion comes.

Remain firm and the cloud will pass and the true consciousness reassert itself with more firmness and vigour.

*

Not to allow the mind to bubble up with all sorts of ideas and feelings etc. but to remain quiet and learn to think and feel only what is true and right.²

² *The correspondent asked Sri Aurobindo how to “meet things without any superficial and unnecessary reaction”. — Ed.*

Chapter Four

The Physical Mind and Sadhana

The Activity of the Physical Mind

Activity of the physical mind is not a new thing that needs to take root. It has been there very well rooted since you began your human evolution in the primaevial forests.

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What you have now seen and describe in your letter is the ordinary activity of the physical mind which is full of ordinary habitual and constantly recurrent thoughts and is always busy with external objects and activities. What used to trouble you before was the vital mind which is different, — for that is always occupied with emotions, passions, desires, reactions of all kinds to the contacts of life and the behaviour of others. The physical mind also can be responsive to these things but in a different way — its nature is less that of desire than of habitual activity, small common interests, pains and pleasures. If one tries to control or suppress it, it becomes more active.

To deal with this mind two things are necessary, (1) not so much to try to control or fight with or suppress it as to stand back from it: one looks at it and sees what it is but refuses to follow its thoughts or run about among the objects it pursues, remaining at the back of the mind quiet and separate; (2) to practise quietude and concentration in this separateness, until the habit of quiet takes hold of the physical mind and replaces the habit of these small activities. This of course takes time and can only come by practice. What you propose to do is therefore the right thing.

*

The mechanical movements are always more difficult to stop by the mental will, because they do not in the least depend

upon reason or any mental justification but are founded upon association or else a mere mechanical memory and habit.

*

This mechanical putting out of the thoughts happens to everybody at all times and it is especially strong in the physical mind — one has not to be upset by it, but go on quietly drawing the mind in, for if one does that, the obstacle after a time will diminish and one can then remain inside with the greater part of the consciousness, even if there are some wandering thoughts. So long as there is interest in outward things this can only be done for short periods, — but if there is not any strong interest, then the habit becomes purely mechanical and it can be got over in a shorter time. Its entire disappearance comes only when there is a complete silence in the being, but even before complete disappearance, one can arrive at a point when, in spite of it, one can go inside at will and remain there.

*

This going out of the mind and this siege of thoughts is a difficulty which everybody has to meet for a time or often when he wants to concentrate within. You should not allow it to depress you or make you hopeless or lead you to think that there is some special disability in you from which others do not suffer. One has to keep one's poise, recognise it as an inherent difficulty of the nature of mind (physical mind), one which has to be overcome and will be overcome in time. In that way one feels the pressure of these obstacles less and gets over it sooner than if one gets distressed or upset by them or takes them for a sign of incapacity for the Yoga.

*

It is the usual fit and the same round of thoughts mechanically repeated that you always get in these fits. These thoughts have no light in them and no truth, for the physical mind which engenders this routine wheel of suggestions is shut up in surface appearances and knows nothing of deeper truth or the things of

the spirit. There is plenty of “increment”, but with this superficial part of the physical mind it is not likely or possible that you can see it. Your impression of the dwindling light is also an impression of this mind natural to it especially in its periods of darkness; for that matter when the periods of darkness come to any sadhak they always seem darker than before; that is the nature of the darkness, to give that impression always. It is also quite according to the rule of these reactions that it should have come immediately after a considerable progress in bhakti and the will to surrender in the inner being — for it comes from the spirit of darkness which attacks the sadhak whenever it can, and that spirit resents fiercely all progress made and hates the very idea of progress and its whole policy is to convince him by its attacks and suggestions that he has made none or that what progress he has made is after all null and inconclusive.

The laws of this world as it is are the laws of the Ignorance and the Divine in the world maintains them so long as there is the Ignorance — if He did not, the universe would crumble to pieces, *utsīdeyur ime lokāḥ*, as the Gita puts it. There are also, very naturally, conditions for getting out of the Ignorance into the Light. One of them is that the mind of the sadhak should cooperate with the Truth and that his will should cooperate with the Divine Power which, however slow its action may seem to the vital or to the physical mind, is uplifting the nature towards the Light. When that cooperation is complete, then the progress can be rapid enough; but the sadhak should not grudge the time and labour needed to make that cooperation fully possible to the blindness and weakness of human nature and effective.

All the call for faith, sincerity, surrender is only an invitation to make that cooperation more easily possible. If the physical mind ceases to judge all things including those that it does not know or are beyond it, like the deeper things of the spirit, then it becomes easier for it to receive the Light and know by illumination and experience the things that it does not yet know. If the mental and vital will place themselves in the Divine Hand without reservation, then it is easier for the Power to work and produce “tangible” effects. If there is resistance, then it is natural

that it should take more time and the work should be done from within or as it might appear underground so as to prepare the nature and undermine the resistance. It seems to me that the demand for patience is not so terribly unreasonable.

*

It [*perfection of the physical mind*] can come only by farther development and the activity of another kind of knowledge communicating itself to the physical and taking up gradually the functions of the mind in all its parts.

The Unsteadiness of the Physical Mind

The unsteadiness you speak of is the nature of the human physical mind — almost everybody has it, for the physical mind goes after all sorts of outward things. To fix the consciousness within, to keep it concentrated on the Divine alone is a great difficulty for all, it is what makes sadhana a thing for which long time and a slow development of the consciousness is usually necessary, at first at any rate. So that need not discourage you. In your inner vital there is plenty of strong will and deep down in your psychic there is the true aspiration and love which come up when the psychic is active and will eventually possess the whole nature.

*

It is quite natural that the unsteadiness of the physical mind should interfere with the settling of full and constant quietude and faith — it always does with everybody, but that does not mean that this quietude and faith will not or cannot settle in the nature. All that I meant was that you should try to get a constant will for that quietude, so that when the restlessness or unsteadiness come across, your will to quiet might meet it or soon reappear and dispel the disturbance. That would make the elimination of the restlessness or impatience easier; but in any case the Mother's force is there working behind the variations of the surface consciousness and it will bring you through them.

The experiences you had were renewed glimpses of the

psychic working that is going on all the time even when there is no sign of it on the surface. The golden sword was the sword of Truth which will destroy the difficulties.

*

Of course it is difficult to be withdrawn inwardly, difficult especially for the physical mind and consciousness with which you are now in contact. But that is not peculiar to you, — as in the other things, it is a general difficulty of human nature. The instability of which you speak is also a usual characteristic of the external mind and vital. But you have the capacity to do it as recent experiences have shown; the capacity will grow, for as the psychic develops that develops and the inability or instability of the physical consciousness becomes less pressing.

*

Diabetes or any other physical illness cannot be a cause of absence of concentration. There is always a difficulty in the beginning to concentrate for more than a short time because it is contrary to the habits of the physical mind. Perseverance is necessary. At the same time there should be a call for the help of the Divine Power above the mind; for if one can open to that, the process can be more rapid.

The Obscurity of the Physical Mind

What you felt was the obscurity of the external physical mind and nature (the centre in the throat is the centre of this external mind). So long as that is there the external nature and action remain as they always were and there is no correspondence between it and the inner spiritual consciousness and experience. This cannot disappear by a single experience; a steady will to change is necessary.

*

It means that the outer physical mind has a certain obscurity in it which impedes the knowledge from coming out. This obscurity

is universal in the external physical mind — you feel it more just now because it is in the physical consciousness that the opposition is now centred. It will pass as soon as the Force can descend through the mind and vital and act directly on the physical nature.

*

But that is a common experience — it is extraordinary how long it takes for the simple and right thing to do to dawn on the physical mind.¹

*

It is the nature of the physical mind not to believe or accept anything that is supraphysical unless it is enlightened and compelled by the light to do it. Do not identify yourself with this mind, do not consider it as yourself but only as an obscure functioning of Nature. Call down the light into it until it is compelled to believe.

Other Problems of the Physical Mind

Yes, it [*the physical mind*] is closely connected with the brain functioning. All these things — irritation, grief, fear etc. etc. — can become entirely discharged of thought content and felt simply as a physical sensation in the cells, not accepted by the thought (even in the physical mind), not shared in by the emotional being — a wave brought from outside into the material body consciousness.

*

These small things of the physical mind [*such as being disturbed by the defects of others*] are such as everybody has and they will fall off when the truer wider consciousness comes out. You have the understanding in your mind, but these things persist because they really belong to the smaller vital part and when

¹ The correspondent wrote that it took him a long time to figure out the best place to put the cot in his room. — Ed.

that part widens, then they will no longer be able to recur. One can discourage them by keeping certain ideas in mind, such as that the things which vex you belong to the nature and can go only with the change of the nature, that one has to do the work well oneself but not be troubled by the defects of others in their work, that a quiet inner will for their doing right is more effective than getting vexed and disturbed by their lapses. But fundamentally it is by the widened consciousness in your mind and vital and physical that you will be quite freed from these small reactions. You have only to continue with the Mother's Force working in you and these things will smooth themselves out hereafter.

*

These small movements [*such as useless talking*] are the most difficult of all to change owing to their very smallness and the habit of frequent indulgence as natural and trifling everyday movements of life. The best thing to do is to mass the force and light and peace in the mind and higher vital until they can occupy the physical mind even — then through the physical mind, which usually supports more or less these movements, they can be worked on with more success.

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It [*chasing sparrows out of a garden because they made it dirty*] was I suppose an idea that came through the physical mind, suggesting the following of a physical utility only and ignoring all other perceptions and motives. You must be on your guard against the ideas and suggestions of this physical mind and accept none without discrimination and subjection to a higher light.

*

The confusion and inertia of which you speak must be in the physical mind which has not yet the Light. It does not matter very much if you keep in touch with the consciousness of the Force working upon you; for such periods of inertia in one part or another, especially in the physical consciousness, come to

everybody. If you keep and deepen the quietude and become continuously conscious of the Force, it will itself work these defective states and movements out of the being in time. All depends on that, increasing quietude, increasing consciousness of the Force at work in you.

*

One is either conscious of the power or peace or other force (light, ananda, knowledge, movements of the divine working) or, if not conscious of that, is aware of the results — either of these things is sufficient to show that one is open. To feel the grace descending and yet doubt whether it is not a vital imagination is a folly of the physical mind; a spiritual experience must be accepted as it is; if one questions at every moment whether an experience is an experience or Grace is grace or peace is peace or light is light, one will spend all the time in these useless and fantastic doubts instead of making a quiet and natural progress.

*

It is the physical mind that would like everything made easy.

The Physical Mind and the Lower Vital

Formerly the mental will and the higher vital and the psychic were active, so their consent was sufficient for the lower vital to be kept down or to be influenced. But now it is the physical mind that is active in you and the physical mind gives a value and therefore a power to the lower vital which it did not have before.

*

What you describe, the insistence of the physical mind and the insistence of the small desire vital, are indeed the two things that still obstruct the sadhana. The mind must give up its insistence on its own ideas and the vital the insistence on satisfying its desires for the full quietude to come and for the permanent opening of the inner experience to realise itself. We shall put our

Force persistently for the removal of these two difficulties till it is done.

*

No, there is a limit to the resistance [*of the physical mind and the lower vital*]. At any rate a time comes when the fundamental resistance is broken for good and there is only left a dealing with details which is not troublesome.

The Physical Mind and the Psychic

It [*the psychic*] can have a very great influence [*on the physical mind*] by giving it the right attitude and the right way of looking at things so that it supports the emotional being in its aspiration, love and surrender and itself gets interest, faith and insight in the inner truth of things instead of seeing only their outer aspects and following false inferences and appearances. It also helps it to get rid of the narrowness and doubt which are the chief defects of the physical mind.

*

When the physical mind is disturbed by the vital, it is not easily convinced because its reasoning is supplied to it by the vital which thinks according to its own desires and feelings — unless a great clarity from the psychic or from the thinking mind above comes to the rescue.

It is the psychic consciousness, not perfect but still well developed, that supports some of those whom you mention and makes it easy for them to go on in faith — but it is only after much vital difficulty that it developed in them, — and there is no reason why that should not happen speedily in you also.

*

The psychic if it gets hold of them [*the vital physical and the physical mind*] can change completely their will and outlook and orientation and open them to the true perception of things and right impulse. The mind and higher vital can help much towards that.

The Physical Mind and Peace and Silence

There is always a difficulty in keeping the physical mind within or silent, because it has been its nature to occupy itself with outward things and it finds a difficulty in accustoming itself to a contrary movement. You must not be depressed by that, but persist in the aspiration and will till it is done. The Mother's Force will be there to bring it about as soon as possible.

*

You have only to allow the consciousness to develop — at first there will be mistakes as well as true ideas, but when there is sufficient development and the Mother's force and knowledge directly working in you, things will become more and more right — not only so, but you will have the certitude. At present there is still too much of the old physical mind for perceptions to be always right. As the Peace and Force take direct and complete possession of the physical consciousness, this will change and the consciousness develop more surely and with a greater light.

*

To get rid of the random thoughts of the surface physical mind is not easy. It is sometimes done by a sudden miracle, as in my own case, but that is rare. Some get it done by a slow process of concentration, but that may take a very long time. It is easier to have a quiet mind with things that come in passing on the surface, as people pass in the street, and one is free to attend to them or not — that is to say, there develops a sort of double mind, one inner silent and concentrated when it pleases to be so, a quiet witness when it chooses to see thoughts and things, — the other meant for surface dynamism. It is probable in your case that this will come as soon as these descents of peace, intensity or Ananda get strong enough to occupy the whole system.

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If the peace and silence continue to come down, they usually become so intense as to seize the physical mind also after a time.

Chapter Five

Thought and Knowledge

Thoughts Come from Outside

First of all, these thought-waves, thought-seeds or thought-forms or whatever they are, are of different values and come from different planes of consciousness. Even the same thought-substance can take higher or lower vibrations according to the plane of consciousness through which the thoughts come in (e.g., thinking mind, vital mind, physical mind, subconscious mind) or the power of consciousness which catches them and pushes them into one man or another. Moreover there is a stuff of mind in each man and the incoming thought uses that for shaping itself or translating itself (transcribing we usually call it), but the stuff is finer or coarser, stronger or weaker etc. etc. in one mind than in another. Also there is a mind-energy actual or potential in each which differs and this mind-energy in its recipience of the thought can be luminous or obscure, sattwic, rajasic or tamasic with consequences that vary in each case.

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There is no difficulty about explaining [*how a thought rejected by one person gets picked up by another*]. You are as naive and ignorant as a newborn lamb. That is the way things come, only one does not notice. Thoughts, ideas, happy inventions etc. etc. are always wandering about (in thought waves or otherwise) seeking a mind that may embody them. One mind takes, looks, rejects — another takes, looks, accepts. Two different minds catch the same thought-form or thought-wave, but the mental activities being different make different results out of them. Or it comes to one and he does nothing, then it walks off, crying “O this unready animal!” and goes to another who promptly annexes it and it settles into expression with a joyous bubble of inspiration, illumination or enthusiasm of original discovery or

creation and the recipient cries proudly, "I, I have done this." Ego, sir! ego! You are the recipient, the conditioning medium, if you like — nothing more.

*

That is the silliness of the mind. Why should it be impossible to fill up a vacancy?¹ It is easier for things to come into an empty space than into a full one. The error comes from thinking that your thoughts are your own and that you are their maker and if you don't create thoughts (i.e. think), there will be none. A little observation ought to show that you are not manufacturing your own thoughts, but rather thoughts occur in you. Thoughts are born, not made — like poets, according to the proverb. Of course, there is a sort of labour and effort when you try to produce or else to think on a certain subject, but that is a concentration for making thoughts come up, come in, come down, as the case may be, and fit themselves together. The idea that you are shaping the thoughts or fitting them together is an egoistic delusion. They are doing it themselves, or Nature is doing it for you, only under a certain compulsion; you have to beat her often in order to make her do it, and the beating is not always successful. But the mind or nature or mental energy — whatever you like to call it — does this in a certain way and carries on with a certain order of thoughts, haphazard intelligentialities (excuse the barbarism) or asinities, rigidly ordered or imperfectly ordered intellectualities, logical sequences and logical inconsequences, etc. etc. How the devil is an intuition to get in in the midst of that waltzing and colliding crowd? It does sometimes, — in some minds often intuitions do come in, — but immediately the ordinary thoughts surround it and eat it up alive, and then with some fragment of the murdered intuition shining through their non-intuitive stomachs they look up smiling at you and say, "I am an intuition, sir." But they are only intellect, intelligence or ordinary thought with part of

¹ *The correspondent said that his mind found it hard to believe that a vacancy in the mind could suddenly be filled with an intuition without one's thinking about it. — Ed.*

a dismembered and therefore misleading intuition inside them. Now in a vacant mind, vacant but not inert (that is important), intuitions have a chance of getting in alive and whole. But don't run away with the idea that all that comes into an empty mind, even a clear or luminous empty mind, will be intuitive. Anything, any blessed kind of idea, can come in. One has to be vigilant and examine the credentials of the visitor. In other words, the mental being must be there, silent but vigilant, impartial but discriminating. That is, however, when you are in search of truth. For poetry so much is not necessary. There it is only the poetic quality of the visitor that has to be scrutinised and that can be done after he has left his packet — by results.

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What you perceive as suggestions or voices, are accepted and felt by people to be thoughts of their own mind. When one practises Yoga and observes the thoughts, one sees that they come from outside, from universal Nature, from the mental, vital or subtle physical worlds etc. The proper thing is then to stand back from these thoughts, voices or suggestions, to reject them or else control them, to make the mind free and quiet and open only to the divine light, force, knowledge and the presence of the Divine. Your mistake has been to allow free play to these thoughts, voices and suggestions instead of rejecting, silencing and controlling them. It is what you must now do. Aspire, get into contact with the Light and the true Force, reassert your will to reject these suggestions and voices. Do not take interest in these voices, keep the mind quiet.

*

All these thoughts and influences come really from outside, from universal Nature — they create formations in us or get habitual responses from the individual being. When they are rejected, they go back into the external universal Nature and if one becomes conscious, one can feel them coming from outside and trying to get a lodging inside again or reawaken the habitual response. One has to reject them persistently till no possibility of response

remains any longer. This is hastened much if a certain inner calm, purity and silence can be established from which these things fall away without being able to touch it.

*

What you say is true. The power to open is there in your mind and vital and psychic being, but this recurrence of the external thoughts and feelings is making a strong obstruction and a persistent rejection is needed in order to get rid of it. There are some difficulties in the nature that fall away rapidly by the repeated touch of the inner Force, but those which are obstinately recurrent, especially in the physical field, need an equal persistence in the rejection before they will consent to fall away from the nature.

Control of One's Thoughts

To reject doubts means control of one's thoughts — very certainly so. But the control of one's thoughts is as necessary as the control of one's vital desires and passions or the control of the movements of one's body — for the Yoga, and not for the Yoga only. One cannot be a fully developed mental being even, if one has not a control of the thoughts, is not their observer, judge, master, — the mental Purusha, *manomaya puruṣa*, *śakṣī*, *anumantā*, *īśvara*. It is no more proper for the mental being to be the tennis ball of unruly and uncontrollable thoughts than to be a rudderless ship in the storm of the desires and passions or a slave of either the inertia or the impulses of the body. I know it is more difficult because man being primarily a creature of mental Prakriti identifies himself with the movements of his mind and cannot at once dissociate himself and stand free from the swirl and eddies of the mind whirlpool. It is comparatively easy for him to put a control on his body, at least a certain part of its movements: it is less easy but still very possible after a struggle to put a mental control on his vital impulsions and desires; but to sit, like the Tantrik Yogi on the river, above the whirlpool of his thoughts is less facile. Nevertheless it can be done; all developed

mental men, those who get beyond the average, have in one way or other or at least at certain times and for certain purposes to separate the two parts of the mind, the active part which is a factory of thoughts and the quiet masterful part which is at once a Witness and a Will, observing them, judging, rejecting, eliminating, accepting, ordering corrections and changes, the Master in the House of Mind, capable of self-empire, *svārājya*.

The Yogi goes still farther; he is not only a master there, but even while in mind in a way, he gets out of it, as it were, and stands above or quite back from it and free. For him the image of the factory of thoughts is no longer quite valid; for he sees that thoughts come from outside, from the universal Mind or universal Nature, sometimes formed and distinct, sometimes unformed and then they are given shape somewhere in us. The principal business of our mind is either a response of acceptance or refusal to these thought-waves (as also vital waves, subtle physical energy waves) or this giving a personal-mental form to thought-stuff (or vital movements) from the enviroing Nature-Force. It was my great debt to Lele that he showed me this. "Sit in meditation," he said, "but do not think, look only at your mind; you will see thoughts *coming into it*; before they can enter throw them away from you till your mind is capable of entire silence." I had never heard before of thoughts coming visibly into the mind from outside, but I did not think of either questioning the truth or the possibility, I simply sat down and did it. In a moment my mind became silent as a windless air on a high mountain summit and then I saw a thought and then another thought coming in a concrete way from outside; I flung them away before they could enter and take hold of the brain and in three days I was free. From that moment, in principle, the mental being in me became a free Intelligence, a universal Mind, not limited to the narrow circle of personal thought or a labourer in a thought-factory, but a receiver of knowledge from all the hundred realms of being and free too to choose what it willed in this vast sight-empire and thought-empire.

I mention this only to emphasise that the possibilities of the mental being are not limited and that it can be the free Witness

and Master in its own house. It is not to say that everybody can do it in the way I did and with the same rapidity of the decisive movement (for of course the later fullest development of this new untrammelled mental Power took time, many years); but a progressive freedom and mastery over one's mind is perfectly within the possibilities of anyone who has the faith and will to undertake it.

*

Assuredly, rejection means control of one's thoughts, and why should not one be master of one's own mind and thoughts and not only master of one's vital passions and bodily movements? If it is the right thing to control the body and not allow it to make a stupid, wrong or injurious movement, if it is the right thing to reject from the vital an ignorant passion or low desire, it must be equally the right thing to reject from the mind a thought that ought not to be there or that for good reasons one does not want to be there. As for possibility, I suppose when a thought that is manifestly stupid or false presents itself to the mind one can and usually does reject and throw it out and bid it not recur again. If one can do that with a given thought, it follows that one can do it with any thoughts that need for any reason to be excluded. If a scientist goes into his laboratory to work out a problem, he shuts out from his mind for the time being all thoughts of his wife, his family or his financial affairs, and if they come he repels them and says, "This is not your time." If he has resolved to carry out a line of investigation to the end or a method of invention and, if doubts assail him, he will certainly throw them aside and say, "I mean to see this through to the end and till I have reached the end, I have no intention of listening to you." At every step a man of any mental calibre has to exercise some power over his mind, otherwise he would be as much in a state of restless mental confusion or of mechanical incoherence as one who had no control over his impulses and desires.

*

To do anything by mental control is always difficult, when what

is attempted runs contrary to the trend of human nature or of the personal nature. A strong will patiently and perseveringly turned towards its object can effect a change, but usually it takes a long time and the success at the beginning may be only partial and chequered by many failures.

To turn all actions automatically into worship cannot be done by thought control only; there must be a strong aspiration in the heart which will bring about some realisation or feeling of the presence of the One to whom worship is offered. The bhakta does not rely on his own effort alone, but on the grace and power of the Divine whom he adores.

*

What do you mean by control of the mind? Control of the thoughts or control of the passions and the sense impulses? The latter can be controlled by the mind (not abolished), if the will in the mind is strong enough. But this mental control is not Yoga.

Yogic control can come in one of two ways or by their combination. (1) To separate the witness Soul in you from the movements of the mental, vital and physical Prakriti to which these things belong, learn to look upon them and in the end to feel them as not yourself, not a part of the inner or true being but occurring on the surface, and to experience the inner being as the Purusha eternally calm, silent and immovable. This separation once done, learn by *abhyāsa* to give the effective command of the Purusha to the movements of the Prakriti to cease — refusing the sanction to all that you wish to eliminate. The process is long and laborious and the final perfection can only come by resolute and persevering practice. (2) To open yourself to the Divine Power and give up all into its hands, yourself only rejecting and refusing sanction to all that you feel to be false and contrary to truth and purity in you.

This is as an answer to your difficulty, but I cannot direct you or give you any Sadhana, which I give only to those who are called from within to my way of Yoga and not for any limited object like the one you have in view.

*

It is not so easy to do mental work and do sadhana at the same time, for it is with the mind that the sadhana is done. If one gets back from the mind as well as the body and lives in the inner Purusha consciousness, then it is possible.

*

Detach yourself from it [*the habitual movement of the mind*] — make your mind external to you, something that you can observe as you observe things occurring in the street. So long as you do not do that, it is difficult to be the mind's master.

*

The control over the thoughts and the power of seeing the image of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in the head are a very good beginning. The heat in the head is not fever, but the result of the action of the Force in the mental centres working to overcome the mental resistance which there always is in the human mind — heaviness sometimes comes as a result of the pressure of the Force — it passes away of itself usually when the mind receives freely the Force.

Thoughts and Words

This is a wrong psychology. Thoughts is quite possible without words. Children have thoughts, animals too — thoughts can take another form than words. Thought perceptions come first — language comes to express the perceptions and itself leads to fresh thoughts.

*

They [*ideas in the universal Mind*] take word form in the mind when they enter into it — unless they come from beings, not as mere idea-forces.

The Idea and What Lies Behind It

There is a power in the idea — a force of which the idea is a

shape. Again, behind the idea and force and word there is what is called the spirit, — a consciousness which generates the force.

*

The idea is not enough. It gives only a half-light — you must get to all the Truth that lies behind the idea and the object together. Being, consciousness, force, — that is the triple secret.

Thought and Knowledge

Thought is not the giver of Knowledge but the “mediator” between the Inconscient and the Superconscient. It compels the world born from the Inconscient to reach for a Knowledge other than the instinctive vital or merely empirical, for the Knowledge that itself exceeds thought; it calls for that superconscient Knowledge and prepares the consciousness here to receive it. It rises itself into the higher realms and even in disappearing into the supramental and Ananda levels is transformed into something that will bring down their powers into the silent Self which its cessation leaves behind it.

Knowledge and Ignorance

Knowledge is always better than ignorance. It makes things possible hereafter if not at the moment, while ignorance actively obstructs and misleads.

*

Who comes into the path of Yoga with full knowledge or even any knowledge? All are ignorant, it is only by Yoga itself that they get the knowledge.

*

Neither knowledge nor anything else is constant at first — and even when it is there one cannot expect it to be always active. That comes afterwards.

*

What is to be left out [*in expressing one's ideas*] is the ego. Limitation of knowledge will necessarily be there so long as there is not the fullest wideness from above; that does not matter.

*

Most people who have not knowledge are apt to be opinionated — they have their ideas and don't want them to be changed or their fixity disturbed.

Knowledge and the Divine Consciousness

Mental knowledge is of little use except sometimes as an introduction pointing towards the real knowledge which comes from a direct consciousness of things.

*

All consciousness comes from the one consciousness — knowledge is one aspect of the divine consciousness.

*

One must be conscious of all one's states and movements and the causes and influences that bring them about and conscious too of the Divine — the nearness, presence, power, peace, light, knowledge, love, Ananda of the Divine.

Mental Knowledge and Knowledge from Above

The knowledge of the mind and vital plane is no knowledge. Only from above can the true knowledge come.

*

No, these contacts with the violent vital forces do not bring knowledge — they rather stand in the way of true knowledge growing. The true knowledge comes from above, not from below. The knowledge from above is divine, the knowledge from

below is not divine, it is a confusion full of darkness and disturbance. When the knowledge from above comes, then there is light and you will then be able to see what is the true vital movement and the real harmony of the mind, vital and body. Do not allow these stormy conditions to take hold of you.

*

Is getting knowledge from above and getting it by the mind in its own capacity the same thing? If the mind is capable, then there is no need of knowledge from above, it can do the getting of knowledge by its own greatness.

*

The mind in its higher part is aware of being one with the Divine, in all ways, in all things — having that supreme knowledge, it is not disturbed by its own ignorance and impotence in its lower instrumental parts; it looks on all that with a smile and remains happy and luminous with the light of the supreme knowledge.

The consciousness of union with the Divine is for the spiritual seeker the supreme knowledge.

Knowledge and Mental Questions

To answer your question [*about how the divine consciousness acts in life*] I would have to speak in the terms of a consciousness to which the mind has no key and at the same time try to explain its relations to the lower consciousness in which things are now happening. What is the use of doing this? The mind will either understand nothing or misunderstand or think it has understood when really it has understood nothing.

Or I would have to make up a mental answer to the question which would not be the real thing, but just something to keep the questioning mind quiet.

The true way to enter into these things is to still the mind and open to the consciousness from which things are done. Then you would first have a direct experience of the way the divine consciousness acts on different planes and secondly a light of

knowledge about the experience. This is the only true way — all the rest is only words and sterile mental logic.

*

A thousand questions can be asked about anything whatsoever, but to answer would require a volume, and even then the mind would understand nothing. It is only by a growth in the consciousness itself that you can get some direct perception of these things. But for that the mind must be quiet and a direct feeling and intuition take its place.

*

So long as the outer mind is not quiet, it is impossible for intuition to develop. So if you want to go on asking intellectual questions about what is beyond the intellect until the intuition develops in spite of this activity, you will have to go on for ever.

*

When you get the true intuitive plane, there will be no need for instructions or questions as to how to do sadhana. The sadhana will do itself under the light of the intuition.

*

Your mind is too active. If it were more quiet and less questioning and argumentative and restlessly wanting to find devices it seems to me that there would be more chance of knowledge coming down and of intuitive, non-intellectual consciousness developing within you.

*

Out of one thousand mental questions and answers there are only one or two here and there that are really of any dynamic assistance — while a single inner response or a little growth of consciousness will do what those thousand questions and answers could not do. The Yoga does not proceed by *upadeśa* but by inner influence. To state your condition, experiences etc. and open to the help is far more important than question-

asking—especially the questions about why and how which your physical mind so persistently puts.

*

It is the physical mind that raises all these questions and cannot understand or give the right answer. The real knowledge and understanding can only come if you stop questioning with the small physical mind and allow a deeper and wider consciousness which is there within you to come out and grow. You would then get automatically the true answer and the true guidance. Your mistake is to attach so much importance to the external mind and its ideas and perceptions instead of concentrating on the growth of the inner consciousness.

*

Such [*mental*] questions should not be allowed to stop the flow [*of higher knowledge*]. Afterwards one can consider them and get the answer. The knowledge that comes is not necessarily complete or perfect in expression; but it must be allowed to come freely and amplifications or corrections can be made afterwards.

Understanding and the Higher Light

Get back to the true *feeling* of the Force and Peace—the understanding will grow with the growth of that feeling and experience. For with the Force and Peace comes always something of the Light and it is the Light illumining the mind that brings the understanding. So long as you try to understand with the unilluminated mind, mistakes and non-understanding are inevitable.

*

Yes, that is the point. The ordinary mind governed by the vital desires and its own mental formations cannot understand—it must fall quiet and allow the Peace and Force to work so as to bring another consciousness with the true Light in it. When that is done, these questionings and their reactions will have no place.

*

Yes, it is that [*faith that the Mother will enlighten one's mind*] that is the real necessity. It is not possible for the mind to understand fully and rightly till it is filled with the higher Light; but it can feel and believe in the Divine and that the way of the Divine is sure, and this faith itself will bring the first true understanding.

*

What you say is quite true. No personal effort can get these things done; that is why we tell you always to keep yourself quiet and let the peace and the force work. As for understanding, it is your physical mind that wants to understand, but the physical mind is incapable of understanding these things by itself — for it has no knowledge of them and no means of knowledge. Its standards also are quite different from the standards of the true knowledge. All the physical mind can do is to be quiet and allow the light to come into it, accepting it, not interposing its own ideas — then it will progressively get the knowledge. It can't get it in this way; it must surrender.

*

If one has faith and openness, that is enough [*to get the understanding one needs to practise the Yoga*]. Besides there are two kinds of understanding — understanding by the intellect and understanding in the consciousness. It is good to have the former if it is accurate, but it is not indispensable. Understanding by the consciousness comes if there is faith and openness, though it may come only gradually and through steps of experience. But I have seen people without education or intellectuality understand in this way perfectly well the course of the Yoga in themselves, while intellectual men make big mistakes — e.g. take a neutral mental quietude for the spiritual peace and refuse to come out of it in order to go farther.

Knowledge and the Psychic

It is not a mental knowledge that is necessary, but a psychic perception or a direct perception in the consciousness. A mental

knowledge can always be blinded by the tricks of the vital.

*

The one thing always is to let the Peace and Power work and not allow the mind to seek after things and get disturbed. All the values of the mind are constructions of ignorance — it is only when your psychic being comes forward that you have the true knowledge — for your psychic being knows.

Knowledge and Mental Silence

That [*incessant activity*] is always the difficulty with the mind. It must learn to be silent and let the knowledge come without trying to catch hold of it for its own play.

*

The turmoil of mental (intellectual) activity has also to be silenced like the vital activity of desire in order that the calm and peace may be complete. Knowledge has to come but from above. In this calm the ordinary mental activities like the ordinary vital activities become surface movements with which the silent inner self is not connected. It is the liberation necessary in order that the true knowledge and the true life activity may replace or transform the activities of the Ignorance.

*

The activity of mind is necessary so long as a higher activity cannot be reached; but if the spiritual consciousness becomes active with its direct power of perception, the mind must become more and more content and give place to spiritual perception, psychic intimations and discrimination, intuitions, a deeper knowledge from within, a higher knowledge from above.

*

The thinking mind has to learn how to be entirely silent. It is only then that true knowledge can come.

*

Of course [*a silent mind is the result of Yoga*]; the ordinary mind is never silent.

*

No, certainly not [*thinkers and philosophers do not have a silent mind*]. It is the active mind they have; only, of course, they concentrate, so the common incoherent mentalising stops and the thoughts that rise or enter and shape themselves are coherently restricted to the subject or activity in hand. But that is quite a different matter from the whole mind falling silent.

*

Ordinary human minds, Europeans especially, are accustomed to regard thought as indispensable and as the highest thing — so they are alarmed at silence. X when he was here asked for Yoga. I told him how to make his mind silent and it became silent. He immediately got frightened and said, “I am becoming a fool, I can’t think”, — so I took what I had given away from him. That is how the average mind regards silence.

*

Good; cessation of thought and other vibrations is the climax of the inner silence. When once one has got that, it is easier for the true knowledge to come from above in place of the mental thought.

*

It [*knowledge*] comes through the mind, so the mind can always modify its expression unless it is entirely and absolutely still.

*

When the personal mind is still, whatever mental action is needed is taken up and done by the Force itself which does all the necessary thinking and progressively transforms it by bringing down into it a higher and higher plane of perception and knowledge.

*

It is in the silence of the mind that the strongest and freest action

can come, e.g. the writing of a book, poetry, inspired speech etc. When the mind is active it interferes with the inspiration, puts in its own small ideas which get mixed up with the inspiration or starts something from a lower level or simply stops the inspiration altogether by bubbling up with all sorts of mere mental suggestions. So also intuitions or action etc. can come more easily when the ordinary inferior movement of the mind is not there. It is also in the silence of the mind that it is easiest for knowledge to come from within or above, from the psychic or from the higher consciousness.

Knowledge, Experience and Realisation

Knowledge by thinking process would not be spiritual knowledge. True knowledge comes by spiritual realisation and experience. There are such realisations and experiences.

*

I was speaking of your experiences of the higher consciousness, of your seeing the Mother in all things—these are what are called spiritual realisations, spiritual knowledge. Realisations are the essence of knowledge—thoughts about them, expression of them in words are a lesser knowledge and if the thoughts are merely mental without experience or realisation, they are not regarded as *jñāna* in the spiritual sense at all.

*

It [*knowledge gained in Divine realisation*] is the conscious experience of the Truth, seen, felt, lived within and it is also a spiritual perception (more direct and concrete than the intellectual) of the true significance of things which may express itself in thought and speech, but is independent of them in itself.

*

Yes, it happens like that. A touch of realisation is enough to set the higher mind knowledge or the illumined mind knowledge flowing.

Section Two

Cultivation of the Mind in Yoga

Chapter One

Mental Development and Sadhana

The Development of the Mind

The development of the mind is a useful preliminary for the sadhak; it can also be pursued along with the sadhana on condition that it is not given too big a place and does not interfere with the one important thing, the sadhana itself.

*

To have a developed intellect is always helpful if one can enlighten it from above and turn it to divine use.

*

A well-developed intellect is one which is plastic, wide, free from rigidity and stiffness, — that can be of use.

*

It [*a developed mind*] may or may not [*help the sadhana*] — if it is too intellectually developed on certain rationalistic lines, it may hinder.

*

The tendency to inquire and know is in itself good, but it must be kept under control. What is needed for progress in sadhana is gained best by increase of consciousness and experience and of intuitive knowledge.

*

To be interested in outward things is not wrong in itself — it depends on the way in which one is interested. If it is done as part of the sadhana, looking on them from the true consciousness, then they become a means for the growth of the being. It is that

that matters, to get the true consciousness — and it is this that comes in you when you have the sense of the Peace and the working of the Force in it. There is no real reason for discontent or dissatisfaction with yourself — since progress is being made in spite of the resistance of the lower forces. The pressure which is translated by the heaviness in the stomach has to be got rid of — it is there that there is the chief resistance still. Peace within and a cheerful confidence and gladness without is what is wanted — then this kind of nervous pressure and disorder would cease.

*

It does not help for spiritual knowledge to be ignorant of the things of this world.

Reading and Sadhana

For one who wants to practise sadhana, sadhana must come first — reading and mental development can only be subordinate things.

*

I don't know that it [*mental development*] helps the sadhana and I don't quite understand what is meant by the phrase. What is a fact is that mental like physical work can be made a part of the sadhana, — not as a rival to the sadhana or as another activity with equal rights and less selfish and egoistic than seeking the Divine.

*

I have no objection to mental development. It is the idea that doing sadhana earnestly is egoistic and selfish, and reading is an unselfish noble pursuit that is absurd.

*

Reading can be only a momentary help to prepare the mind. But the real knowledge does not come by reading. Some preparation for the inner knowledge may be helpful — but the mind should

not be too superficially active or seek to know only for curiosity's sake.

*

It [*reading*] does not take one inwards in any real sense — it only takes one from the more physical to the more mental part of the external consciousness.

*

If the power to meditate long is there, a sadhak will naturally do it and care little for reading — unless he has reached the stage when everything is part of the Yogic consciousness because that is permanent. Sadhana is the aim of a sadhak, not mental development. But if he has spare time, those who have the mental turn will naturally spend it in reading or study of some kind.

*

The attitude you describe is just what it should be — there is nothing wrong in it, — nor in your reading or letter-writing etc. There can be no objection to these activities in themselves, for the Yoga; only they must be done with the right attitude and spirit and as part of the sadhana — because the whole life has to become a sadhana, until it is able to become, the whole life, an embodiment of the *siddhi*.

*

If by passivity of the mind you mean laziness and inability to use it, then what Yoga makes that its basis? The mind has to be quieted and transformed, not made indolent and useless. Is there any old Yoga that makes it a rule not to allow those who practise it to study Sanskrit or philosophy? Did that prevent the Yogis from attaining mental quietude? Do you think that the Mother and myself never read anything and have to sit all day inactive in order to make our minds quiet? Are you not aware that the principle of this Yoga is to arrive at an inner silence in which all activities can take place without disturbing the inner silence?

*

When the passion for reading or study seizes hold of the mind, it is like that; one wants to spend all the time doing it. It is a force that wants to satisfy itself — like other forces — and takes hold of the consciousness for its purpose. One has to utilise these forces without letting them take hold; for this there must be the central being always in control of the forces of Nature that come to it, deciding for itself the choice of what it shall accept, how use, how arrange their action. Otherwise each Force catches hold of some part of the personality (the student, the social man, the erotic man, the fighter) and uses and drives the being instead of being controlled and used by it.

*

I do not think you should stop reading so long as the reading itself does not, as a passion, fall away from the mind; that happens when a higher order of consciousness and experiences begin within the being. Nor is it good to force yourself too much to do only the one work of painting. Such compulsion of the mind and vital tends usually either to be unsuccessful and make them more restless or else to create some kind of dullness and inertia.

For the work simply aspire for the Force to use you, put yourself inwardly in relation with the Mother when doing it and make it your aim to be the instrument for the expression of beauty without regard to personal fame or the praise and blame of others.

*

I don't think it would be advisable not to read at all. It is a relaxation of the tension of sadhana which can be at the same time useful to the mind. It is only when there is the spontaneous flow of sadhana all day without strain that reading is no longer needed.

Reading What Is Helpful to the Sadhana

Dhyana and work are both helpful for this Yoga to those who

can do both. Reading also can be made helpful.

*

Dedication to the Divine [*is the right attitude in reading*]. To read what will help the Yoga or what will be useful for the work or what will develop the capacities for the divine purpose. Not to read worthless stuff or for mere entertainment or for a dilettante intellectual curiosity which is of the nature of a mental dram-drinking. When one is established in the highest consciousness, one can read nothing or everything: it makes no difference — but that is still far off.

*

In the beginning of the sadhana you need nothing more than just what you say, “concentration with faith, devotion and sincerity” on a form of the Divine Being — you can add prayer or the name, if you like.

Reading good books can be of help in the early mental stage — they prepare the mind, put it in the right atmosphere — can even if one is very sensitive bring some glimpses of realisation on the mental plane. Afterwards the utility diminishes — you have to find the right knowledge and experience in yourself.

*

This [*inclination to meditate while reading books on spiritual life*] is quite a normal movement. In reading these books you get into touch with the Force behind them and it is this that pushes you into meditation and a corresponding experience.

*

It depends upon the nature of the things read, whether they are helpful to the growth of the being or not. No general rule can be made. It cannot be said that poetry or dramas ought or ought not to be read — it depends on the poem or the play — so with the rest.

*

It is quite permissible to do so [*read light literature at times for*

a change] and may relieve. The one thing necessary is that you should be able to keep the consciousness behind free, as in this case.

*

What you can do is to read not for pastime but with the clear intention of furnishing your mind with knowledge.

*

Yes, reading can be done for the improvement of the mental instrument as part of the *sadhana*.

Reading and Detachment

You can remember at the beginning and offer your reading to the Divine and at the end again. There is a state of consciousness in which only a part of it is reading or doing the work and behind there is the consciousness of the Divine always.

*

A time must come when the reading as well as any other outward occupation does not interfere with the presence or activity of the higher consciousness.

*

The reading must learn to accommodate itself to the pressure [*of sadhana*] — that is, be done by the outer mind while the inner being remains in concentration.

*

That is good. Reading ought not to absorb the consciousness — there ought to be the larger part behind detached and conscious in a larger way.

*

The only way [*to separate oneself from mental activities such as reading*] is to separate the Prakriti and Purusha. When you feel

something within watching all the mental activities but separate from them, just as you can watch things going on outside in the street, then that is the separation of Purusha from mental Prakriti.

*

That [*inability to understand what is read*] only means that you cannot separate yourself from your mental consciousness in its activity. Naturally, if you take your mental consciousness off the reading, you can't understand what is being read, for it is with the mental consciousness that one understands. You have not to make the mental consciousness separate from the reading, but yourself separate from the mental consciousness. You have to be the Witness watching it reading or writing or talking, just as you watch the body acting or moving.

*

What happens in reading such books [*as a book on zoology*] is that one comes into a very external consciousness which looks outward and not inward. When the reading is over the mind runs for a time in this external groove and then one has to remain quiet and call back or get back into the inward state to which the higher thoughts naturally come. This may take a little time.

*

The only harm in reading these things [*about procreation*] is that the vital makes it an excuse for sexual excitement. Otherwise there is no harm in reading for knowledge — the facts of existence have to be known, and we should learn them with a free and dispassionate mind. But such reading has to be avoided, if there is any vital reaction.

Reading Novels and Newspapers

Reading novels is always distracting if you are deep in sadhana. It is better to avoid it now.

*

If novels touch the lower vital or raise it, they ought not to be read by the sadhak. One can read them only if one can look at them from the literary point of view as a picture of human life and nature which one can observe, as the Yogi looks at life itself, without being involved in it or having any reaction.

*

I don't quite know about the novel. People bring in the relations of man and woman because it has been the habit for centuries to make every novel turn around that — except in the few which deal with history or adventure or similar things. In a novel based on spiritual philosophy should not the man and woman idea go into the background or disappear, the spiritual love not having anything based at all on sex, but on the relation between soul and soul?

*

It is not necessary to be in touch with the outside world in this way [*by reading newspapers*]; it may be useful under certain circumstances and for some purposes. It may act too as a hindrance. All depends upon the consciousness from which it is done.

The reading of books of a light character may act as a relaxation of the mental consciousness. In the early stages it is not always possible to keep the mind to an unbroken spiritual concentration and endeavour and it takes refuge in other occupations, feeling even instinctively drawn to those of a lighter character.

*

Obviously there are many things that apply to all equally and cannot be avoided in that way [*by saying that each one's way is different*]. The dictum that each has his own way is not true; each has his own way of following the common way and the "own way" may often be very defective. Of course it is true that natures are different and the approach whether to the sadhana or to other things. One can say generally that newspaper reading

or novel reading is not helpful to the sadhana and is at best a concession to the vital which is not yet ready to be absorbed in the sadhana — unless and until one is able to read in the right way with a higher consciousness which is not only not “disturbed” by the reading or distracted by it from the concentrated Yoga-consciousness but is able to make the right use of what is read from the point of view of the inner consciousness and the inner life.

*

Merely following external rules cannot of course be sufficient. They are only an aid to the inner effort until the inner consciousness is thoroughly established. Usually much reading of newspapers in the ordinary way keeps one attached to the ordinary view and vision of things and interested in that — when one has the inner consciousness one can see things happening in the world with another eye of knowledge and then reading can be of some use, though even then most of what is published is empty and futile. But the mere not-reading by itself is not effective. Also if one has need of a distraction, reading newspapers serves the purpose.

*

Reasons given [*for reading newspapers*] of course prove nothing — they may be only excuses put forward by the mind for doing what the vital wants. The newspapers obviously carry with them a lowering atmosphere. It is a question of fact whether one can separate oneself sufficiently not to be pulled down by it. At the time of reading there is certainly a lower pitch of the consciousness in the frontal or outward parts. Only, if one has a consciousness behind which is not affected, then one can revert immediately after reading to the normal higher level.

*

It is not against the principle of Yogic life to know what is happening in the world — what is unyogic is to be attached to these things [*such as newspaper reading*] and not able to

do without them or to think of them as a matter of main importance. The all-important thing must be the sadhana, the growth into a new consciousness and a new inner life. The rest must be done with detachment and without getting absorbed in them. The feeling must be such that if the Mother were to tell you never to see a newspaper at all, it would be no deprivation to you and you would not even feel the difference.

*

The inability to read books or papers is often felt when the consciousness is getting the tendency to go inside.

Chapter Two

The Place of Study in Sadhana

Study and Sadhana

Study cannot take the same or a greater importance than sadhana.

*

Study is of importance only if you study in the right way and with the turn for knowledge and mental discipline. What is the use of studying French if you go on always making the same mistakes and having the same inaccurate and slovenly hold of the language?

*

I have already said that you can spend the time in study as the sadhana is not active. If the sadhana were active then study could be done in the spare time, i.e. in times not given to work or meditation.

Study and Mental Development

A well-trained intellect and study are two different things — there are plenty of people who have read much but have not a well-trained intellect. Inertia can come to anybody, even to the most educated people.

*

Reading, learning about things, acquiring complete and accurate information, training oneself in logical thinking, considering dispassionately all sides of a question, rejecting hasty or wrong inferences and conclusions, learning to look at all things clearly and as a whole [*are what is meant by mental training*].

*

By training it to see, observe and understand in the right way [*one can have a well-developed intellect*]. Reading and study are only useful to acquire information and widen one's field of data. But that comes to nothing if one does not know how to discern and discriminate, judge, see what is within and behind things.

*

A man may have read much and yet be mentally undeveloped. It is by thinking, understanding, receiving mental influences from his intellectual superiors that a man's mind develops.

*

There is no such rule.¹ It is better if the mind is strong and developed, but scholarship does not necessarily create a strong and developed mind.

*

Intelligence does not depend on the amount one has read, it is a quality of the mind. Study only gives it material for its work as life also does. There are people who do not know how to read and write well who are more intelligent than many highly educated people and understand life and things better. On the other hand a good intelligence can improve itself by reading because it gets more material to work on and grows by exercise and by having a wider range to move in. But book knowledge by itself is not the real thing; it has to be used as a help to the intelligence, but it is often used only as a help to a loquacious stupidity or ignorance — ignorance because knowledge of facts is a poor thing if one cannot see their true significance.

*

You have either to train the memory by practising to remember — or if you cannot do that, try only to understand, read much and let the memory remember what it can. There are people who

¹ *The correspondent asked whether a scholar would progress rapidly in spiritual life if his mind was "developed, large and enlightened through education". — Ed.*

have a bad memory but they succeed in their studies in spite of it.

School Studies and Yoga

I see no objection to his going on with his studies, — whether they will be of any use to him for a life of sadhana will depend on the spirit in which he does them. The really important thing is to develop a state of consciousness in which one can live in the Divine and act from it on the physical world. A mental training and discipline, knowledge of men and things, culture, capacities of a useful kind are a preparation that the sadhak would be all the better for having, — even though they are not the one thing indispensable. Education in India gives very little of these things; but if one knows how to study without caring much for the form or for mere academic success, the life of the student can be used for the purpose.

*

At this age he is too young to give up study. It would be best for him to attend the school still; it will be worth while leaving it only if other and better arrangements could be made for his studies. Development of the mind is not a useless thing for one who wishes to follow this sadhana and it can very well go along with the Yoga.

*

There is no reason why X should not complete his studies or learn something which will make him useful in life. To be useless is not a qualification for Yoga.

The Study of Languages

Knowing languages is part of the equipment of the mind.

*

There is no harm in learning [*a new language*] — provided it is

kept in its subordinate place and one is not too much lost in it.

*

Your objection was to learning languages and especially French as inimical to peace and silence because it meant activity. The mind, when it is not in meditation or in complete silence, is always active with something or another — with its own ideas or desires or with other people or with things or with talking etc. None of these is any less an activity than learning languages. Now you shift your ground and say it is because owing to their study they have no time for meditation that you object. That is absurd, for if people want to meditate, they will arrange their time of study for that; if they don't want to meditate, the reason must be something else than study and if they do not study they will simply go on thinking about "small things". Want of time is not the cause of their non-meditation and passion for study is not the cause.

*

One does not learn English or French as an aid to the sadhana; it is done for the development of the mind and as part of the activity given to the being. For that purpose learning French is as good as learning English and, if it is properly done, better. Nor is there any reason, if one has the capacity, to limit oneself to one language only.

*

It depends on what you want to do with the language. If it is only to read the literature, then to learn to read, pronounce and understand accurately is sufficient. If it is a complete mastery one wants, then conversation and writing have to be thoroughly learned in that language.

*

To read many books quickly gives freedom and ease and familiarity with the language. The other method [*to read a book carefully more than once*] is necessary for thoroughness and accuracy in detail.

The Study of Philosophy

I don't know that there is anything false in your philosophical reflections. Philosophy is of course a creation of the mind but its defect is not that it is false, but that a philosophical system is only a section of the Truth which the philosopher takes as a whole. If one does not shut oneself up like that but looks at all sides, there is no harm in philosophising.

*

It depends on the nature of the book [*whether it is harmful or useful*]. Philosophy makes the mind subtle in certain directions — or ought to do so. The only harm it can do is if the mind begins clinging to ideas instead of going forward to direct experience.

*

I do not know about this Commentary [*on the Taittiriya Upanishad*], but most commentaries on the Upanishads are written out of the reasoning and speculating intellect. They may be of use to people who are trying to find out intellectually the meaning of the Upanishads — but they can be of no help to you as a sadhak who are seeking experience; it is likely rather to confuse the mind by taking it off the true basis and throwing it out from the road of experience and spiritual receptivity into the tangle of intellectual debate.

*

Yes, that [*to read critically*] is the right way to read these things. These philosophies [*of the early Greeks*] are mostly mental intuitions mixed with much guessing (speculation), but behind, if one knows, one can catch some Truth to which they correspond.

*

Metaphysics deals with the ultimate cause of things and all that lies behind the world of phenomena. As regards mind and consciousness, it asks what they are, how they came into existence, what is their relation to Matter, Life etc. Psychology deals with

mind and consciousness and tries to find out not so much their ultimate nature and relations as their actual workings and the rule and law of these workings.

The Study of Logic

It [*the study of logic*] is a theoretical training; you learn by it some rules of logical thinking. But the application depends on your own intelligence. In any sphere of knowledge or action a man may be a good theorist but a poor executant. A very good military theorist and critic if put in command of an army might very well lose all his battles, not being able to suit the theories rightly to the occasion. So a theoretical logician may bungle the problems of thought by want of insight, of quickness of mind or of plasticity in the use of his capacities. Besides, logic is not the whole of thinking; observation, intuition, sympathy, many-sidedness are more important.

*

I never heard that learning logic was necessary for good expression. So far as I know very few good writers ever bothered about learning that subject.

*

I am not aware that by learning logic one gets freed from physical things. A few intellectuals lead the mental life and are indifferent to physical needs to a great extent, but these are very few.

*

Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the least common-sense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation — not imagining wild imaginations — or for that matter despairing “I know not why” despairs.

The Study of Science

I think some knowledge of science will be most useful to you — that field is quite a blank for most people here, and yet the greater part of modern thought and knowledge is influenced by it.

*

Yes, the scientific mind does not lead very far [*in spiritual life*]; it only multiplies experiences but brings neither the realisation, nor the knowledge.

Chapter Three

The Power of Expression and Yoga

Verbal Expression

It is the thinking mind that works out ideas, the externalising mental or physical mind that gives them form in words. Probably you have not developed this part sufficiently — the gift of verbal expression is besides comparatively rare. Most people are either clumsy in expression or if they write abundantly, it is without proper arrangement and style. But this is of no essential importance in sadhana — all that is needed is to convey clearly the perceptions and experiences of their sadhana.

*

The power of expression comes by getting into touch with the inner source from which these things come. A calm and silent mind is a great help for the free flow of the power, but it is not indispensable, nor will it of itself bring it.

*

Thought and expression always give one side of things; the thing is to see the whole but one can express only a part unless one writes a long essay. Most thinkers do not even see the whole, only sides and parts — that is why there is always conflict between philosophies and religions.

Expression and Language

The Knowledge from above or whatever comes down can express itself in any language.

*

When the knowledge comes strongly from above, it very often brings its own language and the defects of the instrument are

overcome. There are people who knew very little but when the knowledge began to flow they wrote wonderfully — when it was not flowing, their language became incorrect and ordinary.

*

If you speak of the expression, the deeper things in these experiences cannot be expressed — except by a great spiritual poet and even then only imperfectly — they can only be realised and remembered.

*

What is expressed is always only a part of what is behind — which remains unexpressed and in the language of the manifestation inexpressible.

Spoken and Written Expression

The voice brings a vibration of force which it is more difficult to put in writing which is a more mechanic vehicle — although the written word can have a special power of its own.

Writing and Sadhana

Writing by itself on ordinary subjects has the externalising tendency unless one has got accustomed to write (whatever be the subject) with the inner consciousness detached and free from what the outer is doing.

*

Writing and reading absorb the mind and fill it with images and influences; if the images and influences are not of the right kind, they naturally turn away from the true consciousness. It is only if one has the true consciousness well established already, that one can read or write anything whatever without losing it or without any other harm.

*

The use of your writing is to keep you in touch with the inner

source of inspiration and intuition, so as to wear thin the crude external crust in the consciousness and encourage the growth of the inner being.

Poetry and Sadhana

Of course when you are writing poems or composing you are in contact with your inner being, that is why you feel so different then. The whole art of Yoga is to get that contact and get from it into the inner being itself, for so one can enter directly into and remain in all that is great and luminous and beautiful. Then one can try to establish them in this troublesome and defective outer shell of oneself and in the outer world also.

*

It is obvious that poetry cannot be a substitute for sadhana; it can be an accompaniment only. If there is a feeling (of devotion, surrender etc.), it can express and confirm it; if there is an experience, it can express and strengthen the force of experience. As reading of books like the Upanishads or Gita or singing of devotional songs can help, especially at one stage or another, so this can help also. Also it opens a passage between the exterior consciousness and the inner mind or vital. But if one stops at that, then nothing much is gained. Sadhana must be the main thing and sadhana means the purification of the nature, the consecration of the being, the opening of the psychic and the inner mind and vital, the contact and presence of the Divine, the realisation of the Divine in all things, surrender, devotion, the widening of the consciousness into the cosmic Consciousness, the Self one in all, the psychic and the spiritual transformation of the nature. If these things are neglected and only poetry and mental development and social contacts occupy all the time, then that is not sadhana. Also the poetry must be written in the true spirit, not for fame or self-satisfaction, but as a means of contact with the Divine through aspiration or of the expression of one's own inner being, as it was written formerly by those who left behind them so much devotional and spiritual poetry in India; it

does not help if it is written only in the spirit of the Western artist or *littérateur*. Even works or meditation cannot succeed unless they are done in the right spirit of consecration and spiritual aspiration gathering up the whole being and dominating all else. It is the lack of this gathering up of the whole life and nature and turning it towards the one aim, which is the defect in so many here, that lowers the atmosphere and stands in the way of what is being done by myself and the Mother.

Chapter Four

Speech and Yoga

Outer Speech and the Inner Life

Even those who have a strong inner life, take a long time before they can connect it with the outer speech and action. Outer speech belongs to the externalising mind — that is why it is so difficult to connect it with the inner life.

*

Talk is more external than writing, it depends more on the physical and its condition. Therefore in most cases it is more difficult to get it out of the clutch of the external mind.

*

In talking one has the tendency to come down into a lower and more external consciousness because talking comes from the external mind. But it is impossible to avoid it altogether. What you must do is to learn to get back at once to the inner consciousness — this so long as you are not able to speak always from the inner being or at least with the inner being supporting the action.

*

You have to learn not to allow the speaking to alter your condition or else to recover it as soon as the interruption is over.

*

In speaking there should be always a sort of instinctive defence — except with those who are free from the ordinary vital impulse.

*

To remain aloof from the talk is what you should always do. The detachment is the first necessary condition for being free.

Talking and Dispersion of the Consciousness

Talking cannot be always avoided. I don't think it matters much so long as there is not excessive dispersion of the consciousness.

*

There are some who have the flow of speech by nature and those who are very vital cannot do without it. But the latter case (not being able to do without it) is obviously a disability from the spiritual point of view. There are also certain stages in the sadhana when one has to go inward and silence is at that time very necessary while unnecessary speech becomes a dispersion of the energies or externalises the consciousness. It is especially this chat for chat's sake tendency that has to be overcome.

*

It is one thing to speak simply and easily with others, keeping the inner consciousness, and another to let oneself go in the vital stream of an externalised consciousness — it was that which I said I had told you not to do.

*

It [*a feeling of dispersion*] is of course because the consciousness is thrown out in these things [*light talk and laughter*] and one comes out of the inner poise and has difficulty in going back to it — especially as there is a sort of dispersion of the vital energy. If one attains to a condition in which one can do these things only with the surface of the consciousness, keeping inside and observing what is done on the surface, but not forgetting oneself in it, then the poise is not lost. But it is a little difficult to get at this duplication of oneself — one comes to it however in time especially if the inner peace and calm become very intense and durable.

*

X's talk is certainly not very helpful to his sadhana and I think he knows it — but he has not made any real attempt to control his tongue as yet. Talk — of the usual kind — does very easily disperse or bring down the inner condition because it usually comes out of the lower vital and the physical mind only and expresses that part of the consciousness — it has a tendency to externalise the being. That is of course why so many Yogis take refuge in silence.

Talking and Fatigue

Everyone who lives much inside tends to feel too much talking a fatiguing thing and quite shallow and unnecessary unless it is talk that comes from within. Of course if you make a practice of talking much, that will bring you outside, externalise you and then you will no longer find it fatiguing even if you talk for 18 hours out of the 24.

*

Talking has a very exhausting effect for the inner energies — unless the inner itself controls the talk.

*

That [*feeling of fatigue after talking*] happens very usually. Talking of an unnecessary character tires the inner being because the talk comes from the outer nature while the inner has to supply the energy which it feels squandered away.

*

Chat of that kind [*about others*] has indeed a very tiring effect when one is at all in the stream of true experience, because it dissipates the energy uselessly and makes the mind movement a thing of valueless shreds and patches instead of gathered and poised in itself so as to receive.

*

The headache and the fatigue is always a sign that the consciousness no longer wants this outward-going thought and speech and

is even physically strained by it. But it is the subconscious habit that wants to continue. Mostly human speech and thought go on mechanically in certain grooves that always repeat themselves and it is not really the mind that controls or dictates them. That is why this habit can go on for some time even after the conscious mind has withdrawn its support and consent and resolved to do otherwise. But if one perseveres, this subconscious mechanical habit runs down like all machinery that is not kept wound up to go on again. Then one can form the opposite habit in the subconscious of admitting only what the inner being consents to think or speak.

*

It is the nervous envelope that is weak — it is this that you saw. The fact that you feel weak when talking with people shows that the origin of the whole trouble is a weakened nervous force. It is this that you have to get strong. You should avoid much talking with others — you can also take rest when you feel the symptoms very strong. But faith, quietude and openness to the higher force are the fundamental cure.

Useless, Unnecessary or Light Speech

There should be no useless talking or mere chat, still less anything untrue or prompted by egoism and desire. One can talk, but with silence within and quietude in the speech.

*

On the whole you are right. Useless conversation which lowers the consciousness or brings back something of a past consciousness is better avoided. Talking about sadhana also comes under the category when it is merely mental discussion of a superficial kind.

*

The depression came into you subconsciously because you had the discussion with X. When you discuss like that with people,

you put something in them, but something also comes from them to you. So, as X was not in quite a good condition, though nothing like what he used to be in his depressions, you easily got a touch of it and as soon as the subconscious could find a habitual excuse it sent it up to the mind. You should always be on your guard against these automatic interchanges. A little care is sufficient — and no needless discussion.

*

It is true that to indulge in useless or harmful conversations is not good, but on the other hand it is not good to be too much shut up in oneself. Some company and going out of oneself is also necessary.

*

It is always helpful to limit a little unnecessary talking—it has always a tendency to bring the consciousness down and outwards.

*

You are right — to minimise speech is sure to be helpful both for right action and for inner sadhana.

*

It is something very external that takes pleasure in light talk, and it is only when the quietude and with it a certain spontaneous self-control is established in the lower vital nature that this tendency can be entirely conquered in those who have it — i.e. in most people.

All these things will be worked out in time. What is most important is to get down the quietude into all the being and with it the true force bringing the energy which you describe above.

*

There is always a chance of something light and unbalancing coming in when there is levity indulged in for its own sake.

The consciousness feels a little shaken in its seat, if not pulled out. Once the consciousness is well set inside, then the outward movement gets determined from within and there is no such trouble.

*

Yes; excessive hilarity and unnecessary chat do most undoubtedly dissipate the force. A great moderation is necessary in these things.

Control of Speech

Yes, it would be better to get full control of the speech — it is an important step towards going inward and developing a true inner and Yogic consciousness.

*

Yes. The speech must come from within and be controlled from within.

*

Yes, control of the speech is very necessary for the physical change.

*

To control speech is to stand back from the speech impulse and observe it, not to say whatever the impulse makes you say but only to speak what one really needs to say or chooses to say, not to speak in haste or anger or impatience or lightly, not to talk at random or say what is harmful. It does not necessarily mean to speak very little, though that is often helpful.

*

It [*speech*] can only be controlled if you separate yourself from the part that is speaking and are able to observe it. It is the external mind that speaks — one has to watch it from the inner witnessing mind and put a control.

*

Yes, of course, complete truth of speech is very important for the sadhak and a great help for bringing Truth into the consciousness. It is at the same time difficult to bring the speech under control; for people are accustomed to speak what comes to them and not to supervise and control what they say. There is something mechanical about speech and to bring it to the level of the highest part of the consciousness is never easy. That is one reason why to be sparing in speech is helpful. It helps to a more deliberate control and prevents the tongue from running away with one and doing whatever it likes.

To stand back means to become a witness of one's own mind and speech, to see them as something separate from oneself and not identify oneself with them. Watching them as a witness, separate from them, one gets to know what they are, how they act and then put a control over them, reject what one does not approve and think and speak only what one feels to be true. This cannot, of course, be done all at once. It takes time to establish this attitude of separateness, still more time to establish the control. But it can be done by practice and persistence.

*

It is obvious that things which are a long habit cannot go at once. Especially the speech is a thing which in most people is largely automatic and not under their control. It is the vigilance that establishes the control, so one must be on guard against the danger of which you speak, the slacking of the vigilance. Only the more it can be a quiet and unmixed, not an anxious vigilance, the better.

*

The habits of the physical or the vital-physical nature are always the most difficult to change, because their action is automatic and not governed by the mental will and it is therefore difficult for the mental will to control or transform them. You have to persevere and form the habit of control. If you can succeed in controlling the speech often, — it needs a constant vigilance, — you will finally find that the control extends itself and can in the

long run always intervene. This must be done so long as that movement is not fully opened to the Mother's Light and Force, for if that happens the thing can be done more quickly and sometimes with a great rapidity. There is also the intervention of the psychic — if the psychic being is sufficiently awake and active to intervene each time you are going to speak at random and say "No", then the change becomes more easy.

*

The psychic self-control that is desirable in these surroundings and in the midst of discussion would mean among other things:

(1) Not to allow the impulse of speech to assert itself too much or say anything without reflection, but to speak always with a conscious control and only what is necessary and helpful.

(2) To avoid all debate, dispute or too animated discussion and simply say what has to be said and leave it there. There should also be no insistence that you are right and the others wrong, but what is said should only be thrown in as a contribution to the consideration of the truth of the matter. I notice that what you report X as having said in this discussion had its truth and what you said was also true, so that really there should have been no dispute.

(3) To keep the tone of speech and the wording very quiet and calm and uninsistent.

(4) Not to mind at all if others are heated and dispute, but remain quiet and undisturbed and yourself speak only what can help things to be smooth again.

(5) If there is gossip about others and harsh criticism (especially about sadhaks), not to join — for these things are helpful in no way and only lower the consciousness from its higher level.

(6) To avoid all that would hurt or wound others.

Criticising Others

The habit of criticism — mostly ignorant criticism of others — mixed with all sorts of imaginations, inferences, exaggerations, false interpretations, even gross inventions is one of the universal

illnesses of the Asram. It is a disease of the vital aided by the physical mind which makes itself an instrument of the pleasure taken in this barren and harmful pursuit of the vital. Control of the speech, refusal of this disease and the itch of the vital is very necessary if inner experience has to have any true effect of transformation in the outer life.

*

It is also better to be more strict about not talking of others and criticising them with the ordinary mind — not only in the case of X or Y but all. It is necessary in order to develop a deeper consciousness and outlook on things that understands in silence the movements of Nature in oneself and others and is not moved or disturbed or superficially interested and drawn into an external movement.

Gossip

It [*gossiping*] can be and very often is [*a hindrance to sadhana*]. A gossiping spirit is always an obstacle.

*

The difficulty you experience exists because speech is a function which in the past has worked much more as an expression of the vital in man than of the mental will. Speech breaks out as the expression of the vital and its habits without caring to wait for the control of the mind; the tongue has been spoken of as the unruly member. In your case the difficulty has been increased by the habit of talk about others, — gossip, to which your vital was very partial, so much that it cannot even yet give up the pleasure in it. It is therefore this tendency that must cease in the vital itself. Not to be under the control of the impulse to speech, to be able to do without it as a necessity and to speak only when one sees that it is right to do so and only what one sees to be right to say, is a very necessary part of Yogic self-control.

It is only by perseverance and vigilance and a strong resolution that this can be done, but if the resolution is there, it can

be done in a short time by the aid of the Force behind.

*

Truth is far above this false gossip and scandal. Care only for the Divine's opinion and not for that of men.

Speaking the Truth

It [*truthfulness*] means first truth-speaking, but beyond that to keep the speech in harmony with the deepest truth of which one is conscious.

*

It is very evident from this inward control which you feel enlightening and guiding you and the resolution of truth-speaking that it made you take, that your psychic being is awake within you.

The fault of character of which you speak is common and almost universal in human nature. The impulse to speak what is untrue or at least to exaggerate or understate or twist the truth so as to flatter one's own vanity, preferences, wishes or to get some advantage or secure something desired is very general. But one must learn to speak the truth alone if one is to succeed truly in changing the nature.

To become conscious of what is to be changed in the nature is the first step towards changing it. But one must observe these things without being despondent or thinking "it is hopeless" or "I cannot change". You do right to be confident that the change will come. For nothing is impossible in the nature if the psychic being is awake and leading you with the Mother's consciousness and force behind it and working in you. This is now happening. Be sure that all will be done.

*

Very obviously, you ought not to have said or written what was a lie, and you should avoid doing it in future.

The things that you imagined, would not have happened

and therefore there was not even any use in this untruth — but useless or not, untruth should be avoided.

*

In the first place, there is a great difference between uttering as truth what one believes or knows to be false and uttering as truth what one conscientiously believes to be true, but is not in fact true. The first is obviously going against the spirit of truth, the second does homage to it. The first is deliberate falsehood, the second is only error at worst or ignorance.

This is from the practical point of view of truth-speaking. From the point of view of the higher Truth, it must not be forgotten that each plane of consciousness has its own standard — what is truth to the mind, may be only partial truth to a higher consciousness, but it is through the partial truth that the mind has to go in order to reach the wider more perfect truth beyond. All that is necessary for it is to be open and plastic, to be ready to recognise the higher when it comes, not to cling to the lower because it is its own, not to allow the desires and passions of the vital to blind it to the Light or to twist and pervert things. When once the higher consciousness begins to act, the difficulty diminishes and there is a clear progress from truth to greater truth.

*

If you get the English original¹ from X, you will see that what is written is from the highest standpoint. If you want to be an instrument of the Truth, you must always speak the truth and not falsehood. But this does not mean that you must tell everything to everybody. To conceal the truth by silence or refusal to speak is permissible, because the truth may be misunderstood or misused by those who are not prepared for it or who are opposed to it

¹ Sri Aurobindo is referring to the following statement of the Mother: “If we allow a falsehood, however small, to express itself through our mouth or our pen, how can we hope to become perfect messengers of Truth? A perfect servant of Truth should abstain even from the slightest inexactitude, exaggeration or deformation.” Words of the Mother — II (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2004), *Collected Works of the Mother* (second edition), vol. 14, p. 202. — Ed.

— it may even be made a starting point for distortion or sheer falsehood. But to speak falsehood is another matter. Even in jest it should be avoided, because it tends to lower the consciousness. As for the last point, it is again from the highest standpoint — the truth as one knows it in the mind is not enough, for the mind's idea may be erroneous or insufficient — it is necessary to have the true knowledge in the true consciousness.

*

Why should it be lying [*to leave something unsaid*]? One is not bound to tell everything to everybody — it might often do more harm than good. One has only to say what is necessary. Of course what is said must be true and not false and there must never be any intention to deceive.

*

“As one likes” is never a formula that leads to truth; it implies enthroning the vital and its desire as the standard or following the mind's preferences — which even in any mental discipline is regarded as contrary to the very principle of the search for Truth.

*

Because one is dealing with dishonest people, that does not justify one in going down to their own level.

If you think that the prices are too high, or, simply, if you want them to be lower, you can say so and ask for a reduction, but it is not right to support your demand by a false statement.

No one is bound to speak the truth when it would be harmful or to speak whatever is in one's mind; it is always permissible to keep silence or evade a reply and not to say what one does not wish or think it right to tell. But to tell a lie is superfluous and not justifiable.

It is usually out of weakness (mind and vital) that people lie; those who are strong in nature do not need to lie. A sadhak has to be strong and not weak — straightforward when necessary, silent when necessary, but not a liar. Straightforwardness does not mean of course that one has to babble out everything to

everybody — to keep things to oneself, not to tell what should not be told is very necessary; but falsehood is not the right way to conceal things that have not to be told, the right way is silence.

*

If it [*what one has said to someone*] is true, it should not be withdrawn [*even if the person is troubled by it*]. But the truth need be told only when it helps the person spoken to, otherwise silence is better.

*

It is not the fact that if a man is truthful (in the sense of not lying), all he says happens. For that he must know the Truth — be in touch with the truth of things, not merely speak the truth as his mind knows it.

*

Things said of sadhana — or any kind of real truth — always give more meaning with the growth of consciousness and experience. That is why when one rises in the level of consciousness the truth seen before in the mind becomes a new and vastly deeper thing always.

*

That [*talking about spiritual things when one is full of imperfections*] is not hypocrisy but a conflict between two parts of the nature. Hypocrisy comes in only when one preaches a thing one does not believe or deliberately pretends to be or aim at what one is not and has no intention of trying to become.

Mauna or Keeping Silence

That is not the way. Absolute silence and looseness of talk are two extremes; neither is good. I have seen many people practising *maunavrata*, but afterwards they are just as talkative as before. It is self-mastery you must get.

*

Mauna is seldom of much use. After it is over, the speech starts again as on the old lines. It is in speech itself that the speech must change.

*

It is no use giving up talking altogether — the proper course is to speak usefully to people but not to talk for the sake of talking.

*

There is not much utility in complete outer silence or absolute retirement. Unless one is very strong spiritually, these things often end by creating a moribund condition of the consciousness.

*

To remain in silence as much as possible is good for a time. But entire retirement is seldom found to be helpful — the lower movements may remain quiescent owing to want of stimulus from outside, but do not disappear. For that you must be able to get an inner quietude and a mastery over the outer movements which will resist any atmosphere.

*

The difficulty is that the things in the atmosphere come in even if one does not speak with people. There are always mind waves moving about. It is a mastery that has to be developed, beginning with a power of silence, exclusion, non-response.

*

It is really an inner silence that is needed — a something silent within that looks at outer talk and action but feels it as something superficial, not as itself and is quite indifferent and untouched by it. It can bring forces to support speech and action or it can stop them by withdrawal or it can let them go on and observe without being involved or moved.

*

If one keeps the inner silence even when among the friends, that is the real thing; the outer silence need only be relative until the time comes when speech itself is an expression out of the silence.

*

If the peace is very strong within, talking does not cloud it—because this peace is not mental or vital even when it pervades the mind and vital—or else it is a cloud that quickly passes without touching deeply. Usually however such talk [*about others*] disperses the consciousness and one can lose much. The only disadvantage of not talking is that it isolates too much, if it is absolute, but by not talking these things one loses nothing.

Other Aspects of Speech Control

In all things there must be a control over thought and speech also. But while rajasic violence is excluded, a calmly forceful severity of thought and speech where severity is needed is sometimes indispensable.

*

Yes, obviously, the power to say “No” is indispensable in life and still more so in sadhana. It is the power of rejection put into speech.

*

These [*heated*] discussions are perfectly useless, they only deflect the mind and open the gate to falsehood.

*

Harangues and exhortations touch only the surface of the mind. If the mind is in agreement it is pleased and stimulated, but that is all. If it is not in agreement the mind criticises or becomes impatient and turns aside. If the harangue is very forcible it may touch the vital sometimes and produce a momentary effect.

*

It is no use being moved by the talk of others; one who follows the path, must be strong enough to go on upon it untouched by the opinion of the outside world. And it is best not to speak of these things to the indifferent or the hostile.

*

Hastiness of speech and action — (in excess, because to a certain extent it exists in everybody) — is a matter of temperament. I do not suppose it is more in you than in many others here. Of course it has to be got rid of, but it is one of the lesser, not one of the major imperfections of nature with which the Yogic Force has to deal. It is the externalising mind that has to be disciplined so that it may not leap too soon to conclusions or rush immediately from thought to speech and action.

*

That (thinking over what was talked) is a physical mind habit which should in course of time wear out. The mind should be free to shut off immediately as soon as the talk is done.

Part Two

Sadhana on the Level of the Vital

Section One

The Vital Being and Sadhana

Chapter One

The Nature of the Vital

Living in the Vital

Man is a mental being and cannot come from the vital, although part of him may live on the vital plane or rather in connection with it. Most men in fact live much in the vital and therefore when they practise sadhana it is first on the vital plane that they find themselves, in dreams, experiences etc. When the supramental opens then something will descend from the supramental in each as he becomes ready and forms a supramental Purusha in him. What he is now, cannot limit what he will become.

*

That [*a routine of work and study*] is not living in the vital — these are physical and mental occupations merely. Living in the vital is a psychological condition.

Most people live in their vital. That means that they live in their desires, sensations, emotional feelings, vital imaginations and see and experience and judge everything from that point of view. It is the vital that moves them, the mind being at its service, not its master. In Yoga also many people do sadhana from that plane and their experience is full of vital visions, formations, experiences of all kinds, but there is no mental clarity or order, neither do they rise above the mind. It is only the minority of men who live in the mind or in the psychic or try to live on the spiritual plane.

*

Of course most men live in their physical mind and vital, except a few saints and a rather larger number of intellectuals. That is why, as it is now discovered, humanity has made little progress in the last three thousand years, except in information and material

equipment. A little less cruelty and brutality perhaps, more plasticity of the intellect in the elite, a quicker habit of change in forms, that is all.

*

A vital life, “a little higher than the animals” because of some play of mind, with death as its answer is all that human existence is as it is ordinarily envisaged. And yet there is an aspiration for something more; but the religions take hold of it and canalise it into something pointless for life and things remain as they are. Only a few indeed get beyond this limit.

The “after all” is indeed only an excuse.¹ Nobody can become more than human if he refuses to make a sacrifice of his ego — for “human” means a vital animal ego mentalised by a little outward thought and knowledge. So long as one is satisfied with remaining that, one will remain human “even here” or anywhere.

*

People are living now so much in the vital when they do not live in the intellect, and so unguardedly and without restraint, the old mental conventions and restraints being in a state of deliquescence, that catastrophes are likely to be common. The disappearance of conventions and the urge to a larger life are in themselves good things, but on condition that a greater control and a truer harmony are discovered. At present people are going about it in the wrong way — hence the perilous condition of Europe and of the world. Nor are these convulsed and insecure conditions a very favourable environment for the development of a spiritual life either. But it seems that it is in the midst of difficulties that it is destined to come.

*

The times now are both worse and better than in Wordsworth’s — on one side there is a collapse into the worst parts of human

¹ *The correspondent wrote, “When people say — even here — ‘After all we are human, we have not become gods’, it seems to me only an excuse.” — Ed.*

nature and a riot of the vital forces, on the other there is in compensation a greater seeking for something beyond and a seeking with more light and knowledge in it.

The Irrationality of the Vital

The vital started in its evolution with obedience to impulse and not reason — as for strategy, the only strategy it understands is some tactics by which it can compass its desires. It does not like the voice of knowledge and wisdom — but curiously enough by the necessity which has grown up in man of justifying action by reason, the vital mind has developed a strategy of its own which is to get the reason to find out reasons for justifying its own feelings and impulses. When the reason is too clear to lend itself to this game, the vital falls back on its native habit of shutting its ears and going on its course. In these attacks, the plea of unfitness, “Since you are not pleased with my impulses and I can’t change them, that shows I am unfit, so I had better go”, is the counter-strategy it adopts. But even if one counters that, the impulse itself is sufficient, coming strongly as it does from universal Nature, to restore to the vital for a short time its old blind irrational instinct to obey the push that has come.

*

The doubts of the sadhaks more often rise from the vital than from the true mental — when the vital goes wrong or is in trouble or depression, the doubts rise and repeat themselves in the same form and the same language, no matter how much the mind had been convinced by either patent proofs or intellectual answers. I have noticed that always. The vital is irrational (even when it uses the reason to justify itself) and it believes or disbelieves according to its feeling, not according to reason.

*

The opposition of the vital is never reasonable, even when it puts forward reasons. It acts from its nature and habit of desire, not from reason.

The Deceptiveness of the Vital

The vital always prefers to cover its movements from the Light.

*

The whole significance of your sentences was that you had made all the necessary resolutions, but you could not carry them out because the Force refused to support you. That is the usual trick of the vital mind when it wants to rid itself of the blame for difficulties or want of progress in the sadhana: “I am doing all I can, but the Force is not supporting me.” It is no use your quoting other sentences, because you write now one thing, now another, shifting your ground for the sake of your argument. If logic could help you to get rid of this trickery of the vital mind, it would be worth while learning Logic.

*

As to what you ask about anything else being behind than what your mind was conscious of in its surface intention, there is more often than not something behind when the vital meddles in the matter — and it is a part of self-knowledge not to be misled by the mind’s surface movements but to detect this something behind. For it is the habit of the vital to make a mask of the mind’s arrangements about feelings and actions in order to conceal even from the self-observation of the doer the secret underlying motive or forces behind the speech, act or feelings.

*

It is indeed amazing that you should have lost yourself to an extravagant deception such as X has set on foot. It is simply the spirit of vital falsehood, dramatic and romantic, obscuring the reason and shutting out common sense and simple truth. To clear the vital, you must get out of it all compromise with falsehood — no matter how specious the reason it advances — and get the habit of simple straightforward psychic truth engraved in it so that nothing may have a chance to enter. If this lesson can be imprinted in that part of the vital which is capable

of such compromises, some good will come out of this wrong movement. Put the Mother's notice henceforth at the door of your vital being, "No falsehood hereafter shall ever enter here", and station a sentry there to see that it is put into execution.

*

You have to develop discrimination so that it becomes impossible for the vital to deceive you.

*

If there is this unconsciousness, you have to learn to be conscious in all your actions, so that the vital movements will no longer be able to deceive you or take any cover. You must make a point of being perfectly sincere in looking at these vital movements and seeing them as they are.

If once you can open in the psychic being and keep it open, then from within yourself will come constantly a perception that will show you at each step the actual truth and keep you on your guard against any kind of deception. If you aspire constantly and allow the peace to grow and the Force to work in you, this opening will come.

A Good Instrument But a Bad Master

The human vital is almost always of that nature [*full of desires and fancies*], but that is no reason why one should accept it as an unchangeable fact and allow a restless vital to drive one as it likes. Even apart from Yoga, in ordinary life, only those are considered to have full manhood or are likely to succeed in their life, their ideals or their undertakings who take in hand this restless vital, concentrate and control it and subject it to discipline. It is by the use of the mental will that they discipline it, compelling it to do not what it wants but what the reason or the will sees to be right or desirable. In Yoga one uses the inner will and compels the vital to submit itself to tapasya so that it may become calm, strong, obedient — or else one calls down the calm from above obliging the vital to renounce desire

and become quiet and receptive. The vital is a good instrument but a bad master. If you allow it to follow its likes and dislikes, its fancies, its desires, its bad habits, it becomes your master and peace and happiness are no longer possible. It becomes not your instrument or the instrument of the Divine Shakti, but of any force of the Ignorance or even any hostile force that is able to seize and use it.

*

Yes, that is the nature of the vital. It can make the absolute and enthusiastic surrender as well as cause all the trouble possible. Without the vital there is no life or force of action or manifestation; it is a necessary instrument of the spirit for life.

*

Vitality means life-force — wherever there is life, in plant or animal or man, there is life-force — without the vital there can be no life in matter and no living action. The vital is a necessary force and nothing can be done or created in the bodily existence, if the vital is not there as an instrument. Even sadhana needs that vital force.

But if the vital is unregenerate and enslaved to desire, passion and ego, then it is as harmful as it can otherwise be helpful. Even in ordinary life the vital has to be controlled by the mind and mental will, otherwise it brings disorder or disaster. When people speak of a vital man, they mean one under the domination of vital force not controlled by the mind or the spirit. The vital can be a good instrument, but it is a bad master.

The vital has not to be killed or destroyed, but purified and transformed by the psychic and spiritual control.

*

What has been put into the vital receptacle by life can be got out by reversing it, turning it towards the Divine and not towards yourself. You will then find that the vital is as excellent an instrument as it is a bad master.

*

If your will is strong and stiff, always, the vital however obstinate is bound to yield in the end and become your instrument and not your master.

Purification of the Vital

Purification of the vital is usually considered to be a condition for successful sadhana. One may have some experiences without it, but at least a complete detachment from the vital movements is necessary for a sustained realisation.

Discipline of the Vital

It is true that for the external vital an outer discipline is necessary for the purification, otherwise it remains restless and fanciful and at the mercy of its own impulses — so that no basis can be built there for a quiet and abiding higher consciousness to remain firmly. The attitude you have taken for the work is of course the best one and, applying it steadily, the progress you feel was bound to come and is sure to increase.

*

To live and act under control or according to a standard of what is right — not to allow the vital or the physical to do whatever they like and not to let the mind run about according to its fancy without truth or order [*is the meaning of discipline*]. Also to obey those who ought to be obeyed.

*

An overmastering impulse is not necessarily an inspiration of true guidance; in following always such impulses one is more likely to become a creature of random caprices. Inexhaustible energy is an excellent thing, but not an energy without discipline.

*

The will ought to have the same mastery over impulses as over the thoughts. Many people find it easier to control an impulse

than to prevent a thought.

*

The vital is good when it is properly used—it is a necessary instrument for action. But ordinarily it is in its lower action an instrument of ego and desire—that is why it has not to be indulged, but rather put under strong discipline.

*

The vital has to be controlled and not allowed to do what it likes. It is not the vital that has to control you, it is you who have to control the vital.

*

Be careful about vital movements and formations—when you allow them, you are on a dangerous slope.

*

If you want the Divine and the inner life, the old vital moorings must be cut.

*

It is certainly the abrupt and decisive breaking that is the easiest and best way for these things—vital habits.

*

People are here to change what is wrong in their nature so that they may do an effective sadhana.

*

If you want to change, you must first resolutely get rid of the defects of your vital being, persevering steadily, however difficult it may be or however long it may take, calling in always the divine help and compelling yourself always to be entirely sincere.

As for fitness and unfitness, nobody is entirely fit for this Yoga; one has to become fit by aspiration, by *abhyāsa*, by sincerity and surrender. If you have always desired the spiritual

life, it is the psychic part of you that desired it, but your vital has always come in the way. Establish a sincere will in the vital; do not allow personal desires and demands and selfishness and falsehood to mix in your sadhana; then alone the vital in you will become fit for the sadhana. Lately you seem to have made a more sincere endeavour; if you want it to succeed, the endeavour must become always purer and more steady and persistent. If you practise sincerely, you will get the help needed by you.

If you take the right attitude in your work, that itself will bring the help. The right attitude is to work for the sake of the Divine, as an offering, without demand for any reward, without selfish claims and desires, without self-assertion and arrogance, not quarrelling with your fellow workers, thinking it to be the Mother's work and not your own, and trying to feel her power behind the work. If you can do that, your nature will progress and change.

I write this much in answer to your letter because I find in it a beginning of vital sincerity which was not there before. The rest depends upon you. If you become vitally sincere, the help will be with you.

Surrender of the Vital

There is nothing definite that I can tell you. Mother finds no conscious opposition in your mind or will to surrender and transformation. But probably the difficulty lies in the vital (not mind) of the artist (the poet, painter etc. in you), because the vital of the artist is always accustomed to its independence, to follow its own way, to make and live in its own world and pursue the impulses of its nature. If that element changes, then probably surrender and transformation could be more rapid, but it is not always easy for it to change at once, it usually goes by a gradual and almost unobserved change.

*

It is not at all a fact that your nature is incapable of love and bhakti; on the contrary that is the right way for you. Meditation

is all right, but it will be most profitable for you if it is directed towards the increase of love and devotion; the rest will come of itself afterwards.

Also, it is not true that your nature is incapable of surrender; you made a great progress in that direction. But the complete surrender of all parts, especially of the whole vital, is certainly difficult. It can only come with the development of the consciousness. Meanwhile, that it has not fully come, is no reason for despair or giving up.

You are taking too bleak a view of things, the usual result of your giving way to depression. You used to have this before and you got over it by persistence. Now also by persistence it will go. To make radical decisions under the influence of depression is not good. To brace yourself up and, however persistent the difficulties are, to stick it out, is always the best.

Be faithful and persevering, then, however long the way, you cannot fail to reach the goal.

Conversion of the Vital

It is not easy to compel the vital, though it can be done. It is easier by the constant pressure of the mind to persuade and convert it; but it is true that in this mental way of doing it the vital does often attach itself to the spiritual ideal for some gain of its own. The one effective way is to bring the light down always in the vital, exposing it to itself, so that it is obliged to see what is wrong with itself and in the end to wish sincerely for a change. The light can be brought upon it either from within from the psychic or from above through the mind into the vital nature. To call down this light and force from above the mind is one of the chief methods of the Yoga. But whatever way is used, it is always a work of persistent and patient spiritual labour. The vital *can* be converted suddenly, but even after a sudden conversion the effects of it have to be worked out, applied to every part of the vital until the effect is complete and that takes often a long time. As for the physical consciousness, that can only be converted by long spade work, as it were, — rapid changes in this or that

point can be made; but the whole change means a long and persistent endeavour.

Liberation of the Vital

The liberation you are aspiring for is indeed extremely necessary for the sadhak, but it means the liberation of the whole vital part of the nature — not a thing that can be done easily or at once. The *mūla jalada* is not in you or in anyone, it is in the universal vital Nature. The aspiration must be constant, patient and persistent, in the end it will prevail. To call the higher calm and peace down into the system from above is the main thing — if you feel that coming down, it will be the beginning of the liberation.

*

You were getting the true consciousness down into the vital, but as the old difficulty rose again in the physical, there is again the vital attack. The sign of complete liberation will be when your vital can face this attack always without being upset or crying out, repelling its force by a calm rejecting force from within.

The Higher Vital Movement

The higher vital movement is more refined and large in motion than that of the ordinary vital. It stresses emotion rather than sensation and desire, but it is not free from demand and the desire of possession.

The Emergence of the True Vital

It is through a change in the vital that the deliverance from the blind vital energy must come — by the emergence of the true vital which is strong, wide, at peace, a willing instrument of the Divine and of the Divine alone.

*

The vital is an indispensable instrument — no creation or strong action is possible without it. It is simply a question of mastering it and of converting it into the true vital which is at once strong and calm and capable of great intensity and free from ego.

*

It is the nature of the unregenerated vital part on the surface to do like that [*express dissatisfaction, resist change*]. The true vital is different, calm and strong and a powerful instrument submitted to the Divine. But for that to come forward, it is necessary first to get this fixed poise above in the mind — when the consciousness is there and the mind calm, free and wide, then the true vital can come forward.

*

Why the Apollyon do you suppose that all vital things are impure? The vital has strength, ardour, enthusiasm, self-confidence, generosity, the victor spirit — a host of other very necessary things. The only difficulty is that they get mixed up with others that *are* impure. All the same they are there and much needed.

*

It [*the psychic life-energy*] means the life-energy which comes from within and is in consonance with the psychic being — it is the energy of the true vital being, but in the ordinary ignorant vital it is deformed into desire.

You have to quiet and purify the vital and let the true vital emerge.

Or you have to bring the psychic in front, and the psychic will purify and psychicise the vital and then you will have the true vital energy.

*

Certainly it is better if the vital is brought to the true movement — renouncing its wrong movements and asking only for growth of the self-realisation, psychic love and psychicisation of the nature. But it is possible to get rid from above of the more active

forms of obstruction even with a neutral vital.

Vital Sincerity, Aspiration, Consecration

It [*vital sincerity*] is the one-pointed will in the vital to be transformed.

*

The vital can rise to the head in two ways — one to cloud the mind with the vital impulses, the other to aspire and join with the higher Consciousness. If you noticed the aspiration, it was evidently the latter movement.

*

It [*vital consecration*] is to offer all the vital nature and its movements to the Divine so that it may be purified and only the true movements in consonance with the Divine Will may be there and all egoistic desires and impulses disappear.

*

Consecration means offering and making sacred to the Mother so that the whole vital nature may belong to her and not to the lower nature.²

*

As for the offering of the actions to the Divine and the vital difficulty it raises, it is not possible to avoid the difficulty, — you have to go through and conquer it. For the moment you make this attempt, the vital arises with all its restless imperfections to oppose the change. However, there are three things you can do to alleviate and shorten the difficulty:

1. Detach yourself from this vital-physical — observe it as something not yourself; reject it, refuse your consent to its claims and impulses, but quietly as the witness Purusha whose refusal

² The correspondent asked the meaning of “vital consecration” and how one may offer the vital to the Mother. — Ed.

of sanction must ultimately prevail. This ought not to be difficult for you, if you have already learned to live more and more in the impersonal Self.

2. When you are not in this impersonality, still use your mental will and its power of assent or refusal, — not with a painful struggle, but in the same way, quietly, denying the claims of desire, till these claims by loss of sanction and assent lose their force of return and become more and more faint and external.

3. If you become aware of the Divine above you or in your heart, call for help, for light and power from there to change the vital itself, and at the same time insist upon this vital till it itself learns to pray for the change.

Finally, the difficulty will be reduced to its smallest proportions the moment you can by the sincerity of your aspiration to the Divine and your surrender awaken the psychic being in you (the Purusha in the secret heart) so that it will come forward and remain in front and pour its influence on all the movements of the mind, the vital and the physical consciousness. The work of transformation will still have to be done, but from that moment it will no longer be so hard and painful.

Peace and Quiet in the Vital

What you have to aspire for and bring down in you is the peace of the Mother's consciousness. Peace, calm, equanimity in the emotional being and the rest of the vital especially — it is that which will purify the emotions and deliver the vital.

*

If you bring down the peace into your vital, it will be liberated — for even if wrong movements come, it will be able to reject them.

*

A quiet and even basis [*for sadhana*] means a condition of the sadhana in which there is no tossing about between eager bursts of experience and a depressed inert or half inert condition, but

whether in progress or in difficulty there is always a quiet consciousness behind turned in confidence and faith towards the Divine.

*

This quietude is not *tamas* at all—it is a quiescence of the ordinary rajasic movements of the nature (desire, grief, attachment and other reactions), which is very necessary in order that peace may come. It is what we may call the quiet vital—and it is in the quiet mind and the quiet vital that the true spiritual consciousness can most easily come.

Chapter Two

The Vital and Other Levels of Being

The Spirit and the Vital

The Spirit itself if it wants to manifest in matter must use the vital. It is so that things are arranged.

The Higher Consciousness and the Vital

The two movements whose apparent contradiction confuses your mind, are the two ends of a single consciousness whose motions, now separated from each other, must join if the life-force is to have its more and more perfect action and fulfilment or the transformation for which we hope.

The vital being with the life-force in it is one of these ends; the other is a latent dynamic power of the higher consciousness through which the Divine Truth can act, take hold of the vital and its life-force and use it for a greater purpose here.

The life-force in the vital is the indispensable instrument for all action of the Divine Power on the material world and the physical nature. It is therefore only when this vital is transformed and made a pure and strong instrument of the Divine Shakti, that there can be a divine life. Then only can there be a successful transformation of the physical nature or a free perfected divine action on the external world; for with our present means any such action is impossible. That is why you feel that the vital movement gives all the energy one can need, that all things are possible by this energy and that you can get with it any experience you like, whether good or bad, of the ordinary or of the spiritual life,—and that also is why, when this energy comes, you feel power pervading the body-consciousness and its matter. As for the contact with the Mother in the vital and your sense of the fine, the magnificent experience it was,—that too is natural and right; for the vital, no less than the psychic and

every other part of the being, has to feel the Divine Mother and give itself entirely to her.

But this must always be remembered that the vital being and the life-force in man are separated from the Divine Light and, so separated, they are an instrument for any power that can take hold of them, illumined or obscure, divine or undivine. Ordinarily, the vital energy serves the common obscure or half-conscious movements of the human mind and human life, its normal ideas, interests, passions and desires. But it is possible for the vital energy to increase beyond the ordinary limits and, if so increased, it can attain an impetus, an intensity, an excitation or sublimation of its force by which it can become, is almost bound to become an instrument either of divine powers, the powers of the gods, or of Asuric forces. Or, if there is no settled central control in the nature, its action can be a confused mixture of these opposites, or in an inconsequent oscillation serve now one and now the other. It is not enough then to have a great vital energy acting in you; it must be put in contact with the higher consciousness, it must be surrendered to the true control, it must be placed under the government of the Divine. That is why there is sometimes felt a contempt for the action of the vital force or a condemnation of it, because it has an insufficient light and control and is wedded to an ignorant undivine movement. That also is why there is the necessity of opening to inspiration and power from a higher source. The vital energy by itself leads nowhere, runs in chequered, often painful and ruinous circles, takes even to the precipice, because it has no right guidance; it must be connected with the dynamic power of the higher consciousness and with the Divine Force acting through it for a great and luminous purpose.

There are two movements necessary for this connection to be established. One is upward; the vital rises to join with the higher consciousness and steep itself in the light and in the impulsion of a higher force: the other is downward; the vital remains silent, tranquillised, pure, empty of the ordinary movements, waiting, till the dynamic power from above descends into it, changes it to its true self and informs its movements

with knowledge as well as power. That is why the sadhak feels sometimes that he is rising up into a happier and nobler consciousness, entering into a brighter domain and purer experience, but sometimes, on the contrary, feels the necessity of going back into the vital, doing sadhana there and bringing down into it the true consciousness. There is no real contradiction between these two movements; they are complementary and necessary to each other, the ascension enabling the divine descent, the descent fulfilling that for which the ascension aspires and which it makes inevitable.

When you rise with the vital from its lower reaches and join it to the psychic, then your vital being fills with the pure aspiration and devotion natural to the psychic; at the same time it gives to the feelings its own abundant energy, it makes them dynamic for the change of the whole nature down to the most physical and for the bringing down of the divine consciousness into earth matter. When it not only touches the psychic but fuses with the higher mind, it is able to come into contact with and obey a greater light and knowledge. Ordinarily, the vital is either moved by the human mind and governed by its more or less ignorant dictates, or takes violent hold of this mind and uses it for the satisfaction of its own passions, impulses or desires. Or it makes a mixture of these two movements; for the ordinary human mind is too ignorant for a better action or a perfect guidance. But when the vital is in contact with the higher mind, it is possible for it to be guided by a greater light and knowledge, by a higher intuition and inspiration, a truer discrimination and some revelations of the divine truth and the divine will. This obedience of the vital to the psychic and the higher mind is the beginning of the outgoing of the Yogic consciousness in its dynamic action upon life.

But this, too, is not sufficient for the divine life. To come into contact with the higher mind consciousness is not enough, it is only an indispensable stage. There must be a descent of the Divine Force from yet loftier and more powerful reaches. A transformation of the higher consciousness into a supramental light and power, a transformation of the vital and its life-force

into a pure, wide, calm, intense and powerful instrument of the Divine Energy, a transformation of the physical itself into a form of divine light, divine action, strength, beauty and joy are impossible without this descending Force from the now invisible summits. That is why in this Yoga the ascent to the Divine which it has in common with other paths of Yoga is not enough; there must be too a descent of the Divine to transform all the energies of the mind, life and body.

*

There is a stage in the transformation when the Power is pressing on the outer being, especially the vital, and bringing down the higher consciousness. But the natural movements of the vital (anger, restlessness and impatience) are frequently breaking out and disturbing the work. Do not be shaken by that but remain as separate as possible from these movements and let the Force work.

*

It [*a confused inner condition*] is because your sadhana has come down into the vital and in the vital there is not the Light or the higher consciousness. You must aspire for the Light and the true Consciousness to come down into the vital.

*

Your analysis [*of certain vital movements*] is perfectly accurate — with this clear knowledge of the mechanism of the whole thing it should be easier to get rid of these ignorant forces. It is true that they care nothing for truth or reason and appeal only to the blind feelings of the vital, but still the light of the true consciousness turned steadily on them ought to so much enlighten your own vital that it will no longer lend itself to the things that seek to disturb it and be ready to take its stand on the calm and happiness of surrender to the Divine.

*

Of course, it is true that the physical enjoyment is not the only

enjoyment — the vital has its own way of enjoyment. The whole thing is to separate oneself from that and identify oneself with the psychic and spiritual being and through them receive the higher consciousness which will change the vital nature.

The Intuition and the Vital

The vital controlled and transformed by the Intuition has the spontaneous right sense of things instead of groping and getting things by the wrong end due to passion, desire etc.

The Psychic and the Vital

Your former sadhana was mostly on the vital plane. The experiences of the vital plane are very interesting to the sadhak but they are mixed, i.e. not all linked with the higher Truth. A greater, purer and firmer basis for the sadhana has to be established — the psychic basis. For that reason all the old experiences are stopped. The heart has to be made the centre and through bhakti and aspiration you have to bring forward the psychic being and enter into close touch with the Divine Shakti. If you can do this, your sadhana will begin again with a better result.

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Obviously when there is that inability to control and over-eagerness, it must be a movement of a vital nature. The vital can take part in a movement but it must not be in control — it must be subordinated to the psychic.

*

They [*the vital and the psychic*] cannot be reconciled except by the submission of the vital to the psychic. Any other combination means either the submergence of the psychic by vital delusions or a confused and misleading mixture or the use of the psychic aspirations by the vital to justify things that are not spiritual.

*

It is the nature of the psychic pressure to change the former tendencies of the mind, vital and physical consciousness, and remove those that were of the nature of imperfections. This weakness in your outer vital and timidity before others and dependence on them and preoccupation with their opinion of you or their attitude towards you was one of the chief obstacles in your vital nature. If it is now going, it is because of the psychic pressure; for under it these things go slowly but surely.

*

The ordinary human emotions, good and bad, are all of them vital movements. It is only the psychic feelings that come from the deeper heart within which are not vital.

*

What he is having now are the true spiritual and psychic experiences—not those of the vital plane which most have at the beginning. The experiences of the vital plane (in which there is much imagination and fantasy) are useful for opening up the consciousness; but it is when they are replaced by the spiritual and psychic consciousness that there is the beginning of the true progress.

*

When the vital being has been touched by the psychic, mere vital pleasure has no longer any interest, and may also be felt as a disturbance and discomfort because of the lowering effect upon the consciousness.

*

The Ananda you describe is evidently that of the inner vital when it is full of the psychic influence and floods with it the external vital also. It is the true Ananda and there is nothing in it of the old vital nature. When the psychic thus uses the vital to express itself, this kind of intense ecstasy is the natural form it takes. This intensity and the old vital excitement are two quite different things and must not be confused together. Where there

is the intensity with a pure and full satisfaction, contentment and gratitude leaving no room for claim, demand or depressing reaction, that is the true vital movement.

*

I think it needful at this stage of your sadhana to repeat my previous warning about not allowing any vital mixture. It is the crudity of the unregenerated vital that prevents the psychic from remaining always at the front. You have now seen clearly the two different consciousnesses, — according to what you have written in one of your letters, the psychic and the vital. To get rid of the old vital nature is now one of the most pressing needs of your sadhana. You are trying to get rid of the vital attachments and to turn entirely to the Mother. At this juncture you must be careful not to allow the movements of the old vital nature to enter into your relations with the Mother. Take this matter of your wish for more physical nearness to her or contact with her.¹ Take care not to allow this to gain on you or become a desire; for if you do, the vital will begin to play, to create demands and desires, to awaken in you jealousy and envy of others and other undesirable movements, and that would push your psychic being into the background and spoil the whole truth of your sadhana. There are some who have suffered much trouble and difficulty in their Yoga by making this mistake, and I think it therefore better to put you on your guard.

*

The vital may get psychicised or spiritualised, but the vital does not become the psychic or the spiritual part any more than the hand can become the head or the heart. You can put knowledge into the workings of the hand; so too you can put spirituality into the vital, but as the hand remains a hand even when it does the works of intelligence, so the vital remains the vital even when it becomes a pure instrument of the spirit.

¹ *The correspondent had asked to see the Mother for five minutes a day in order to have a short meditation with her. Sri Aurobindo replied that the Mother did not have time for this and had refused all who had made the same request. — Ed.*

The Mind and the Vital

It is evident that your sadhana has been up till now in the mind — that was why you found it easy to concentrate at the crown of the head because the centre there directly commands the whole mental range. The mind quieted and experiencing the effects of the sadhana quieted the vital disturbance, but did not clear and change the vital nature.

Now the sadhana seems to be descending into the vital to clear and change it. The first result is that the difficulty of the vital has shown itself — the ugly images and alarming dreams come from a hostile vital plane which is opposed to the sadhana. From there also comes the renewal of the agitation, the disinclination and resistance to the sadhana. This is not a going back to the old condition, but the result of a pressure of the Yoga-Force on the vital for change to which there is a resistance.

It is this descent of the sadhana to free the vital being that made you feel the necessity of concentrating in the region of the heart; for in the region of the heart is the psychic centre and below, behind the navel, is the vital centre. If these two can be awakened and occupied by the Yoga-Force, then the psychic or Soul-Power will command the whole vital range and purify the vital nature and tranquillise it and turn it towards the Divine. It will be best if you are able to concentrate at will in the heart-region and at the crown of the head, for that gives a more complete power of sadhana.

The other experiences you have are the beginning of the change in the vital, e.g. peace with yourself and those you thought had injured you, joy and freedom from all worldly cares and desires and ambitions. These came too with a quieted mind, but they can be fixed only when the vital is liberated and tranquillised.

Whatever difficulties or troubles arise, the one thing is to go on quietly with full faith in the Divine Power and the guidance, opening steadily and progressively the whole being to the workings of the sadhana till all becomes conscious and consenting to the needed change.

At present your experiences are on the mental plane, but that is the right movement. Many sadhaks are unable to advance because they open the vital plane before the mental and psychic are ready. After some beginning of true spiritual experiences on the mental plane there is a premature descent into the vital and great confusion and disturbance. This has to be guarded against. It is still worse if the vital desire-soul opens to experience before the mind has been touched by the things of the spirit.

Aspire always for the mind and psychic being to be filled with the true consciousness and experience and made ready. You must aspire especially for quietness, peace, a calm faith, an increasing steady wideness, for more and more knowledge, for a deep and intense but quiet devotion.

Do not be troubled by your surroundings and their opposition. These conditions are often imposed at first as a kind of ordeal. If you can remain tranquil and undisturbed and continue your sadhana without allowing yourself to be inwardly troubled under these circumstances, it will help to give you a much needed strength; for the path of Yoga is always beset with inner and outer difficulties and the sadhak must develop a quiet, firm and solid strength to meet them.

*

If you see more clearly any deficiencies of your vital nature and the necessity of a transformation, that itself is a sign of psychic growth. They should not be a cause of discouragement; for these are common defects of the human vital and by an increased psychic opening they will lose their hold and finally disappear.

As for the diminution of mental control over the vital movements, that often happens temporarily in the course of the Yoga. Mental control has to be replaced by a greater control from above and by the calm, purity and strong peace of the vital itself opened to the Divine Force and its government of the whole nature.

Do not allow yourself to be troubled or discouraged by any

difficulties, but quietly and simply open yourself to the Mother's force and allow it to change you.

*

It is not at all true that the Mother takes away the mental control — that is one of the many foolish misinterpretations that certain sadhaks make about the sadhana. What is true — and that is the cause of what you feel — is that when you try to control fully your habitual movements in the vital by the sadhana, instead of sometimes controlling them and sometimes indulging, then they make a violent resistance so that they seem to increase. The sadhak has to stand firm and refuse to be overborne or discouraged by this violence. In dream it is usually the case that even what one has thrown out from the waking state, comes up for a long time — that is because all these things remain still in the subconscious and it is the subconscious that creates a great part of people's dreams. Thus if one no longer has sexual desires in the waking state he can still have sex-dreams — and emissions — with a more or less frequent recurrence; he can still meet people in dreams whom he never sees or hears or thinks of in his waking hours, — and so on. All the more are such dreams likely to come when the waking mind is not free.

*

Once the vital being has come forward and shown its difficulty — there is nobody who has not one crucial difficulty or another there — it must be dealt with and conquered.

It must be dealt with not by the mind but directly by the supramental power.

Not peace and knowledge in the mind, but peace, faith, calm strength in the vital being itself (and especially in this part of it that is defective) is the thing to be established. To open yourself and allow all this to be brought down into it is the proper course.

The deficiency is not in the higher mind or mind proper; there is therefore no use in going back to establish mental peace. The difficulty is in that part of the vital being which is not sufficiently open and confident and not sufficiently strong and

courageous and in the physical mind which lends its support to these things. To get the supramental light and calm and strength and intensity down there is what you need.

You may have all the mental knowledge in the world and yet be impotent to face vital difficulties. Courage, faith, sincerity towards the Light, rejection of opposite suggestions and adverse voices are there the true help. Then only can knowledge itself be at all effective.

Not mental control but some descent of a control from above the mind is the power demanded in the realisation. This control derived eventually from the supermind is a control by the Divine Power.

*

Your difficulty in getting rid of the aboriginal in your nature will remain so long as you try to change your vital part by the sole or main strength of your mind and mental will, calling in at most an indefinite and impersonal divine Power to aid you. It is an old difficulty which has never been radically solved in life itself because it has never been met in the true way. In many ways of Yoga it does not so supremely matter because the aim is not a transformed life but withdrawal from life. When that is the object of an endeavour, it may be sufficient to keep the vital down by a mental and moral compulsion, or else it may be stilled and kept lying in a kind of sleep and quiescence. There are some even who allow it to run and exhaust itself if it can while its possessor professes to be untouched and unconcerned by it; for it is only old Nature running on by a past impetus and will drop off with the fall of the body. When none of these solutions can be attained, the sadhaka sometimes simply leads a double inner life, divided between his spiritual experiences and his vital weaknesses to the end, making the most of his better part, making as little as may be of the outer being. But none of these methods will do for our purpose. If you want a true mastery and transformation of the vital movements, it can be done only on condition you allow your psychic being, the soul in you, to awake fully, to establish its rule and, opening

all to the permanent touch of the divine Shakti, impose its own way of pure devotion, whole-hearted aspiration and complete uncompromising urge to all that is divine on the mind and heart and vital nature. There is no other way and it is no use hankering after a more comfortable path. *Nānyaḥ panthā vidyate'yanāya.*

*

For the mind to be quiet, the vital must be quiet, free of desires etc. or at any rate one must be able to control them so that they shall not interfere with the concentration.

*

What happens usually is that something touches the vital, often without one's knowing it, and brings up the old ordinary or external consciousness in such a way that the inner mind gets covered up and all the old thoughts and feelings return for a time. It is the physical mind that becomes active and gives its assent. If the whole mind remains quiet and detached observing the vital movement, but not giving its assent, then to reject it becomes more easy. This established quietude and detachment of the mind marks always a great step forward made in the sadhana.

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The vital movements are always more difficult to deal with than the pure mental — but it comes with practice.

The Physical and the Vital

It is a great progress if you can now do that [*patiently go on trying, turned always to the Mother*]. The chief difficulty in the way of living in the light as well as the peace and force is the confused and turbid restlessness of man's vital nature. If that is quieted, the major difficulty is gone. There still remains the obstacle of the physical nature's non-understanding or inertia — but that is less troublesome — it is more of the nature of a quiet though sometimes obstinate obstruction than a disturbance. If

the vital inquietude has been cured then certainly the physical obscurity or non-understanding will go.

*

The separate existence of the vital and physical comes to be known of itself usually in the progress of the Yoga. So long as one lives mainly in the surface consciousness one can only know them by their results — one can see that this or that is or must be a movement of the vital etc.; but the direct concrete experience comes only when one begins to live deeper down in the inner being.

Chapter Three

Wrong Movements of the Vital

The Phrase “Wrong Movements”

The phrase [“*wrong movements*”] covers pretty nearly everything that is hurtful to spiritual progress — movements of doubt, revolt, egoistic desire or ambition, sexual indulgence are the most common, but there are plenty of others.

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It depends on what is meant by a wrong or unnecessary movement [*of the vital*]. Certain things have to fall off before the establishment [*of the higher consciousness*] can be *complete*. Others that are unnecessary have to be put aside if they are incompatible with the full sadhana or the growth of the inner consciousness, but can be continued if the consciousness established is such that doing or not doing makes no difference to it.

Vital Reactions

A vital reaction means a response of the vital to the touch or pressure of an idea, action, event, person or thing.

E.g. if someone speaks something you do not like and you get angry, that is a vital reaction. Or if a woman passes and you feel sexual desire, that is a vital reaction. Or if something unpleasant happens and you get a depression, that is a vital reaction. Most disturbances of the consciousness are due to vital reactions, though the mind may assist by wrong thoughts and judgments and misinterpretations. There can be good vital reactions as well as bad, but the term is usually applied to those that are undesirable and have to be surmounted by the sadhak.

The ideal condition is that of a calm, clear, strong vital free from the reactions of the vital ego and responding with true and

high feelings only that are acceptable to the spiritual will and the psychic being.

Vital Suggestions

It would not be at all right to yield to these suggestions which are obviously those of a force that wants to make use of the unease and disappointment of the vital in order to drive you to break your sadhana. These are the usual suggestions that come to all under the stress of this vital condition: "I am not fit for this sadhana. I must go, I cannot stay here. The Mother does not love me. I have given up everything and got nothing. The struggle makes me too miserable; let me go." As a matter of fact there is no real foundation for these suggestions. Because an acute struggle has come, it would be absurd to conclude that you are unfit for the sadhana and to give it up after going so far. It is because you have asked the physical-vital to give up certain of its cherished attachments and habits that it is in this condition; unable to resist altogether, miserable at being deprived, it accepts these suggestions as an excuse for escape from the pressure you have put upon it. The acuteness of the struggle is due to the vehemence of the attack, but still more to this vital or a part of it responding to the suggestions; otherwise a less disturbing even if a slower movement would be quite possible. The Mother has in no way changed towards you nor is she disappointed with you — that is the suggestion drawn from your own state of mind and putting its wrong sense of disappointment and unfitness on to the Mother. She has no reason to change or be disappointed, as she has always been aware of the vital obstacles in you and still expected and expects you to overcome them. The call to change certain things that seem to be in the grain of character is proving difficult even for the best sadhaks, but the difficulty is no proof of incompetence. It is precisely this impulse to go that you must refuse to admit — for so long as these forces think they can bring it about, they will press as much as they can on this point. You must also open yourself more to the Mother's Force in that part and for that it is necessary to get rid of this suggestion about

the Mother's disappointment or lack of love, for it is this which creates the reaction at the time of Pranam. Our help, support, love are there always as before — keep yourself open to them and with their aid drive out these suggestions.

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The feelings and movements of the past always return at night in sleep. It is only when the consciousness that generated them is changed and cleared in the waking state, that afterwards one can clear them out of the sleep also.

You are listening too much to the suggestions of the outer consciousness, “not being able”, etc. etc. Since you did begin to open a little for a time, it shows that you are able. You have to get back to that movement; for that you must persuade this outer vital not to go on repeating, “I am not able, my efforts cannot succeed, I am too crooked etc.” — or if it goes on, you must not listen to it. You must affirm and concentrate on the possibility that was shown you and not on the supposed impossibility.

*

But how is it that any part of you gives any value to the suggestions? If no part gives any value then surely they must seem to you too laughable and contemptible to have any effect or power to make you revolt.

If you attach no value to the suggestions, then there may be the inertia still but not this.

*

The fact that your vital “goes out of the poise” and accepts them [*ego, demand and desire*] means that you keep yourself open to them. The sign that these things are no longer admitted is when the inner vital rejects them so that they become suggestions only and nothing else. There may arise a surge of suggestions or waves from the general nature, but they cannot get admission. It is only then that a will can be kept in which one is untouched by the general atmosphere.

*

It is not the mind, but the psychic being that made the suggestion through the mind. There is a part of the mind that is under the influence of the Truth and can be the channel of the psychic being's knowledge or feeling; there is another part that answers to the vital and expresses and supports the difficulties and oppositions in the nature. If the whole mind refuses to respond to the vital or accept or support its suggestions then much of the force of the vital attack disappears and one is more able to put a pressure on the vital and oblige it also to listen to the psychic and change.

What happened in your case was that the whole vital difficulty — the main one of the family — massed itself together and rose. When an attack like that is overcome, there is always a clearance of the inner atmosphere. It must not be allowed to gather force again — and for that the mind must always follow the psychic suggestion and refuse at once to harbour the opposite suggestions and at the same time keep itself open to the Mother, so that the Mother's Force may come down into it and occupy it and work there.

Vital Restlessness

I have no idea why he wants to change [*his work*]. If he wants to make himself some day fit for the spiritual life, the first thing to be avoided is vital restlessness. To do the work one has to do with a quiet mind, making an offering of it to the Divine and trying to get rid of egoism and vital desire, is the best way to prepare oneself.

*

The bitterness you feel is that of a restless and dissatisfied vital which did not get what it desired because it could not desire anything strongly and persistently. Otherwise it could have all the vital desires — marriage, friends, position etc. — but it could stick to nothing owing to a kind of weak restlessness. In the Yoga it has shown the same restless weakness, — otherwise it could by this time have attained something, and besides there was the

sex-impulse which it would neither satisfy nor leave. You must know what you want and want it with your whole will — it is only so that there can be an end of this restlessness and failure.

*

As for the other thing it is the struggle between the mind and psychic which see the right thing to do and the restless vital. It is not something wrong in the head, on the contrary the head is getting more and more to see what is right; it is only that the vital restlessness is not dominated by the mind and wants to follow its own feeling. That happens to everybody so long as the vital is not properly under our control. Even in ordinary circumstances and in ordinary life the vital is always carrying away the being to do what the mind disapproves, but there it is felt to be something normal, especially as the vital very usually persuades the mind to find arguments and justify its mistakes. You have to persist until the understanding mind and psychic in you become normally stronger than this part of the vital that does not want to be quiet and concentrated or see things rightly. Then you will not be so much troubled by this disagreement between two parts of the being.

*

It is mostly when the sadhana condition is interrupted that the vital becomes agitated or impatient and restless. Instead of remaining quiet and waiting or calling down the real push from above, it begins to get vexed and restless and begins to ask questions: “Why this? why that?” These things do not mean that you are going astray — it means only that these defects are still not worked out, that is all. Also the old vital mental egoism rises up and if the answers do not please it, it becomes challenging, disputatious, insistent on its own point of view. These are old defects which are part of the external nature and therefore difficult to root out. You must learn to recognise them and get rid of them by a quiet rejection and disuse.

*

It is not true that you cannot or will never be put right. It is what appears to you when your lower vital is restless or else your physical mind comes uppermost. Only it is true that if you could keep yourself always in that part of you which is in contact, the thing would be done sooner and with much less difficulty and trouble.

*

If you reject the restlessness of the vital always, the whole being will be at peace and being at peace receive the divine Ananda. Only you must not let the Ananda go out in speech or action nor let it turn into outward vital joy. If you keep it silently within, it will work in you for the transformation.

Vital Dryness

The feeling of the desert comes because of the resistance of the vital which wants life to be governed by desire. If that is not allowed, it regards existence as a desert and puts that impression on the mind.

*

It is the resistance of the vital that takes the form of this dryness — a form of passive resistance, just as revolt or an excited activity of desire is its active form of resistance. But you should not be discouraged — these phases are normal and almost everybody has to face them. It is not really a sign of failure or inability, but a trying part of the process of change. Hold fast and aspire always for the love and the opening. The inner heart is there and that will receive an answer to the aspiration and one day quickly open the outer and make it also receive. To call to the Mother always is the main thing and with that to aspire and assent to the light when it comes, to reject and detach oneself from desire and any dark movement. But if one cannot do these other things successfully, then call and still call.

The Mother's force is there with you even when you do not feel it. Trust to it, remain quiet and persevere.

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Yes, dryness comes usually when the vital — here certainly the vital physical — dislikes a movement or condition or the refusal of its desires and starts non-cooperation. But sometimes it is a condition that has to be crossed through, e.g. the neutral or dry quietude which sometimes comes when the ordinary movements have been thrown out but nothing positive has yet come to take their place (e.g. peace, joy, a higher knowledge or force and action).

*

The ordinary freshness, energy, enthusiasm of the nature comes either from the vital, direct when it is satisfying its own instincts and impulses, indirect when it cooperates with or assents to the mental, physical or spiritual activities. If the vital resists, there is revolt and struggle. If the vital no longer insists on its own impulses and instincts but does not cooperate, there is either dryness or a neutral state. Dryness comes in when the vital is quiescent but passively unwilling, not interested, the neutral state when it neither assents nor is unwilling, — simply quiescent, passive. This however, the neutral state, can deepen into positive calm and peace by a greater influx from above which keeps the vital not only quiescent but at least passively acquiescent. With the active interest and consent of the vital the peace becomes a glad or joyful peace or a strong peace supporting and entering into action or active experience.

*

The dryness is usually only a passage of neutral quiet, — the vital withdrawing its stimulus gives to the neutrality a colour of dryness. To live in the peace is the natural condition of the Self and therefore the basis of the Yogic consciousness — it is possible when the peace has so deepened and generalised itself that even a vital attack cannot cover it up or penetrate it.

*

The slight dryness must have been the reaction caused in the physical vital by the “uninterest” in external things — because the physical vital depends very much on this external interest.

When it gets more accustomed to the silence, then the dryness disappears.

*

The feeling of loneliness, *udāsīnatā*, dryness and lack of *rasa* come very usually when the vital part is disappointed in its desires or tries to give them up but has not yet attained a quiet indifference towards them. It is necessary to replace this condition by the true quietude which will allow the psychic being to become again active and reopen the doors of inner experience, and we shall try to get this done.

*

I do not know that sadness has the power to cure [*dryness in the vital*]. I have myself followed the Gita's path of equanimity — but for some the psychic sadness may be necessary. But I think it is more an indication of a mistake than a cure.

Vital Resistance

The resistance and the contrary suggestions come from the vital nature which is in all men obscure and attached to ordinary ideas and aims and easily listens to such ideas and suggestions as those you mention. Faith and devotion come from the soul and it is only when the vital has entirely submitted to the soul that one can truly lead the spiritual life.

*

It is normal that when a special pressure is put on a vital movement, a resistance whether in the vital itself (here vital-physical) or in the subconscious should manifest itself. It is sometimes a real resistance, sometimes it is only the *pravṛtti* presenting itself for purification.

*

Why should you suppose it [*the effort of sadhana*] is vain? The purification of the vital takes a long time because until all the parts are free, none is quite free and because they use a multitude

of movements which have to be changed or enlightened, — and moreover there is a great habit of persistence and resistance in the habitual movements of the nature. One therefore easily thinks that one has made no progress, — but all sincere and sustained effort of purification has its result and after a time the progress made will become evident.

*

You should not allow yourself to be invaded by this suggestion of not being fit or able to go through. The vital is the most difficult part of the being to change or control and even sadhaks who have advanced far have to struggle with it at times. But its more fundamental resistances can be overcome more quickly, and you have only to persevere in aspiration and opening to the Mother and this kind of denial will after a time come no more.

*

It is this idea that you are helpless because the vital consents to the wrong movement that comes in the way. You have to put your inner will and the Mother's light on the vital so that it shall change, not leave it to do what it likes. If one is to be "helpless" and ruled by any part of the instrumental being, how is change possible? The Mother's force or the psychic can act, but on condition that the assent of the being is there. If the vital is left to do what it likes, it will always go after its old habits; it has to be made to feel that it must change.

*

I suppose it is the nature of the vital which, when a thing is forbidden to it whether by the mind or by circumstances, runs after it more. But I suppose if you remain firm, this will pass.

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When the vital takes hold of a thing it is often like that — it fixes it continually on the mind till it is either satisfied or the hold thrown off.

*

The one thing you have to avoid is losing patience; for that only prolongs the vital trouble. There is no reason for it. When the vital is to be changed (fundamentally) it always gives constant trouble like this until one can seat oneself fixedly in the calm of the inner consciousness and keep the vital movements quite on the surface.

*

It is always better to have peace. As for the vital, there is always something in it that resists and tries to retard, but if the inner being opens sufficiently and you can live in the inner being, peace can descend and establish itself there in such a way that the vital movements of the surface may be there but will not be able to break the inner peace.

Vital Dissatisfaction and Non-Cooperation

It is because the vital was very much under the grip of its desires and so, now that it is separately active, not controlled by mental will, it kicks and cries whenever its desires are not satisfied. That is an ordinary movement of the human vital when not dominated and kept in its place by the mental will.

*

It is an oscillation due to something in the resistant part (not the whole of it) being still dissatisfied at the call to change. When any vital element is disappointed, dissatisfied, called or compelled to change but not yet willing, it has the tendency to create non-response or non-cooperation of the vital, leaving the physical dull or insensible without the vital push. With the psychic pressure this remnant of resistance will pass.

*

There are two conditions in which it [*the vital*] becomes like that [*non-cooperative*]: (1) when its ordinary (ego) actions or motives of action are not allowed to it, (2) when one goes very much down into the physical, the vital sometimes or for a time

becomes inert unless or until there is the Force from above.

*

The nervous being is under the influence of the vital forces; when they are denied or pushed out, it becomes depressed and wants to call them back — for it is accustomed to get the pleasure and strength of life from the vital movements and not from the spiritual or divine Force above.

*

The vital can be all right when things are going on swimmingly, but when difficulties become strong, it sinks and lies supine. Also if a bait is held out to the vital ego, then it can become enthusiastic and active.

*

It seems to be some *tamas* or inertia coming down on the system. It is sometimes like that when the vital gets dissatisfied with the conditions or with what has been attained and initiates a sort of non-cooperation or passive resistance, saying, “As I am not satisfied, I won’t take interest in anything or help you to do anything.”

It may be because I asked you to stop meditating and to wait. The vital does not like waiting. But I had to tell you that because of the burning of the centres, the disturbance of sleep and the rest — these must go before you can meditate in the right way and with success. If you meditate at all now, it should be only in calm and peace with a very quiet aspiration for the divine calm and peace to descend into you.

It is also perhaps due to your penchant for Nirvana. For the desire of Nirvana easily brings this kind of collapse of the energies. Nirvana is not the aim of my Yoga — but whether for Nirvana or for this Yoga, calm and peace in the whole being are the necessary foundation of all *siddhi*.

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For the dissatisfaction of the vital, the only remedy is rejection

and refusal to identify yourself with it. For the inertia the remedy is not to absorb yourself in thoughts about it, but to turn upwards and call the Light and Force to come into it.

Vital Disturbance and Revolt

The exacerbation of certain vital movements is a perfectly well-known phenomenon in Yoga and does not mean that one has degenerated, but only that one has come to close grips instead of to a pleasant nodding acquaintance with the basic instincts of the earthly vital nature. I have had myself the experience of this rising to a height, during a certain stage of the spiritual development, of things that before hardly existed and seemed quite absent in the pre-Yogic life. These things rise up like that because they are fighting for their existence—they are not really personal to you and the vehemence of their attack is not due to any “badness” in the personal nature. I dare say seven sadhaks out of ten have a similar experience. Afterwards when they cannot effect their object which is to drive the sadhak out of his sadhana, the whole thing sinks and there is no longer any vehement trouble. I repeat that the only serious thing about it is the depression created in you and the idea of inability in the Yoga that they take care to impress on the brain when they are at their work. If you can get rid of that, the violence of the vital attacks is only the phenomenon of a stage and does not in the end matter.

*

What you have noticed about the disturbances is true. There are now two consciousnesses in you, the new one that is growing and what is left of the old. The old has something in it which is a habit of the human vital, — the tendency to keep any touch of grief, anger, vexation etc. or any kind of emotional, vital or mental disturbance, to make much of it, to prolong it, not to wish to let it go, to return to it even when the cause of disturbance is past and could be forgotten, always to remember it and bring it up when it can. This is a common trait of human nature and a quite customary movement. The new consciousness on the contrary

does not want these things and when they happen throws them off as quickly as possible. When the new consciousness is fully grown and established, then the disturbances will be altogether rejected. Even if the causes of them happen, there will be no response of grief, anger, vexation etc. in the nature.

*

The one thing necessary is to arrive at a fixed and definite choice in the mind which one can always oppose to the vital disturbance. Disturbance in the vital will always come so long as the full peace has not descended there, but with a fixed resolution in the mind kept always to the front the acuteness of the disturbance can disappear and the road become shorter.

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Usually the vital tries to resist the call to change. That is what is meant by revolt or opposition. If the inner will insists and forbids revolt or opposition, the vital unwillingness may often take the form of depression and dejection accompanied by a resistance in the physical mind which supports the repetition of old ideas, habits, movements or actions which the body consciousness suffers from an apprehension or fear of the called for change, a drawing back from it or a dullness which does not receive the call.

It is these things you have to get rid of. But a sorrowful or despondent mood is not the proper condition for doing that. You have to stand back from the feeling of suffering, anguish and apprehension, reject it and look quietly at the resistance, affirming always to yourself your will to change and insisting that it shall be done and cannot fail to be done now or later with the divine help, because the divine help is there. It is then that the strength can come to you that will overcome the difficulties.

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It was the dissatisfaction of the soul with the superficial vital life that brought you away from the outer world and it is the same dissatisfaction a hundred times increased and accompanied with

an intense psychic sorrow that would come on you if you went away from the Yoga.

Your vital mind (which is the one which revolts and doubts) has strange misconceptions about the spiritual state. There is no grimness in being an instrument of the divine Will—it is the happiest and most joyous condition possible—it brings not only peace but an intense Ananda. Anyhow, the hold of the Yoga-force is increasing in spite of everything and you have only to go on for it to solve the struggle between the outer man and the inner Spirit.

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This part of the vital [*which wants to revolt*] has no precise reasons to support itself with—it takes hold of any mood of disappointment or strong sense of difficulty. It is a factor in all human natures,—restless, desiring, eager, despondent, unstable. Stand back from it and do not allow it to govern or move you. There is a right part of the vital which must be used—ardent, sensitive to the higher things, capable of great love and devotion. Strengthen that and support it on the psychic and on the peace and wideness that comes from above.

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Tell the vital that complaining and revolting only hampers you from getting what it wants—it is only when it is calm and confident that things can be done.

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The outward revolt is the refusal of discipline and obedience—the inward revolt is of many kinds, it may take many forms, e.g. a revolt of the vital against the Mother, a revolt of the mind against the Truth, a rejection of the spiritual life, a demand to enthrone the ego as the Divine or to serve something that flatters the vital ego and supports its demands and call that the Divine, a response to vital suggestions of distrust, despair, self-destruction or departure—and many others.

*

The difficulty must have come from distrust and disobedience. For distrust and disobedience are like falsehood (they are themselves a falsity, based on false ideas and impulses), they interfere in the action of the Power, prevent it from being felt or from working fully and diminish the force of the Protection. Not only in your inward concentration, but in your outward acts and movements you must take the right attitude. If you do that and put everything under the Mother's guidance, you will find that difficulties begin to diminish or are much more easily got over and things become steadily smoother.

In your work and acts you must do the same as in your concentration. Open to the Mother, put them under her guidance, call in the peace, the supporting Power, the protection and, in order that they may work, reject all wrong influences that might come in their way by creating wrong, careless or unconscious movements.

Follow this principle and your whole being will become one, under one rule, in the peace and sheltering Power and Light.

Rejection of Wrong Vital Movements

It is quite true that rising into a higher consciousness than the ordinary human consciousness is the right way towards transformation. Merely to remain in the ordinary lower consciousness and try to reject from there the wrong movements can produce no permanent or complete result. But there are several points here which you must note or this perception may be accompanied by an error.

(1) As you have yourself subsequently seen, all the parts and personalities that constitute the being must share in the higher consciousness, otherwise the old movements under various pretexts will continue.

(2) You speak of rejecting the lower vital, but it is only the unregenerated lower vital movements that can be got rid of; you cannot get rid of the lower vital itself, for it is a necessary part of the manifested nature, like the higher vital or the mind. It has

to be changed in the power of the higher consciousness, not left to itself or dropped from you.

(3) If you do not so change it, if you simply remain content by living in the psychic or other higher consciousness internally then you raise the risk of doing like those who are satisfied to have experiences and some inner quietude or Ananda, but leave the external nature and surface active movements unchanged, either thinking them of no importance or justifying them under the plea that there is the psychic or spiritual consciousness behind them.

I asked you to look for the cause of the abatement of energy or zeal (*utsāha*), because it is evident that there must be some resistance somewhere, otherwise there would not be these constant headaches and this less intense condition. If the physical consciousness is open the headaches should disappear or at least diminish in frequency and force, and if the lower vital is all right, the intensity ought to continue.

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But what do you want to do with all these obscure and useless vital movements that torment you, these wrong thoughts, suggestions, confusions, inabilities etc.? You seem to write as if you thought they must be kept and changed? But why kept and how changed? What would be the use? But precisely what you have got to do is to “shut them out”, to reject, refuse to keep them, refuse to have them. It is precisely to see in another way, to see in the true way, that the Force is pressing on you. It would indeed be a great blessing if you could forget these other wrong things altogether. Again, why do you want to keep and change the “wrong things” as you yourself call them? If you have an illness, do you want to keep and change the pains, the sickness and all the rest of it? It is to throw out the illness that you want, for the body to forget it, not to keep any impression of it, to lose even the possibility of having it again, to live and feel in quite another way, the way of health. It is just the same here.

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These wrong movements [*doubt, depression, sadness, hostility towards the Mother*] belong to the universal vital Nature, but the vital of man also shares in them, makes itself a centre and field of the play of these wrong forces: in that sense they are in you. But by constant rejection they are pushed out; you feel them no longer rising in you but coming from outside. The vital still admits them because it is not yet pure of the old habit of response. You have to persist till they are entirely foreign to your nature and no longer get admittance.

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Keep your resolution firm in your mind. It is the vital that is invaded by something foreign from the outside (universal) Nature; it is not your own feeling. If you keep your resolution firm, the vital also will begin to throw out this foreign matter.

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After each crisis there is something gained, if there has been a victory and rejection. The gain is to externalise the vital disturbance, so that even if it returns it will be felt so much an outside force that the observing consciousness (mental, higher vital) cannot be disturbed. If you keep that, it will be an immense advance.

Return of Vital Movements after Rejection

It was evidently not the action of something that is rooted still within, but an old movement returning from outside (from the universal Nature) to which something in the vital still responds by force of habit, force of accustomed recurrence. This is shown by the fact that you felt nothing at the time — only afterwards; also by the alternations of quiet and unrest after calling the Force, as if of something losing its hold and then trying to get it back and hold on still. Things thrown out always come back like that relying on the old habit of response in the stuff of the nature, — the old vibration. By throwing it out whenever it comes, in the end the part which responds begins to understand that it

must not and is gradually or quickly liberated from the habit.

*

What comes back like that is the old vital movements which you used to have and which you have been throwing out. The vital gets disturbed and filled with these thoughts whenever something happens that hurts or displeases it strongly. To get rid of it one must have always a sense of complete reliance on the Mother, of surrender; that brings a calm which refuses to be moved by any outward happening or by what people do or say, a happiness which is not disturbed by any occurrence.

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It must be that on that occasion the consciousness got lowered and some vital wave came in from the atmosphere resuscitating the old vibrations of the restless vital which had quieted down. You must separate yourself from them and get the poise of quietude again. They have no longer any real basis in mind or heart, they rely only on the force of repetition that comes up from the subconscious and once started try to keep these old ideas and feelings repeating themselves so as to prevent the consciousness from settling down into quietude. But the poise once obtained is there and has only been covered up and has got to be uncovered again from these cloudings. You must get the habit of keeping quiet somewhere in yourself when these attacks come, of keeping something within that refuses to say ditto to these suggestions or accept them as its own proper thoughts and feelings.

Anyhow the Force will be put to help you; receive it and all that will go.

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It is very often when one thinks a particular resistance is finished and is no longer in the vital that it surges up again.

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The only way to get rid of these vital movements is to do

persistently what he describes himself as doing with the invading forces — i.e. he must be always vigilant, try always at every moment to be conscious, always reject these things, refusing to take pleasure in them, call on the Mother, bring down the descent of the Light. If they return persistently he must not be discouraged; it is not possible to change the nature at once, it takes a long time. If, however, he can keep the psychic consciousness in the front, then it will be much easier and there will be much less difficulty and trouble in the change. That can be done by constant aspiration and *abhyāsa*.

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The difficulty you have in your vital is not peculiar to you, but is in some degree and in one form or another a fairly general malady. Its constant return, the mechanical irrational return even when all the rest of the nature has rejected it, is due to the obstinacy of the material consciousness always repeating the old movement in the old groove at the least touch from the old habitual forces. It is a question of faith, patience and persistence. One must be more obstinate than the obstinate material nature and persevere until the light and truth can take permanent hold of the parts which are still responsive to the old movements. There can be no doubt that with this perseverance the Truth will in the end conquer.

It would make it easier if you could get rid of certain fixed ideas and of the habitual reaction of depression or despair when these recurrences come. For instance, you ought to throw away once for all this idea of X's malediction; it is a thing of the past and it is only the physical mind's memory of it that gives it some appearance of survival. The difficulties we are now meeting have nothing to do with X; they are part only of the necessity of conquest over the habits of the physical consciousness and he has nothing to do there and no influence of any kind whatever. Also dismiss any question about the "possibility" of conversion of your vital being; you should see rather that it is certain and not merely possible. This idea of identification with the dark Shakti is also another old notion which you ought to root out

without cherishing any least trace of it. It has no meaning on the plane of the physical and vital physical consciousness where the whole work is now going on and to nourish any such ideas can only hamper your progress. Finally, when there are these recurrences, do not allow yourself to be depressed by them, but simply observe and stand back and call in the higher force with the full confidence that these are mechanical recurrences and in substance nothing more — however strong they may seem in appearance. The principle of mechanical repetition is very strong in the material nature, so strong that it makes one easily think that it is incurable. That however is only a trick of the forces of this material inconscience; it is by creating this impression that they try to endure. If, on the contrary, you remain firm, refuse to be depressed or discouraged and, even in the moment of attack, affirm the certainty of eventual victory, the victory itself will come much more easily and sooner.

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All these things are there in human nature, habitual movements, which show their true nature only when the light of the higher consciousness is turned on them. Even after they have been rejected the possibility of a response to such suggestions from outside remains in the grain of the lower vital or vital physical or the subconscious till there is the full supramental enlightenment there.

Alternation of Good and Bad Vital Conditions

When one tries to change something in the vital, then, due to the nature's habit of persisting in a movement to which it has been accustomed, there is usually an alternation like this; the new condition persists for some days, then the old forces its way for some time to the surface. If one persists, the old movement begins to lose its force and die out and the new permanently replaces it.

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At present I will only say that the alternations you feel are there between your psychic being and the mental and vital parts already submitted to it and the revolted vital parts full of the outcry of the vital ego stressing and increasing by brooding in them its own grievances and sufferings. That is a struggle which every sadhak has to go through with more or less acuteness; but the only way to escape from the suffering and struggle is for the mind to put itself wholly on the side of the soul and bring over the whole vital to the true attitude. It is absurd to think that we know nothing of these things; we know them very well but we know also that the solution lies not in the satisfaction of the revolted vital but in its submission and surrender to the soul within and to the Divine.

Chapter Four

The Lower Vital Being

The Decisive Ordeal of This Yoga

The cardinal defect, that which has been always standing in the way and is now isolated in an extreme prominence, is seated or at least is at present concentrated in the lower vital being. I mean that part of the vital-physical nature with its petty and obstinate egoism which actuates the external human personality, — that which supports its surface thoughts and dominates its habitual ways of feeling, character and action. I am not concerned here with the other parts of the being and I do not speak of anything in the higher mind, the psychic self or the higher and larger vital nature; for when the lower vital rises, these are pushed into the background, if not covered over for the time, by this lower vital being and this external personality. Whatever there may be in these higher parts, aspiration to the Truth, devotion or will to conquer the obstacles and the hostile forces, it cannot become integral, it cannot remain unmixed or unspoilt or continue to be effective so long as the lower vital and the external personality have not accepted the Light and consented to change.

It was inevitable that in the course of the sadhana these inferior parts of the nature should be brought forward in order that like the rest of the being they may make the crucial choice and either accept or refuse transformation. My whole work depends upon this movement; it is the decisive ordeal of this Yoga. For the physical consciousness and the material life cannot change if this does not change. Nothing that may have been done before, no inner illumination, experience, power or Ananda, is of any eventual value if this is not done. If the little external personality is to persist in retaining its obscure and limited, its petty and ignoble, its selfish and false and stupid human consciousness, this amounts to a flat negation of the work and the Sadhana. I have no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the

old fiasco, a partial and transient spiritual opening within with no true and radical change in the law of the external nature. If, then, any sadhaka refuses in practice to admit this change, or if he refuses even to admit the necessity for any change of his lower vital being and his habitual external personality, I am entitled to conclude that, whatever his professions, he has not accepted either myself or my Yoga.

I am well aware that this change is not easy; the dynamic will towards it does not come at once and is difficult to fix and, even afterwards, the sadhaka often feels helpless against the force of habit. Knowing this, the Mother and myself have shown and are still showing sufficient patience in giving time for the true spirit to come up and form and act effectively in the external being of those around us. But if in anyone this part not only becomes obstinate, self-assertive or aggressive, but is supported and justified by the mind and will and tries to spread itself in the atmosphere, then it is a different and very serious matter.

The difficulty in the lower vital being is that it is still wedded to its old self and in revolt against the Light; it has not only not surrendered either to a greater Truth or to myself and the Mother, but it has up to now no such will and hardly any idea even of what true surrender is. When the lower vital assumes this attitude, it takes its stand upon a constant affirmation of the old personality and the past forms of the lower nature. Every time they are discouraged, it supports and brings them back and asserts its right to freedom — the freedom to affirm and follow its own crude and egoistic ideas, desires, fancies, impulses or convenience whenever it chooses. It claims, secretly or in so many words, the right to follow its nature, — its average unregenerate human nature, the right to be itself, — its natural, original, unchanged self with all the falsehood, ignorance and incoherence proper to this part of the being. And it claims or, if it does not claim in theory, it asserts in practice the right to express all this impure and inferior stuff in speech and act and behaviour. It defends, glosses over, paints in specious colours and tries to prolong indefinitely the past habitual ways of thinking, speaking and feeling and to eternise what is distorted and

misformed in the character. This it does sometimes by open self-assertion and revolt, branding all that is done or said against it as error or oppression or injustice, sometimes behind a cover of self-deception or a mask of dissimulation, professing one thing and practising another. Often it tries to persuade itself and to convince others that these things are the only right reason and right way of acting for itself or for all or even that they are part of the true movement of the Yoga.

When this lower vital being is allowed to influence the action, as happens when the sadhaka in any way endorses its suggestions, its attitude, whether masked to himself or coming to the surface, dictates a considerable part of his speech and action and against it he makes no serious resistance. If he is frank with himself and straightforward to the Mother, he will begin to recognise the source and nature of the obstacle and will soon be on the direct road to correct and change it. But this, when under the adverse influence, he persistently refuses to be; he prefers to hide up these movements under any kind of concealment, denial, justification or excuse or other shelter.

In the nature the resistance takes certain characteristic forms which add to the confusion and to the difficulty of transformation. It is necessary to outline some of these forms because they are sufficiently common, in some in a less, in others in a greater degree, to demand a clear and strong exposure.

1. A certain vanity and arrogance and self-assertive rajasic vehemence which in this smaller vital being are, for those who have a pronounced strength in these parts, the deformation of the vital force and habit of leading and domination that certain qualities in the higher vital gave them. This is accompanied by an excessive *amour-propre* which creates the necessity of making a figure, maintaining by any means position and prestige, even of posturing before others, influencing, controlling or “helping” them, claiming the part of a superior sadhaka, one with greater knowledge and with occult powers. The larger vital being itself has to give up its powers and capacities to the Divine Shakti from whom they come and must use them only as the Mother’s instrument and according to her directions; if it intervenes with

the claim of its ego and puts itself between her and the work or between her and other sadhakas, then whatever its natural power, it deviates from the true way, spoils the work, brings in adverse forces and wrong movements and does harm to those whom it imagines it is helping. When these things are transferred to the smallness of the lower vital nature and the external personality and take lower and pettier forms, they become still more false to the Truth, incongruous, grotesque, and at the same time can be viciously harmful, though in a smaller groove. There is no better way of calling in hostile forces into the general work or of vitiating and exposing to their influence one's own sadhana. On a smaller scale these defects of vanity, arrogance and rajasic violence are present in most human natures. They take other forms, but are then also a great obstacle to any true spiritual change.

2. Disobedience and indiscipline. This lower part of the being is always random, wayward, self-assertive and unwilling to accept the imposition on it of any order and discipline other than its own idea or impulse. Its defects even from the beginning stand in the way of the efforts of the higher vital to impose on the nature a truly regenerating tapasya. This habit of disobedience and disregard of discipline is so strong that it does not always need to be deliberate; the response to it seems to be immediate, irresistible and instinctive. Thus obedience to the Mother is repeatedly promised or professed, but the action done or the course followed is frequently the very opposite of the profession or promise. This constant indiscipline is a radical obstacle to the sadhana and the worst possible example to others.

3. Dissimulation and falsity of speech. This is an exceedingly injurious habit of the lower nature. Those who are not straightforward cannot profit by the Mother's help, for they themselves turn it away. Unless they change, they cannot hope for the descent of the supramental Light and Truth into the lower vital and physical nature; they remain stuck in their own self-created mud and cannot progress. Often it is not mere exaggeration or a false use of the imagination embroidering on the actual truth that is marked in the sadhaka, but also a positive denial and distortion as well as a falsifying concealment of facts. This

he does sometimes to cover up his disobedience or wrong or doubtful course of action, sometimes to keep up his position, at others to get his own way or indulge his preferred habits and desires. Very often, when one has this kind of vital habit, he clouds his own consciousness and does not altogether realise the falsity of what he is saying or doing; but in much that he says and does, it is quite impossible to extend to him even this inadequate excuse.

4. A dangerous habit of constant self-justification. When this becomes strong in the sadhaka, it is impossible to turn him in this part of his being to the right consciousness and action because at each step his whole preoccupation is to justify himself. His mind rushes at once to maintain his own idea, his own position or his own course of action. This he is ready to do by any kind of argument, sometimes the most clumsy and foolish or inconsistent with what he has been protesting the moment before, by any kind of misstatement or any kind of device. This is a common misuse, but none the less a misuse of the thinking mind; but it takes in him exaggerated proportions and so long as he keeps to it, it will be impossible for him to see or live the Truth.

Whatever the difficulties of the nature, however long and painful the process of dealing with them, they cannot stand to the end against the Truth, if there is or if there comes in these parts the true spirit, attitude and endeavour. But if a sadhaka continues out of self-esteem and self-will or out of tamasic inertia to shut his eyes or harden his heart against the Light, so long as he does that, no one can help him. The consent of all the being is necessary for the divine change, and it is the completeness and fullness of the consent that constitutes the integral surrender. But the consent of the lower vital must not be only a mental profession or a passing emotional adhesion; it must translate itself into an abiding attitude and a persistent and consistent action.

This Yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity; the work is too

high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature. It cannot be done if you insist on identifying these lowest things of the Ignorance with the divine Truth or even the lesser truth permissible on the way. It cannot be done if you cling to your past self and its old mental, vital and physical formations and habits; one has continually to leave behind his past selves and to see, act and live from an always higher and higher conscious level. It cannot be done if you insist on "freedom" for your human mind and vital ego. All the parts of the human being are entitled to express and satisfy themselves in their own way at their own risk and peril, if he so chooses, as long as he leads the ordinary life. But to enter into a path of Yoga whose whole object is to substitute for these human things the law and power of a greater Truth and the whole heart of whose method is surrender to the Divine Shakti, and yet to go on claiming this so-called freedom which is no more than a subjection to certain ignorant cosmic Forces, is to indulge in a blind contradiction and to claim the right to lead a double life.

Least of all can this Yoga be done if those who profess to be its sadhakas continue always to make themselves centres, instruments or spokesmen of the forces of the Ignorance which oppose, deny and ridicule its very principle and object. On one side there is the supramental realisation, the overshadowing and descending power of the supramental Divine, the light and force of a far greater Truth than any yet realised on the earth, something therefore beyond what the little human mind and its logic regard as the only permanent realities, something whose nature and way and process of development here it cannot conceive or perceive by its own inadequate instruments or judge by its puerile standards; in spite of all opposition this is pressing down for manifestation in the physical consciousness and the material

life. On the other side is this lower vital nature with all its pretentious arrogance, ignorance, obscurity, dullness or incompetent turbulence, standing for its own prolongation, standing against the descent, refusing to believe in any real reality or real possibility of a supramental or suprahuman consciousness and creation or, still more absurd, demanding, if it exists at all, that it should conform to its own little standards, seizing greedily upon everything that seems to disprove it, denying the presence of the Divine — for it knows that without that presence the work is impossible, — affirming loudly its own thoughts, judgments, desires, instincts, and, if these are contradicted, avenging itself by casting abroad doubt, denial, disparaging criticism, revolt and disorder. These are the two things now in presence between which every one will have to choose.

For this opposition, this sterile obstruction and blockade against the descent of the divine Truth cannot last for ever. Every one must come down finally on one side or the other, on the side of the Truth or against it. The supramental realisation cannot coexist with the persistence of the lower Ignorance; it is incompatible with continued satisfaction in a double nature.

The Lower Vital Not Reasonable

The lower vital is not a part that listens to reason. There is no *why* to its action; it acts in a particular way because it has long been accustomed to act in that way, and it goes on even if the doing brings a painful reaction.

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The lower vital is very slow in listening to reason — at least when reason is on the side of Truth; although it is very pleased to listen to the mind when the mind justifies the lower vital's wrong movements. In fact the lower vital moves on its own lines, not according to Truth or reason. It is only the insistence of a stronger Light that can enlighten it by changing it in its own substance of consciousness.

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It is the lower vital energy that rushes to the brain and either confuses it and prevents mental self-control or else makes the mind its slave and uses reason to justify the passions.

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It is the lower (physical) vital that acts like that [*expresses wrong thoughts and feelings*]. This part of Nature does not act according to reason, it has no understanding of things. It acts only according to desire, impulse and habit. The mind and the heart and the higher vital have understood and put themselves on the side of the Peace and Force that are acting to transform the nature. But this still responds to the old forces when they touch it. It is a question of getting down the Peace and Force and Light into this part, so that whenever the outside forces of the lower Nature touch they will find that force there and not the old response. It is a little difficult because of the long past habit, but it will come more and more as the Force descends into the body and pervades it in its descent.

The Resistance of the Lower Vital

In all it is the lower vital that is most full of ignorance and desire and therefore of falsehood.

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There is very commonly a gulf between the higher parts and the lower vital even in ordinary life — in Yoga it is apt to get emphasised until the lower vital changes, but if we can judge from the majority of people here, that change is most extraordinarily difficult.

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The struggle is always hard with the lower vital nature — because it has been indulged through so many lives and it is not easily made willing to change.

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There is certainly a sincere will to change. This resistance of the lower vital is usual in everybody—it is the main difficulty in Yoga. If it were not there, the change would be easy. But once the steady mental will is there, it is a question of time and steady sadhana. With that the change is sure.

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The resistance of the nerves persists because there is always a restlessness in the lower vital due to past errors and what they have left in the being until this part can be entirely opened to the peace and light and the presence of the Mother. It is towards this that your sadhana must be directed and you should not be discouraged if there is some resistance or even a strong resistance. That always happens; if the resistance is quietly and steadily rejected, then it can be overcome.

Rejecting Wrong Movements of the Lower Vital

The lower vital in most human beings is full of grave defects and of movements that respond to hostile forces. A constant psychic opening, a persistent rejection of these influences, a separation of oneself from all hostile suggestions and the inflow of the calm, light, peace, purity of the Mother's power would eventually free the system from the siege.

What is needed is to be quiet and more and more quiet, to look on these influences as something not yourself which has intruded, to separate yourself from it and deny it and to abide in a quiet confidence in the Divine Power. If your psychic being asks for the Divine and your mind is sincere and calls for liberation from the lower nature and from all hostile forces and if you can call the Mother's power into your heart and rely upon it more than on your own strength, this siege will in the end be driven away from you and strength and peace take its place.

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It [*a troubled state of mind*] is because you entered on a wrong movement, taking the lower vital experiences for truth. You now

find it difficult to get rid of them because of the hold you gave them. The two lines of forces are the line of these lower vital forces and the line of the true movement of forces resting on the psychic consciousness and opening the true mind, the true vital, the true physical consciousness to the action of the Higher Force. If you persist in rejecting the former and aspiring for the latter, the struggle will diminish after a time and the true path become more and more clear. Fidelity always and at every moment is what is required of you.

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The condition [*for the change of the lower vital*] is that you must bring the sadhana into your physical consciousness and live for the sadhana and the Divine only. You must give up positively the bad habits that still persist and never resume those that have ceased or been interrupted. Inner experiences are helpful to the mind and higher vital for change, but for the lower vital and the outer being a sadhana of self-discipline is indispensable. The external actions and the spirit in them must change — your external thoughts and actions must be for the Divine only. There must be self-restraint, entire truthfulness, a constant thought of the Divine in all you do. This is the way for the change of the lower vital. By your constant self-dedication and self-discipline the Force will be brought down into the external being and the change made.

At present you have to go back, but this can very well be done outside. When it is done, then you will be truly ready for the complete spiritual life.

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There can be only one “solution” of this kind of struggle, — to recognise these feelings for what they are, unregenerated movements of the old vital nature, and to reject these vital suggestions as suggestions of adverse forces that want to push you out of the straight path. If the mind of the sadhak supports these vital movements, if any part of his nature accepts and cherishes them, then, so long as he allows them to do so, he cannot get rid of the struggle.

All these suggestions are very familiar, and they are always the same both in expression and substance. The reactions too are always the same and their very nature is sufficient to show the source from which they come, — disappointment of unsatisfied desire, despondency, discontent, unhappiness, the sense of grievance and injustice, revolt, a fall to *tamas* and inertia (because the vital being refuses participation in the spiritual effort unless its egoistic demands are conceded), dryness, dullness, cessation of the *sadhana*. The same phrases even are repeated, — “no life in this existence”, “suffocation”, “limitation”, “air-tight compartments”; and all this simply means that the lower vital nature — or some part of it — is in revolt and wants something else than the divine Truth and the *tapasya* that leads to the supramental change. It refuses to give up ego and desire and claim and demand or to accept a true self-giving and surrender, while yet it feels the pressure on it to transform itself into an instrument of the divine life. It is this pressure that it calls suffocation. The refusal to let it expand its desires and make a big place for itself it calls limitation of the being. The calm, purity, collected silence which are the basis of the *tapasya* for the supramental change, — this is what it stigmatises as “no life”. Right rule and insistence on self-denial and self-mastery and restraint from claim and demand are what it calls air-tight compartments. And the worst suggestions and most dangerous deception come when this spirit of demand and desire is dissimulated in a spiritual garb and takes a form which makes it seem to the *sadhak* a part of the *Yoga*.

There is only one way of escape from this siege of the lower vital nature. It is the entire rejection of all egoistic vital demand, claim and desire and the replacement of the dissatisfied vital urge by the purity of psychic aspiration. Not the satisfaction of these vital clamours nor, either, an ascetic retirement is the true solution, but the surrender of the vital being to the Divine and a single-minded consecration to the supreme Truth into which desire and demand cannot enter. For the nature of the supreme Truth is Light and Ananda, and where desire and demand are there can be no Ananda.

It is not the vital demand but the psychic urge that alone can

bring the nature towards the supramental transformation; for it alone can change the mental and vital and show them their own true movement. But constantly the vital demand is being taken for the psychic aspiration; and yet the difference is clear. In the psychic aspiration there are none of these reactions; there is no revolt, no justification of revolt: for the psychic aspires through inner union with the Divine and surrender. It does not question and challenge, but seeks to understand through unity with the Divine Will. It does not ask for small personal satisfactions, but finds its satisfaction in the growth of the Truth within the being; what it seeks and finds is not any indulgence of a vital and physical claim, but the true nearness which consists in the constant presence of the Divine in the heart and the rule of the Divine in all the nature. The cry of the psychic is always, "Let the Truth prevail, let Thy will be done and not mine." But the clamour of the vital is the very opposite: it calls to the Divine, "Let my will be Thine; obey my insinuations, satisfy my desires, then only will I seek and accept Thee, for then only will I consent to see the Divine in Thee." It is hardly necessary to say which is the way to the Truth or which the right solution of any struggle in the nature.

The only creation for which there is any place here is the supramental, the bringing of the divine Truth down on the earth, not only into the mind and vital but into the body and into Matter. Our object is not to remove all "limitations" on the expansion of the ego or to give a free field and make unlimited room for the fulfilment of the ideas of the human mind or the desires of the ego-centred life-force. None of us are here to "do as we like", or to create a world in which we shall at last be able to do as we like; we are here to do what the Divine wills and to create a world in which the Divine Will can manifest its truth no longer deformed by human ignorance or perverted and mistranslated by vital desire. The work which the sadhak of the supramental Yoga has to do is not his own work for which he can lay down his own conditions, but the work of the Divine which he has to do according to the conditions laid down by the Divine. Our Yoga is not for our own sake but for

the sake of the Divine. It is not our own personal manifestation that we are to seek, the manifestation of the individual ego freed from all bounds and from all bonds, but the manifestation of the Divine. Of that manifestation our own spiritual liberation, perfection, fullness is to be a result and a part, but not in any egoistic sense or for any ego-centred or self-seeking purpose. This liberation, perfection, fullness too must not be pursued for our own sake, but for the sake of the Divine. I emphasise this character of the creation because a constant forgetfulness of this simple and central truth, a conscious, half-conscious or wholly ignorant confusion about it has been at the root of most of the vital revolts that have spoiled many an individual sadhana here and disturbed the progress of the general inner work and the spiritual atmosphere.

The supramental creation, since it is to be a creation upon earth, must be not only an inner change but a physical and external manifestation also. And it is precisely for this part of the work, the most difficult of all, that surrender is most needful; for this reason, that it is the actual descent of the supramental Divine into Matter and the working of the Divine Presence and Power there that can alone make the physical and external change possible. Even the most powerful self-assertion of human will and endeavour is impotent to bring it about; as for egoistic insistence and vital revolt, they are, so long as they last, insuperable obstacles to the descent. Only a calm, pure and surrendered physical consciousness, full of the psychic aspiration, can be its field; this alone can make an effective opening of the material being to the Light and Power and the supramental change a thing actual and practicable. It is for this that we are here in the body, and it is for this that you and other sadhaks are in the Asram near us. But it is not by insistence on petty demands and satisfactions in the external field or on an outer nearness pleasing to the vital nature and its pride or desire that you can get the true relation with the Divine in this province. If you want the realisation there, it is the true nearness that you must seek, the descent and presence of the Mother in your physical consciousness, her constant inner touch in the physical being

and its activities, her will and knowledge behind all its work and thought and movement and the ever present Ananda of that presence expelling all vital and physical separateness, craving and desire. If you have that, then you have all the nearness you can ask for and the rest you will gladly leave to the Mother's knowledge and will to decide. For with this in you there can be no feeling of being kept away, no sense of "gulf" and "distance", no complaint of a unity that is lacking or an empty dryness and denial of nearness.

A time comes when after a long preparation of the mind and vital being, it becomes necessary to open also the physical nature. But when that happens, very often the vital exaltation which can be very great when the experience is on its own plane, falls away and the obscure, obstructive physical and material consciousness appears in its unrelieved inertia. Inertia, *tamas*, stupidity, narrowness and limitation, an inability to progress, doubt, dullness, dryness, a constant forgetfulness of the spiritual experiences received are the characteristics of the unregenerated physical nature, when that is not pushed by the vital and is not supported either by the higher mental will and intelligence. This seems to be in part what has temporarily happened to you, but the way out is not to excite the physical by any vital revolt and outcry or to blame for your condition either circumstances or the Mother, — for that will only make things worse and increase the *tamas*, dryness, dullness, inertia, — but to recognise that there is here an element of the universal Nature reflected in yours which you must eliminate. And this can only be done by more and more surrender and aspiration and by so bringing in from beyond the vital and the mind the divine peace, light, power and presence. This is the only way towards the transformation and fulfilment of the physical nature.

I do not think after what I have written, I need add anything about the specific complaints that you make in your letter. Two things perhaps need to be made clear. First, the arrangements actually in existence about the work, about external demands, about correspondence and "seeing" people are the only feasible ones in the present circumstances if the heavy work the Mother

has to do is to be at all physically possible. Next, it is precisely by action in silence that we can best do our work much more than by speech or writing, which can only be subordinate and secondary. For in this Yoga those will succeed best who know how to obey and follow the written and spoken word, but can also bear the silence and feel in it and receive (without listening to other voices or mistaking mental and vital suggestions and impulsions for the divine Truth and the divine Will) help, support and guidance.

Avoiding Premature Engagement with the Lower Vital

You cannot escape from these lower vital forces by being curious about them. This kind of curiosity only encourages and invites them and keeps them recurring. Their whole force is in their power of mechanical recurrence and, if you allow that, you will never get rid of them. Incoherence and confusion are the very nature of these forces and, if you encourage them, your whole nature will become a field of confusion and incoherence. The only way to know them and get rid of them is to be always above, in your true consciousness, in contact with the Mother's light and force. The light and force will then descend upon them, at once showing what they are and dissolving and eliminating them and changing that part of the nature. But first you must learn to keep always in contact with the Mother, always in the true consciousness, only then can these things be dealt with safely.

Do not go down into these lower unredeemed parts without the Mother's force with you. If you feel yourself down, remain quiet, call on the Mother and her force, but do not try to deal with it by your mind. But as far as possible resist the downward movement so long as the true consciousness is not settled in you.

*

It is certainly possible to draw forces from below. It may be the hidden divine forces from below that rise at your pull, and then this motion upward completes the motion and effort of the divine force from above, helping especially to bring it into the

body. Or it may be the obscure forces from below that respond to the summons, and then this kind of drawing brings either *tamas* or disturbance — sometimes great masses of inertia or a formidable upheaval and disturbance.

The lower vital is a very obscure plane and it can be fully opened with advantage only when the other planes above it have been thrown wide to light and knowledge. One who concentrates on the lower vital without that higher preparation and without knowledge is likely to fall into many confusions. This does not mean that experiences of this plane may not come earlier or even at the beginning; they do come of themselves, but they must not be given too large a place.

*

In the lower vital all is a working of general forces which try to seize upon the individual and use him for their satisfaction; they are not his forces at all. In the mind or the higher vital it is much easier to establish some kind of control over the forces. That is the very reason why one should never put oneself into the control of these forces or make oneself a free crossways for their passage. It is only by opening to the Mother's force alone that a control can be established over these lower workings.

Ananda and the Lower Vital

It is indeed in the lower vital that there is the main difficulty for the spiritual change of human nature. If that were not there, the rest could be more easily dealt with and there would be no long resistance. The vital pleasure is not a true Ananda, but only a pleasant excitement which cannot abide — that pleasure and grief and pain are always near to each other and the consciousness passes easily from one to the other. One has to establish peace and quietude there, so that the true psychic and spiritual joy can take the place. It is the touch of the psychic that gives the soothing effect of which you speak.

*

Evidently, the condition into which you have fallen is due to an upsurging of suppressed elements in the lower vital nature. It has been compelled by the mind and the higher vital part in you to give up the little “joys and pleasures” to which it was habituated, but it — or at any rate the subconscious part of it which is often the most powerful — did that without entire conviction and probably with “reservations” and “safeguards” and in exchange for a promise of compensations, other and greater joys and pleasures to replace all it was losing. This is evident from what you write; your description of the nature of the depression, the return of what you call impure thoughts which are merely indices of the subconscious lower vital desire-complex, the doubt thrown upon the generosity of the Divine, the demand for compensation for losses, something like striking a bargain with the Divine, a *quid pro quo* pact, are all unmistakable. Latterly, there has been a combination of circumstances (*X*'s turning inwards, *Y*'s emigration etc.) which have rather suddenly increased the deprivation of its former outlets; this attack is its way of non-cooperation or protest. There is only one way to deal with it, — to cast the whole thing away — depression, demands, doubts, sex-thoughts, the whole undesirable baggage, — and have in its place the one true movement, the call for the true consciousness and the presence of the Divine.

It may be that behind this persistence of the lower vital demand for satisfaction there was something not quite clear — in the obscurer part of the physical mind — in your mental attitude towards the Yoga. You seem to regard this demand for the replacement of the old lower vital satisfactions by other joys and pleasures as something quite legitimate; but joys and pleasures are not the object of Yoga and a bargain or demand for a replacement of this kind can be no legitimate or healthy element in the sadhana. If it is there, it will surely impede the flow of spiritual experience. Ananda, yes; but Ananda and the spiritual happiness which precedes it (*adhyātma-sukham*) are something quite different from joys and pleasures. And even Ananda one cannot demand or make it a condition for pursuing the sadhana — it comes as a crown, a natural outcome and

its precondition is the growth of the true consciousness, peace, calm, light, strength, the equanimity which resists all shocks and persists through success and failure. It is these things which must be the first objects of the sadhana, not any hedonistic experience even of the highest kind; for that must come of itself as a result of the Divine Presence.

I would rather like you to tell me what, *precisely*, you do in your hours of meditation, how you do it and what happens within you.

Meanwhile the first thing you must do is to throw out this perilous stuff of despondency and its accompaniments and recover a quiet and clear balance. A quiet mind and a quiet vital are the first conditions for success in sadhana.

*

To live within does not mean to give up reading and writing or other external activities; I shall try to explain to you what I meant. I had in fact started to do so when you had your last fit of despondency, but stopped when you recovered, thinking it was not after all necessary and supposing besides that the essential in what I was about to write must already be known to you. Now, however, that the despondency has returned and you put the question, I will this time try to explain the whole matter.

It is evident that you still cherish some misunderstanding about peace and joy and Ananda. (Peace by the way is not joy — for peace can be there even when joy is quiescent.) It is not a fact that one ought not to pray or aspire for peace or spiritual joy. Peace is the very basis of all the siddhi in the Yoga, and why should not one pray or aspire for foundation in the Yoga? Spiritual joy or a deep inner happiness (not disturbed even when there come superficial storms or perturbations) is a constant concomitant of contact or union with the Divine, and why should it be forbidden to pray or aspire for contact with the Divine and the joy that attends it? As for Ananda, I have already explained that I mean by Ananda something greater than peace or joy, something that, like Truth and Light, is the very nature of the supramental Divine. It can come by frequent inrushes or

descents, partially or for a time even now, but it cannot remain in the system so long as the system has not been prepared for it. Meanwhile, peace and joy can be there permanently, but the condition of this permanence is that one should have the constant contact or indwelling of the Divine, and this comes naturally not to the outer mind or vital but to the inner soul or psychic being. Therefore one who wants his Yoga to be a path of peace or joy, must be prepared to dwell in his soul rather than in his outer mental and emotional nature.

I objected in a former letter not to aspiration but to a demand, to making peace, joy or Ananda a condition for following the Yoga. And it is undesirable because if you do so, then the vital, not the psychic, takes the lead. When the vital takes the lead, then unrest, despondency, unhappiness can always come, since these things are the very nature of the vital—the vital can never remain constantly in joy and peace, for it needs their opposites in order to have the sense of the drama of life. And yet when unrest and unhappiness come, the vital at once cries, “I am not given my due, what is the use of my doing this Yoga?” Or else it makes a gospel of its unhappiness and says, as you say in your letter, that the path to fulfilment must be a tragic road through the desert. And yet it is precisely this predominance of the vital in us that makes the necessity of passing through the desert. If the psychic were always there in front, the desert would be no longer a desert and the wilderness would blossom with the rose.

Apropos, if your despondency has lasted so long this time, is it not because something in the vital has been clinging to it, justifying it on one ground or another? That at least is what I have felt, every time we have tried to remove it.

Aspiration and Offering in the Lower Vital

Sometimes the aspiration is felt at the navel, but that is part of the larger vital. The lower vital is below. The lower vital aspires by offering all its small movements in the fire of purification, by calling for the light and power to descend into it and rid it

of its little greeds, jealousies, resistances and revolts over small matters, angers, vanities, sexualities etc. to be replaced by the right movements governed by selflessness, purity, obedience to the urge of the Divine Force in all things.

*

It is evident that the lower vital has received the Divine Consciousness when even in the small movements of life there is an aspiration to the Divine, a reference as it were to the Divine Light for guidance or some feeling of offering to the Divine or guidance by the Divine. The lower vital commands the little details of emotion, impulse, sensation, action — it is these that, when converted, it offers to the Divine control for transformation.

Peace and Calm in the Lower Vital

The peacefulness in the lower abdomen is very good, for it means that the true consciousness is settling down in the lower vital — if the lower vital is liberated and peaceful, there is little ground for any perturbations to come.

*

It is what I meant when I spoke of something remaining calm even behind the surface disturbances. What happens is that some part of the being becomes quieted, enlightened and strong — say the mind or the mind and the higher vital. But perhaps the lower vital and the physical may be only temporarily influenced and quieted — in time the work begins on them to change permanently, and owing to some outer touch or the pressure of the hostile forces or the lower nature their possibilities of egoism or unrest rise up and have to be dealt with. The advantage is, as you have seen, that a part of the nature is there in which you can stand and deal with the still recalcitrant parts. One has to remain firm and persistently bring what has been gained down into the lower parts, till there is a permanent peace and freedom assured in the whole nature.

Section Two

Vital Temperament

Chapter One

Cheerfulness and Happiness

Cheerfulness

Cheerfulness is the salt of sadhana. It is a thousand times better than gloominess.

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Be more cheerful and confident. Sex and Doubt and Co. are there, no doubt, but the Divine is there also inside you. Open your eyes and look and look till the veil is rent and you see Him — or Her.

*

The change noted by X evidently indicates a great progress in the vital and physical being. There is nothing spiritually wrong in being glad and cheerful, on the contrary it is the right thing. As for struggles and aspiration, struggles are really not indispensable to progress and there are many people who get so habituated to the struggling attitude that they have all the time struggles and very little else. That is not desirable. There is a sunlit path as well as a gloomy one and it is the better of the two — a path in which one goes forward in absolute reliance on the Mother, fearing nothing, sorrowing over nothing. Aspiration is needed but there can be a sunlit aspiration full of light and faith and confidence and joy. If difficulty comes, even that can be faced with a smile.

*

It is that cheerfulness that we want to be always there in you. It is the happiness of the psychic that has found its way and, whatever difficulties come, is sure that it will be led forward and reach the goal. When a sadhak has that constantly, we know that he has got over the worst difficulty and that he is now firmly on the safe path.

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The cheerfulness [*of joking and hilarity*] is vital. I do not say that it should not be there, but there is a deeper cheerfulness, an inner *sukhahāsyā* which is the spiritual condition of cheerfulness.

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It is an inner joy and cheerfulness that helps, but this [*light joking*] is merely a vital bubbling on the surface. It is all right in ordinary life, but in Yoga it merely expends the vital force for nothing.

Humour and Seriousness

Sense of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have got utterly out of balance — it is unbalanced enough already — and rushed to blazes long ago.

*

I am not aware that highly evolved personalities have no sense of humour or how the person can be said to be integrated when this sense is lacking; “looseness” applies only to a frivolous levity without any substance behind it. There is no law that wisdom should be something rigidly solemn and without a smile.

*

Whatever seriousness is necessary must come of itself from within. To be serious outwardly by rule is not needed.

*

Why on earth should people not be serious if they want? Life may be a joke, — though all do not find it so — but one can't be laughing at it all the time. The idea seems to be that one can't be serious unless one is either (1) in a rage, (2) discontented, (3) sad and miserable. But surely one can be serious when one is thinking or when one is looking at serious things or simply and purely when one is not laughing. And one can't be laughing 24 hours without stopping, — the muscles of the stomach would

not stand it and even the American record makers might shy at such a test.

*

What you write about X is quite correct. It is not necessary to be always serious of face or silent in doing the Yoga, but it is necessary to take the Yoga seriously and silence and inward concentration have a large place. One can't be all the time throwing oneself outward if to go inside and meet the Divine there is one's aim. But that does not mean that one has to be grave and gloomy all the time or gloomy a big part of the time, and I don't suppose the sadhaks here are like that. It is X's rhetorical way of putting his difficulty — the difficulty of a vital that wants to throw itself always outward in action and emotion while another part is dissatisfied with the result and feels that its own movement is frustrated. There are two people in him, one wanting a life of vital expansion, the other an inner life. The first gets restless because the inner life is not a life of outward expansion; the other becomes miserable because its aim is not realised. Neither personality need be thrown away in this Yoga; but the outer vital one must allow the inner to establish itself, give it the first place and consent to be only an instrument of the soul and to obey the law of the inner life. This is what X's mind still refuses to understand; he thinks one must be either all gloomy and cold and grave or else bring the vital bubble and effervescence into the inner life. A quiet, happy and glad control of the vital by the inner being is a thing he is not able as yet to conceive.

Happiness and Contentment

Happiness in the ordinary sense is a sunlit state of the vital with or without cause. Contentment is less than happiness — joy of peace or being free from difficulty is rather a state of joyful *śānti*. Happiness ought not to be a state of self-satisfaction or inertia, and need not be, for one can combine happiness and aspiration. Of course there can be a state of happy inertia, but most people don't remain satisfied with that long, they begin to

want something else. There are Yogins who are satisfied with a happy calm immobility, but that is because the happiness is a form of Ananda and in the immobility they feel the Self and its eternal calm and want nothing more.

Chapter Two

Sorrow and Suffering

Joy and Sorrow

Joy is a vital feeling, like its opposite, sorrow.

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There is no real reason why delight should necessarily be followed by sorrow — except that it is the habit of the vital. But that habit can be overcome.

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It is dangerous to have a heart insisting on its own vital emotions. Not to be the slave of vital joy or sorrow is a condition one has to pass through in order to arrive at true Anandam. If people are right [*that a heart indifferent to joy and sorrow is not desirable*] then there can never be any equality and we have even to say that equality is a bad thing. If so, then the whole of the Gita is a mass of nonsense.

*

There are vital joys that are innocent and need not be seriously put down — such as joy in art, poetry, literature. They have to be not put down, but put aside only when they interfere with sadhana.

Sorrow and Pain and Suffering

Sorrow and pain and suffering? The curious thing is that my Yoga does not approve of sorrow and suffering or of taking stumbles and difficulties too seriously, as the Tapaswis do or of viraha pangs as the Vaishnavas do or of vairagya as the Mayavadis do, yet the old ideas and forces bring these things into the Asram through the minds of the sadhaks and there they are. Well, well!

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The thing in you which enjoys the suffering and wants it is part of the human vital—it is these things that we describe as the insincerity and perverse twist of the vital; it cries out against sorrow and trouble and accuses the Divine and life and everybody else of torturing it, but for the most part the sorrow and the trouble come and remain because the perverse something in the vital wants them! That element in the vital has to be got rid of altogether.

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Yes, it is so [*that people themselves indirectly choose pain and misery by not turning to the Divine*]. Even there is something in the vital consciousness that would not feel at home if there were no suffering in life. It is the physical that fears and abhors suffering, but the vital takes it as part of the play of life.

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It is the vital that enjoys the drama of life and takes a pleasure even in sorrow and suffering—it [*a movement of depression*] is not a revolt but an acceptance. Of course there are moods of revolt also in the vital in which it takes a pleasure. The part that does not like suffering and would be glad to get rid of it is the physical consciousness, but the vital pushes it always and so it cannot escape.

It is the rajaso-tamasic vital ego that is responsible both for revolt and for the acceptance of depression. Rajas predominating there is revolt, tamas predominating there is depression.

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It is not the soul but the vital or rather something in it that takes pleasure in groaning and weeping and in fact in sorrow and suffering of all kinds.

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The surface nature does not enjoy [*groaning and weeping*]—but something within enjoys the *līlā* of “laughter and tears”, joy and grief, pleasure and pain, in a word the play of the ignorance.

In some people this comes up to a certain extent on the surface. Many, if you propose to them the removal of suffering from life, look askance at you and feel that it would be terribly boring to have nothing but joy and Ananda and peace — many even have said it.

*

The gloom and other difficulties come from a resistance of inertia in the lower vital and physical consciousness. What you have to do is to prepare the consciousness by getting rid of the inertia. A sattvic gladness and calm and confidence is the proper temperament for this Yoga; gloom, depression and weeping should not be indulged in, as they stand in the way of the opening, unless the tears are the psychic weeping of release or adoration or a moved love and bhakti. The progress made in controlling the sex and other rajasic movements of the lower vital is a good preparation, but not enough; by itself it is only the negative side, though indispensable. Aspire for a positive sattvic opening for strength, for light, for peace and do not worry or repine if the progress is slow at first, nor grudge the time and labour of preparation necessary before there can be a rapid advance in the Yoga.

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You should not indulge this sense of grief — remain calm, confident, turned to the one Will in all circumstances; that is the way to secure that each step will be taken in the right measure and produce its best possible consequences. Regard henceforth the question of X and your relation with X as a minor and subordinate thing on the outer side of your sadhana. If you take it as a problem of the first importance it will become that and stand in your way again. Look at it as a question from the past that has been firmly settled and put in its place and turn to the central aim of your sadhana.

For the rest, apart from this circumstance, you need change nothing in the inward aim and concentration of your will and endeavour on the one thing to be done — the entire self-giving and self-dedication of your inner and outer being to the Divine

alone. If you can adopt firmly the right inward attitude, it may even be easier than by an outward rule for your main guidance.

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I hope you will be able to reject this *duḥkha*; it must be an attempt of something of the old consciousness to come back, — for a psychic sorrow would not burn. These things come from the subconscious, so for such a grief no particular reason would be necessary. It is the force of sorrow in itself that rises like that and lays a claim on the nature.

*

Tamasic indifference is one thing and the absence of sorrow is another. One has to observe what is wrong and do all that one can to set it right. Sadness in itself has no power to cure what is wrong; a firm quiet persistent will has the power.

*

It is clear that the force and peace are descending and working more and more to fix themselves in you.

The other feelings, the wanting to be sad, the fear of being happy, the suggestion of incapacity or unfitness are the usual movements of the vital formation which is not yourself and they come up to try and prevent the change in you. You have only to refuse to accept these suggestions and put yourself persistently on the side of the Truth in you which will make you free and happy, and all will be well.

Melancholy

It seems to me from what you have written that it is the old vital restlessness and indulgence in melancholy that has taken hold of you. It has no special cause, but takes hold of everything to feed itself; in itself it is only a habitual nervous weakness. The more one broods on it, the more it increases. There are three ways of combating it. One is to take interest and busy yourself in something else not yourself and to think of your condition as

little as possible. Another is to separate yourself from this vital restlessness and melancholia as much as possible and face it, as you were doing, with an energetic and resolute refusal to accept it. The third is to habituate yourself to turn your mind upwards in a call for the Mother's peace. It is there above you waiting to come down if you make yourself open to it; if it came down, it would rid you permanently of all this suffering and trouble.

Chapter Three

Depression and Despondency

Discouragement

Not to get discouraged when there is no immediate result is very important — for then the force within sinks and when the force within sinks there is the *tapo-bhanga* of which the old Rishis were always complaining, for each time the tapas broke they had to start afresh till it was reconstructed.

*

Tell him that discouragement is the one thing that the sadhak should never indulge. One should go on steadily whether the pace is slow or hampered or swift and easy — one will always get to the goal in time. Difficulties and periods of darkness cannot be avoided — they have to be gone through with quietness and courage.

*

There is no reason to be discouraged. Three years is not too much for the preparation of the nature and it is usually through fluctuations that it gradually grows nearer to the point where a continuous progress becomes possible. One has to cleave firmly to the faith in the Mother's working behind all appearances and you will find that that will carry you through.

*

I do not quite know what is the drift of your questions. It sounds as if you had been allowing yourself to be influenced by a vague and confused atmosphere of discouragement and barren questioning which has caught many in the Asram. Otherwise there is no ground for any such feelings. Where you are? In the Mother's presence here and close to me. Where you are going? Towards union with the Divine through dedication and service. What

you are doing here? Service and self-giving to the Divine. The rest depends, as the Mother writes to you, on the simplicity and fullness with which you give yourself and serve. If there is anything more special in your thoughts that has disturbed you, it is better to say clearly what it is. But do not listen to the thoughts spoken or silently suggested that are moving about the Asram and of which I have spoken, for these are a poison that will only bring discontent and depression.

Depression

The outer being does not care for the sadhana unless it gets something by it which is to it pleasant or gratifying or satisfying — depression therefore comes easy to it.

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That is how the depression works in everybody. It takes hold of this or that excuse but really it comes for its own satisfaction and not for any particular reason.

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All depression is bad as it lowers the consciousness, spends the energy, opens to adverse forces.

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After you went from here it seems that the vital difficulties which you were emerging from here came back with your return to the atmosphere and that was the cause of the violent depression and ill-health that fell upon you. The depression again was the cause why everything went wrong and the arrangements made fell through or took a wrong turn. For depression prevents the Force from flowing through and calls in the adverse forces and gives them a chance to destroy the helpful formations that are made. All the trouble and difficulty you have had will disappear or be minimised if you shake off this tendency to depression altogether.

*

The vital may understand, but that is not enough, it must wholeheartedly call for the peace and transformation. There must be a large part of it unable to change its position and give up its moods or its way of receiving things; otherwise these depressions could not be so acute. There is no reason why you should not get the peace, but this must change.

*

One should certainly not overestimate one's progress, but not underestimate it either. I don't know whether dwelling on the defects and weaknesses is very wholesome. To know that they are there is one thing, to keep them always before the eye may be depressing and retard the progress.

*

There was nothing wrong in helping with the cooking. But if there were a wrong movement in that, it is not to be met by getting depression — for depression itself is a wrong or mistaken movement; and how can one mistake be corrected by another? The proper way to deal with a wrong movement is to look quietly at it and put the consciousness right at that point.

*

It [*vital joy*] is much better than vital depression at any rate. What is wanted is an inner peace and upon that a constant cheerfulness and gladness.

*

I am glad the cloud is lifting and hope to find it lifted altogether soon. It is the usual experience that if the humility and resignation are firmly founded in the heart, other things like trust come naturally afterwards. If once the psychic light and happiness which is born of these things is founded, it is not easy for other forces to cloud that state and not possible for them to destroy it. That is the common experience.

Depression Often Comes from Outside

Often waves of depression come from the general Nature — the mind finds out inner or external reasons for them when there are none. That may be the reason why the reasons are not clear. On the other hand it may be due to some part of the being getting discouraged or fatigued or unwilling to follow the movement either of work or of sadhana. If it is something in the vital being, it may hide itself so as not to be exposed or cleared; if a part of the physical, it may be simply dumb and obscure, unable to express itself. Finally, it may come up from the subconscious. These are various cases in which there is what seems a causeless depression. One has to see for oneself which it is.

*

Yes. The depression comes from without, not from within. But some part of the vital is too habituated to respond or at least passively accept or reflect and to take it as its own. If it were not for this, there would be little or no difficulty in throwing off the depression when it tries to come.

*

You seem to rely very much on X and his experiences and ideas about them. X's experience proves nothing because he is quite ignorant. His depression comes from outside and has its causes, only his vital mind does not record or understand the causes, but there is a response to them all the same. Because the vital mind has in the past always associated depression with these causes and that impression remains in the vital stuff, so it responds to the touch with the usual reaction taught to it by the vital mind. An ignorant and untrained mind like X's cannot be expected to realise the secret machinery of the movements of his own consciousness.

*

The vital mind is part of the mind. If mind (mental mind, vital mind, physical mind, subconscious mind) does not respond to

outer things, depression is impossible. The self at one end, the stone at the other never get into depression. In between them, the true mind, true vital, true physical consciousness never get depression because they do not give the responses to things that create depression.

*

Naturally the deep depression and low vitality [*in another person*] try to get into you, or if the person pulls your vital force to restore hers or you yourself part with it for that purpose, you feel exhausted and empty afterwards. That is the natural result. One person may produce more of this result than another. Or if you are strong enough to resist in the mind and vital, the influence gets into the physical and produces some result there. According to the nature of the person approached, the result may be violent or intense or of a minor character. Also certain effects may not manifest at the time but only afterwards.

*

These cloudings are not rare and not personal to yourself— all get them, — very often they are formations thrown *from outside*. The important thing is not to get upset or distressed or take them to yourself or as your own, and to remain quiet till they pass.

*

Do not allow these depressing thoughts to find credit with you. If they come, look at them as not yours, as suggestions from outside. Remain as quiet as you can and let the Mother's Force work in you.

*

However or from wheresoever it came, the only thing to do with a depression is to throw it out.

Dealing With Depression

Naturally, if the vital is quiet and allows the mind to see things

rightly, there will not be this depression.

*

Small desires and defects have not to be magnified or made a cause of worry or depression, but they have to be noted and quietly got rid of.

*

Be careful to reject always movements (like vexation, discontent etc.) that bring back confusion or depression. One cannot always help these movements coming, but one can reject them when they come; the more they are rejected, the more difficult it becomes for them to recur — or, if they recur, they hold only for a moment and then drop away. To entertain them means to give them a chance to cover the true consciousness once more.

*

It [*depression*] comes back if you give it a chance. Do not give it a chance. Do not give it a room to live in if it comes.

*

Depression should not be indulged, for all who do the Yoga have difficulties with their ego; but the higher consciousness will always prevail with a true aspiration.

*

Do not allow yourself to admit any movement of vital depression, still less a depressed condition. As for the external being, it is always, not only in you but in everyone, a difficult animal to handle. It has to be dealt with by patience and a quiet and cheerful perseverance; never get depressed by its resistance, for that only makes it sensitive and aggrieved and difficult, or else discouraged. Give it rather the encouragement of sunlight and a quiet pressure, and one day you will find it opening entirely to the Grace.

*

It is indeed good that the psychic intervened and prevented the mind taking the wrong direction. It is not possible that there should not be occasional stumbles, failures etc. in the work of self-purification and change; but to feel upset or remorseful over them is harmful rather than helpful; it easily brings depression and depression brings clouding of the mind and weakness. To observe calmly the wrong movement and its nature (here it was the tongue that was at fault and the tongue is always an easily erring member) and to set it right inwardly is always the best way. Calm, especially when the true spiritual calm of the self is there, is the thing that must always be preserved; for with that everything else can be done in time and with the least trouble.

*

Anutāp — remorse, repentance, is the natural movement of the vital mind when it sees it has done a mistake. It is certainly better than indifference. Its disadvantage is that it disturbs the vital stuff and sometimes leads to depression or discouragement. For that reason what is usually recommended to the sadhak is a quiet recognition of the mistake with a sincere aspiration and will that it should not be repeated or at least that the habit of making such mistakes should soon be eliminated. At a higher stage of development when the inner calm is established, one simply observes the defects of the nature as defects of a machinery that one has to put right and calls down the Light and Force for its rectification. In the beginning however the movement of repentance even helps provided it does not bring discouragement or depression.

*

This kind of dejection [*feeling that life is meaningless*] must be cast aside. Life always has a meaning whether in success or in difficulty so long as it is turned towards the Divine. Protection will be given, but depression must be put aside so that you may be able to receive and use the help and the force.

Depression and the Gospel of Sorrow¹

I think the best thing I can write to you in the circumstances is to recommend to you X's aphorism, "Depression need not be depressing; rather it should be made a jumping-board for the leap to a higher and happier poise."

The rule in Yoga is not to let the depression depress you, to stand back from it, observe its cause and remove the cause; for the cause is always in oneself, perhaps a vital defect somewhere, a wrong movement indulged or a petty desire causing a recoil, sometimes by its satisfaction, sometimes by its disappointment. In Yoga a desire satisfied, a false movement given its head produces very often a worse recoil than disappointed desire.

What is needed for you is to live more deeply within, less in the outer vital and mental which is exposed to these touches. The inmost psychic being is not oppressed by them; it stands in its own closeness to the Divine and sees the small surface movements as surface things foreign to the true being.

*

It is regrettable that this attack [*of depression*] should recur. Perhaps it was a little my fault — you were or seemed to me going on so well that I was not on my guard against its possible recurrence. During the last two or three days the suggestion did come to me that there might be a turn of that kind, but I was so much in the joy of your music that I did not give it credence.

It is certainly not the answering of questions that will remove the underlying cause of this recurrence. Even if the answers satisfy, it could only be for a time. The same questionings would arise either in a mechanical reiteration — for it is not truly the reason from which they arise, it is a certain part of the vital consciousness affected by the surrounding atmosphere — or else presented from a shifted ground or a somewhat changed angle of vision. The difficulty can only disappear if you remain resolute

¹ All the letters in this group were written to the same correspondent, a disciple who suffered from bouts of depression.

that it shall disappear,—if you refuse to attach any value to the justifications which the mind is *made* to put forward for your “sadness” under this atmospheric influence and, as you did in certain other matters, stick fast to the resolution to make the Yogic change, to awake the psychic fully, not to follow the voices of the mind but to do rather what the Mother asks of you, persisting *however difficult it may be* or seem to be. It is so that the psychic can fully awaken and establish its influence—not on your higher vital where it is already awake and growing through your poetry and music and certain experiences so that whenever your higher vital is active you are in good condition, full of delight and creativeness and open to experience; but it is the influence on the lower vital, for it is there as I have already told you that your difficulties are and that this vital depression recurs.

*

It is quite unwarranted to say that you have been going in the wrong direction—going west when you thought you were going east. You were going towards the east, all right, but you were going as if with a chain on your ankles and the chain was a certain tension and stiffness in your endeavour. This is what was found to have been wrong in your way of meditation. Therefore there is no need to lament that you have been going in the wrong direction all the time—for that is not the case; what is needed is to profit by the discovery and get rid of the impediment.

The light which you saw seems to have got clouded by your indulging your vital more and more in the bitter pastime of sadness. That was quite natural, for that is the result sadness always does bring. It is the reason why I object to the gospel of sorrow and to any sadhana which makes sorrow one of its main planks (*abhimān*, revolt, *viraha*). For sorrow is not, as Spinoza pointed out, a passage to a greater perfection, a way to siddhi; it cannot be, for it confuses and weakens and distracts the mind, depresses the vital force, darkens the spirit. A relapse from joy and vital elasticity and Ananda to sorrow, self-distrust, despondency and weakness is a recoil from a greater to a lesser consciousness;—

the habit of these moods shows a clinging of something in the vital to the smaller, obscurer, dark and distressed movement out of which it is the very aim of Yoga to rise.

It is incorrect to say that the wrong key with which you were trying to open the faery palace has been taken away from you and you are left with none at all. The true key has been given to you in the right kind or condition of meditation — a state of inner rest, not of straining, of quiet opening, not of eager or desperate pulling, a harmonious giving of oneself to the Divine Force for its working, and in that quietude a sense of the Force working and a restful confidence allowing it to act without any unquiet interference. Now that condition is the beginning of the psychic opening; there is of course much more that afterwards comes to complete it but this is the fundamental condition into which all the rest can most easily come. In this condition there may and will be call, prayer, aspiration. Intensity, concentration will come of themselves, not by a hard effort or tense strain on the nature. Rejection of wrong movements, frank confession of defects are not only not incompatible, but helpful to it; but this attitude makes the rejection, the confession easy, spontaneous, entirely complete and sincere and effective. That is the experience of all who have consented to take this attitude.

Now as to the tension and stiffness. I may say in passing that consciousness and receptivity are not the same thing; one may be receptive, yet externally unaware of how things are being done and of what is being done. But for such an external unconsciousness there must be a reason, — and in you it was the stiffness created by a tension and a straining which made the consciousness thus rigid and closed it up. Not that it closed you to the Force or that it took away the inner receptivity, but it did close you to the surface consciousness of what is being done. When that happens, the Force works, as I have repeatedly written, behind the veil; the results remain packed behind and come out afterwards, often slowly, little by little, until there is so much pressure that it breaks through somehow and forces open the external nature. There lies the difference between a mental and vital straining and pulling and a spontaneous psychic

openness, and it is not at all the first time that we have spoken of the difference. It is not really a question of the right or the wrong key, but of putting the key in the lock in the right or the wrong way, whether because of some difficulty you try to force the lock turning the key this way and that with violence or confidently and quietly give it the right turn — and the door opens.

It is not that this pulling and straining and tension can do nothing; in the end they prevail for some result or another, but with difficulty, delay, struggle, strong upheavals of the Force breaking through in spite of all. Ramakrishna himself began by pulling and straining and got his result but at the cost of a tremendous and perilous upsetting; afterwards he took the quiet psychic way whenever he wanted a result and got it with ease and in a minimum time. You say that this way is too difficult for you but it is on the contrary the easiest and simplest and most direct way and anyone can do it, if he makes his mind and vital quiet. It is the other way of tension and strain and hard endeavour that is difficult and needs a great force of Tapasya. Take the psychic attitude; follow the straight sunlit path, with the Divine openly or secretly upbearing you — if secretly, he will yet show himself in good time, — do not insist on the hard, hampered, roundabout and difficult journey.

All this has been pointed out before: but you were not inclined to regard it as feasible or at least not ready to apply it in the field of meditation because your consciousness by tradition, owing to past lives and for other reasons, was clinging to former contrary conceptions. Something in you was harking back to one kind of Vaishnava sadhana, and that tended to bring in it its pain-giving feeling-elements of *abhimāna*, revolt, suffering, the Divine hiding himself (“always I seek, but never does he show himself”) — the rarity of the unfolding and the *milana*. Something else in you was inclined to see as the only alternative some harsh, grim ascetic ideal, the blank featureless Brahman (and imagined that the supramental was that), something in the vital looked on the conquest of wrong movements as a hard desperate tapasya, not as a passage into the purity and joy of the Divine — even now some element in you seems to insist

on regarding the psychic attitude as something extraordinary, difficult, inhuman and impossible! There were these and other old lingerings of the mind and the vital; you have to clear them out and look at the simplicity of the Truth with a straight and simple gaze.

The remedy we propose, the key we offer to you ought not to be so difficult to apply as you imagine. After all, it is only applying in "meditation" the way that has been so successful with you in your creative work. There is a way of creation by strain and tension, by beating of the brain, by hard and painful labour — often the passage clogged and nothing coming or else coming only in return for a sort of intellectual tapasya. There is the other way in which one remains quiet and opens oneself to a power that is there behind and waits for inspiration; the force pours in and with it the inspiration, the illumination, the Ananda, — all is done by an inner Power. The flood passes, but one remains quiet for the next flood and at its time surely it comes. Here too all is not perfect at once; but progress comes by ever new waves of the same Power. Not then a strain of mental activity, but a restful opening to the Force that is there all the time above and around you, so that it may flow freely and do its work in peace and illumination and Ananda. The way has been shown to you, you yourself have had from time to time the true condition; only you must learn how to continue in it or recover it and you must allow the Force to do its work in its own way. It may take some time to take entire hold of it, get the other habit out and make this normal; but you must not start by deciding that it is impossible! It is eminently possible and it is the door of definitive entrance. The difficulty, the struggle were only the period of preparation necessary to get rid of or to exhaust the obstruction in the consciousness which was a thorn-hedge round the faery palace.

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I find it rather surprising that you should regard what the Mother said to you or what I wrote as a recommendation to relax aspiration or postpone the idea of any kind of siddhi till the Greek

Kalends! It was not so intended in the least—nor do I think either of us said or wrote anything which could justly bear such an interpretation. I said expressly that in the way of meditating of which we spoke, aspiration, prayer, concentration, intensity were a natural part of it; this way was put before you because our experience has been that those who take it go quicker and develop their sadhana, once they get fixed in it, much more easily as well as smoothly than by a distressed, doubtful and anxious straining with revulsions of despondency and turning away from hope and endeavour. We spoke of a steady opening to the Divine with a flow of the force doing its work in the adhar, a poised opening with a quiet mind and heart full of trust and the sunlight of confidence; where do you find that we said a helpless waiting must be your programme?

As for light-heartedness and insouciance, the Mother never spoke of insouciance—a light don't-care attitude is the last thing she would recommend to anybody. She spoke of cheerfulness, and if she used the word light-hearted it was not in the sense of anything lightly or frivolously gay and careless—although a deeper and finer gaiety can have its place as one element of the Yogic character. What she meant was a glad equanimity even in the face of difficulties and there is nothing in that contrary to Yogic teaching or to her own practice. The vital nature on the surface (the depths of the true vital are different) is attached on the one side to a superficial mirth and enjoyment, on the other to sorrow and despair and gloom and tragedy,—for these are for it the cherished lights and shades of life; but a bright or wide and free peace or an *ānandamaya* intensity or, best, a fusing of both in one is the true poise of both the soul and the mind—and of the true vital also—in Yoga. It is perfectly possible for a quite human sadhak to get to such a poise, it is not necessary to be divine before one can attain it. All this is nothing new and original; I have been saying it ever since I began speaking at all about Yoga and I cannot see anything in it resembling a gospel of helpless waiting or of light careless insouciance or anything contrary to our own practice. I do not think that we have either of us become relentlessly grim and solemn or lacking in humour

or that the Mother has lost her smile! I am afraid you are looking at her and things as through a glass darkly and seeing them in too sombre colours. As for instance what you say about the music, — she came up straight to me from it and spoke at once about your music and the presence of Krishna there, and she was in a very different mood from what you describe.

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Do not allow yourself to be overborne by the dejection; it can only be an incident in the ups and downs of the sadhana, and, as an incident, it should be made as short as possible. Remember that you have chosen a method of proceeding in the sadhana in which dejection ought to have no place. If you have a growing faith that all that is happening has somehow to happen and that God knows what is best for you, — that is already a great thing; if you add to it the will to keep your face always turned towards the goal and the confidence that you are being led towards it even through difficulties and apparent denials, there could be no better mental foundation for sadhana. And if not only the mind, but the vital and physical consciousness can be imbued with this faith, dejection will become either impossible or so evidently an outer thing thrown from outside and not belonging to the consciousness that it will not be able to keep its hold at all. A faith of that kind is a very helpful first step towards the reversal of consciousness which makes one see the inner truth of things rather than their outward phenomenal appearance.

As for the causes of the dejection, there were causes, partly general in the shape of a resistance to a great descending force which was not personal to you at all, and, so far as there was a response to it in you, it was not from your conscious being, otherwise you would not have had it in this way, but from the part in us which keeps things for a long time that have been suppressed or rejected by the conscious will. It is the conscious will that matters, for it is that that prevails in the end, the will of the Purusha and not the more blind and obstinate parts of Prakriti. Keep the conscious will all right and it will carry on to the goal, — just as the resistance in universal Nature will yield

in the end before the Divine Descent.

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The depression of the vital you feel is a continuation of the old feeling in the struggle, but you must reject it and make of it a diminishing movement. The past in Yoga is no guide to the future. For what happened in the past was due to temporary and not permanent causes and to eliminate them is the very purpose of the sadhana.

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There is no doubt about the beauty of the poems you have written but if sometimes — not by any means always — our sweetest songs spring from saddest feelings, there is a quite different rule both for life and for Yoga. For the life in its progress, for the soul in its ascendance, grief and suffering should be only an incident on the way and the vision look always and steadily to a joy and a glory beyond it — let the gloom pass and look beyond it towards Light.

*

The difficulty you feel or any sadhak feels about sadhana is not really a question of meditation versus bhakti versus works, it is a difficulty of the attitude to be taken, the approach or whatever you like to call it. Yours seems to be characterised on one side by a tremendous effort in the mind, on the other by a gloomy certitude in the vital which seems to watch and mutter under its breath if not aloud, “Yes, yes, go ahead, my fine fellow, but — কিছুই কখনও হয়নি, কিছুই হচ্ছেনা, কিছুই হবেনা”,² and at the end of the meditation, “What did I tell you, কিছুই হলনা”.³ A vital so ready to despair that even after a “glorious” flood of poetry, it uses the occasion to preach the gospel of despair. I have passed through most of the difficulties of the sadhak, but I cannot recollect to have looked on delight of poetical creation or concentration in

² *Nothing has ever happened, nothing is happening, nothing will happen.* — Ed.

³ *Nothing happened.* — Ed.

it as something undivine and a cause for despair. This seems to me excessive.

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I have always told you that you ought not to stop your poetry and similar activities. It is a mistake to do so out of asceticism or with the idea of tapasya. One can stop these things when they drop of themselves, because one is in full experience and so interested in one's inner life that one has no energy to spare for the rest. Even then, there is no rule for giving up; for there is no reason why the poetry etc. should not be a part of sadhana. The love of applause, of fame, the ego feeling have to be given up, but that can be done without giving up the activity itself. Your vital needs some activity, most vitals do, and to deprive it of its outlet, an outlet that can be helpful and is not harmful, makes it sulking, indifferent and despondent or else inclined to revolt at any moment and throw up the sponge. Without the assent of the vital it is difficult to do sadhana — it non-cooperates, or it watches with a grim even if silent dissatisfaction ready to express at any moment doubt and denial; or it makes a furious effort and then falls back saying, "I have got nothing." The mind by itself cannot do much; it must have support from the vital; for that the vital must be in a cheerful and acquiescent state. It has the joy of creation and there is nothing spiritually wrong in creative action. Why deny your vital this joy of outflow?

I had already hinted to you that to be able to wait for the Divine Grace (not in a tamasic spirit, but with a sattwic reliance) was the best course for you. Prayer, yes — but not prayer insisting on immediate fulfilment — but prayer that is itself a communion of the mind and the heart with the Divine and can have the joy and satisfaction of itself, trusting for fulfilment by the Divine in His own time. Meditation? Yes, but your meditation has got into a wrong Asana, that of an eager and vehement wrestling followed by a bitter despair. It is no use getting on with it like that; it is better to drop it till you get a new Asana. (I am referring to the old Rishis who established an Asana, a place and a fixed position, where they would sit till

they got siddhi — but if the Asana got successfully disturbed by wrong forces (Asuras, Apsaras etc.), they left it and sought for a new one.) Moreover, your meditation is lacking in quietude, you meditate with a striving mind — but it is in the quiet mind that the experience comes, as all Yogis agree — the still water that reflects rightly the sun. Your vital besides is afraid of quietude and emptiness, and that is because, probably, the strife and effort in you make what comes of them something neutral or desert, while they should be a restful quietude and an emptiness giving the sense of peace, purity or release, the cup made empty so that the soma-rasa of the spirit may be poured in it. That is why I would like you to desist from these too strenuous efforts and go on quietly, praying and meditating if you like but tranquilly without strain and too vehement striving, letting the prayer and meditation (not too much of the latter) prepare the mind and heart till things begin to flow into them in a spontaneous current when all is ready.

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Accustomed as I am to the misunderstanding or misreporting of the Mother's statements, I found that this about her having said that transformation is easy carries the habit to the extreme limit. Needless to say, she did not and could not say anything of the kind and it is astonishing that you should believe she could say anything so absurd and false. I must remind you that I have always insisted on the difficulty of the sadhana. I have never said that to overcome doubt is easy; I have said on the contrary that it was difficult because it was the nature of something in the human physical mind to cling to doubt for its own sake. I have never said that to overcome grief, depression, gloom and suffering was easy; I have said that it was difficult because something in the human vital clings to it and almost needs it as part of the drama of life. So also I have never said that sex, anger, jealousy etc. were easy to overcome; I have said it was difficult because they were ingrained in the human vital, and even if thrown out were always being brought back into it either by its own habit or by the invasion of the general Nature

and the resurgence of its own old response. These things I have repeated hundreds of times. Your idea that my difficulties were different from those of human nature is a mental construction or inference without any real basis. If I am ignorant of human difficulties and therefore intolerant of them, how is it that I am so patient with them as you cannot deny that I am? Why for years and years do I go on patiently arguing about your doubts, spending so much of my time, always trying to throw light on your difficulties, to show how things stand, to give reasons for a knowledge gained by living and *indiscutable* experience? Am I writing these letters every night because I have no understanding and no sympathy with you in your doubts and difficulties? Why do I wait patiently for years for sadhaks to get over their sex difficulties? Why do I tolerate and help and write soothing and encouraging letters to these women who break out and hunger-strike and threaten suicide once a fortnight? Why do we bear all this trouble and *tracas* and *fracas* and resistance and obloquy and harsh criticism from the sadhaks, why were we so patient with men like X and Y and others, if we had no understanding and no sympathy with the difficulties of human nature? It is because I press always on faith and discourage doubt as a means of approach to the spiritual realisation. What spiritual guide with a respect for truth can do otherwise? And if I encourage and support doubt, the only result will be that doubt will last for ever and no assured realisation be possible — just as if I encourage and support sex or any other contrary movement, it will last for ever — even without that they last quite long enough by their own force and motion. All that I can do for them is to tolerate and be patient and give time enough for their transformation or removal. Surely when you look at all this fairly, you will see that you have made a very incorrect inference.

As to the statement about drama and something liking to suffer, nobody doubts that your external consciousness dislikes its suffering. The physical mind and consciousness of man hates its own suffering and if left to itself dislikes also to see others suffer. But if you will try to fathom the significance of your

own admission of liking drama or of the turn towards drama — from which very few human beings escape — and if you go deep enough, you will find that there is something in the vital which likes suffering and clings to it for the sake of the drama; it is something below the surface, not on the surface, but it is strong, almost universal in human nature and difficult to eradicate unless one recognises it and gets inwardly away from it. The mind and the physical of man do not like suffering for if they did it would not be suffering any longer, but this thing in the vital wants it in order to give a spice to life. It is the reason why constant depressions can go on returning and returning even though the mind longs to get rid of them, because this in the vital responds, goes on repeating the same movement like a gramophone as soon as it is set going and insists on turning the whole round of the often repeated record. It does not really depend on the reasons which the vital gives for starting off the round, these are often of the most trivial character and wholly insufficient to justify it. It is only by a strong will to detach oneself, not to justify, to reject root and branch that one can in the end get rid of this most troublesome and dangerous streak in human nature. When therefore we speak of the vital comedy, the vital drama, we are speaking from a psychological knowledge which does not end with the surface of things and looks at these hidden movements. It is impossible to deal with things for the purposes of Yoga if we confine ourselves to the surface consciousness only.

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I cannot candidly say that the Mother and I approve of the idea of your going to Calcutta for a fortnight for relief from your sufferings: if we ever sanction such a movement, it is against our own seeing of things because no choice is left to us owing to circumstances or the state of mind of the sadhak. We have never found that such absences do any spiritual good: they usually relax or lower the consciousness or renew old movements that must go. It is much better to face the difficulty however sticky it is till the conquest is there.

It is a pity that this movement of depression has come back with its painful and irrational circle. It must be thrown away for good: these movements go round in a circular repetitionary way characteristic of these things. It is lent force by the reasonings of the physical mind which are specious but of no value. It is not true of spiritual things that experience must come within a certain number of years or not at all. There are some who begin to succeed after a few years, some who take longer, succeeding only in work but not in meditation or activity of the inner consciousness, but finally the veiled inner preparation of so many years has prevailed and they begin to get the psychic change, the inner opening of head and heart, the descents, the growth through frequent though not uninterrupted experience. This has happened even to those who are troubled by these circular movements and have been again and again on the point of rushing away in despair. There is nothing more futile than to despair in the spiritual path and throw up the game: it is to break a working which would have led one to the realisation asked for if one had persevered.

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Thirst for the Divine is one thing and depression is quite another, nor is depression a necessary consequence of the thirst being unsatisfied; that may lead to a more ardent thirst or to a fixed resolution and persistent effort or to a more and more yearning call or to a psychic sorrow which is not at all identical with depression and despair. Depression is a clouded grey state in its nature and it is more difficult for light to come through clouds and greyness than through a clear atmosphere. That depression obstructs the inner light is a matter of general experience. The Gita says expressly, "Yoga should be practised persistently with a heart free from depression" — *anirvinñacetasā*. Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress* symbolises it as the Slough of Despond, one of the perils of the way that has to be overcome. It is no doubt impossible to escape from attacks of depression, almost all sadhaks go through these attacks, but the principle is that one should react against them and not allow them by any kind

of mental encouragement or acceptance of their suggestions to persist or grow chronic.

It is hardly a fact that sorrow is *necessary* in order to make the soul seek the Divine. It is the call of the soul within for the Divine that makes it turn, and that may come under any circumstances — in full prosperity and enjoyment, at the height of outward conquest and victory without any sorrow or disappointment but by a sudden or growing enlightenment, by a flash of light in the midst of sensuous passion as in Bilwamangal, by the perception that there is something greater and truer than this outward life lived in ego and ignorance. None of these turns need be accompanied by sorrow and depression. Often one turns saying, “Life is all very well and interesting enough as a game, but it is only a game, the spiritual reality is greater than the life of the mind and senses.” In whatever way it comes, it is the call of the Divine or the soul’s call to the Divine that matters, the attraction of it as something far greater than the things that usually hold the nature. Certainly if one is satisfied with life, entranced by it so that it shuts out the sense of the soul within or hampers the attraction to the Divine, then a period of vairagya, sorrow, depression, a painful breaking of the vital ties may be necessary and many go through that. But once the turn made, it should be to the one direction and a perpetual vairagya is not needed. Nor when we speak of cheerfulness as the best condition, do we mean a cheerful following of the vital life, but a cheerful following of the path to the Divine which is not impossible if the mind and heart take the right view and posture. At any rate if positive cheerfulness is not possible in one’s case, still one should not acquiesce in or mentally support a constant depression and sadness. That is not at all indispensable for keeping turned to the Divine.

In speaking of the Buddhist and his nine years of the wall and other instances the Mother was only disproving the view that not having succeeded in seven or eight years meant unfitness and debarred all hope for the future. The man of the wall stands among the greatest names in Japanese Buddhism and his long sterility did not mean incapacity or spiritual unfitness. But apart

from that there are many who have gone on persisting for long periods and finally prevailed. It is a common, not an uncommon experience.

*

This movement [*of restlessness, sadness, gloom*] is one that always tries to come when you have a birthday or a darshan and is obviously a suggestion of forces that want to disturb you and give you a bad birthday or bad darshan. You must get rid of the idea that it is in any way helpful for sadhana, e.g. makes you remember the Divine etc. — if it does it makes you remember the Divine in the wrong way and in addition brings up the weakness, also depression, self-distrust etc. etc. *À quoi bon* cheerfulness? It puts you in the right condition for the psychic to work and without knowing it you grow in just the right perceptions and right feelings for the spiritual attitude. This growth I have been observing in you for a fairly long time now and it is in the cheerful states that it is the most active. Japa, thinking of the Divine is all right, but it must be on this basis and in company with work and mental activity, for then the instrument is in a healthy condition. But if you become restlessly eager to do nothing but japa and think of nothing but the Divine and of the “progress” you have or have not made (Ramana Maharshi says you should never think of “progress”, it is according to him a movement of the ego), then all the fat is in the fire — because the system is not yet ready for a Herculean effort and it begins to get upset and think it is unfit and will never be fit. So be a good cheerful worker and offer your bhakti to the Divine in all ways you can but rely on him to work out things in you.

*

I don't remember saying anything on this subject [*of pain and suffering*],⁴ except that disappointed vital desire must bring

⁴ *The correspondent suggested that pain and suffering are sometimes necessary in spiritual life and may even enrich it. After the “deep suffering” experienced in the process of mental doubt and questioning, he had felt a sense of gain. “Through deep pain,” he wrote, “one often feels a sense of fulfilment.” — Ed.*

about suffering. Pain and suffering are necessary results of the Ignorance in which we live; men grow by all kinds of experience, pain and suffering as well as their opposites, joy and happiness and ecstasy. One can get strength from them if one meets them in the right way. Many take a joy in pain and suffering when associated with struggle or endeavour or adventure, but that is more because of the exhilaration and excitement of the struggle than because of suffering for its own sake. There is, however, something in the vital which takes joy in the whole of life, its dark as well as its bright sides. There is also something perverse in the vital which takes a kind of dramatic pleasure in its own misery and tragedy, even in degradation or in illness. I don't think mere doubt can bring any gain; mental questioning can bring gains if it is in pursuit of truth, but questioning just for the sake of sceptical questioning or in a pure spirit of contradiction can only bring, when it is directed against the truths of the spirit, either error or a lasting incertitude. If I am always questioning the Light when it comes and refusing its offer of truth, the Light cannot stay in me, cannot settle; eventually, finding no welcome and no foundation in the mind, it will retire. One has to push forward into the Light, not be always falling back into the darkness and hugging the darkness in the delusion that that is the real light. Whatever fulfilment one may feel in pain or in doubt belongs to the Ignorance; the real fulfilment is in the divine joy and the divine Truth and its certitude and it is that for which the Yogin strives. In the strife he may have to pass through doubt, not by his own choice or will, but because there is still imperfection in his knowledge.

*

If you accept Krishnaprem's insistence that this and no other must be your path, it is this that you have to attain and realise; any exclusive other-worldliness cannot be your way. I believe that you are quite capable of attaining this and realising the Divine and I have never been able to share your constantly recurring doubts about your capacity or the despair that arises

in you so violently when there are these attacks, nor is their persistent recurrence a valid ground for believing that they can never be overcome. Such a persistent recurrence has been a feature in the sadhana of many who have finally emerged and reached the goal; even the sadhana of very great Yogis has not been exempt from such violent and constant recurrences; they have sometimes been special objects of such persistent assaults, as I have indeed indicated in *Savitri* in more places than one — and that was indeed founded on my own experience. In the nature of these recurrences there is usually a constant return of the same adverse experiences, the same adverse resistance, thoughts destructive of all belief and faith and confidence in the future of the sadhana, frustrating doubts of what one has known as the truth, voices of despondency and despair, urgings to abandonment of the Yoga or to suicide or else other disastrous counsels of *déchéance*. The course taken by the attacks is not indeed the same for all, but still they have strong family resemblance. One can eventually overcome if one begins to realise the nature and source of these assaults and acquires the faculty of observing them, bearing, without being involved or absorbed into their gulf, finally becoming the witness of their phenomena and understanding them and refusing the mind's sanction even when the vital is still tossed in the whirl or the most outward physical mind still reflects the adverse suggestions. In the end these attacks lose their power and fall away from the nature; the recurrence becomes feeble or has no power to last: even, if the detachment is strong enough, they can be cut out very soon or at once. The strongest attitude to take is to regard these things as what they really are, incursions of dark forces from outside taking advantage of certain openings in the physical mind or the vital part, but not a real part of oneself or spontaneous creation in one's own nature. To create a confusion and darkness in the physical mind and throw into it or awake in it mistaken ideas, dark thoughts, false impressions is a favourite method of these assailants, and if they can get the support of this mind from over-confidence in its own correctness or the natural rightness of its impressions and inferences, then they can have

a field day until the true mind reasserts itself and blows the clouds away. Another device of theirs is to awake some hurt or rankling sense of grievance in the lower vital parts and keep them hurt or rankling as long as possible. In that case one has to discover these openings in one's nature and learn to close them permanently to such attacks or else to throw out intruders at once or as soon as possible. The recurrence is no proof of a fundamental incapacity; if one takes the right inner attitude, it can and will be overcome. The idea of suicide ought never to be accepted; there is no real ground for it and in any case it cannot be a remedy or a real escape: at most it can only be postponement of difficulties and the necessity for their solution under no better circumstances in another life. One must have faith in the Master of our life and works, even if for a long time he conceals himself, and then in his own right time he will reveal his Presence.

I have tried to dispel all the misconceptions, explain things as they are and meet all the points at issue. It is not that you really cannot make progress or have not made any progress; on the contrary, you yourself have admitted that you have made a good advance in many directions and there is no reason why, if you persevere, the rest should not come. You have always believed in the Guruvada: I would ask you then to put your faith in the Guru and the guidance and rely on the Ishwara for the fulfilment, to have faith in my abiding love and affection, in the affection and divine goodwill and loving kindness of the Mother, stand firm against all attacks and go forward perseveringly towards the spiritual goal and the all-fulfilling and all-satisfying touch of the All-Blissful, the Ishwara.

Despair and Despondency

Despair and despondency are always wrong. If you make a mistake, quietly observe it and correct the tendency next time. Even if the mistake recurs often, you have only to persevere quietly — remembering that nature cannot be changed in a day.

These feelings of despair and exaggerated sense of self-depreciation and helplessness are suggestions of a hostile Force and should never be admitted. The defects of which you speak are common to all human nature and the external being of every sadhak is full of them; to become aware of them is necessary for the transformation, but it must be done with a quiet mind and with the faith and surrender to the Divine and assured aspiration to the higher consciousness which are proper to the psychic being. The transformation of the external being is the most difficult part of the Yoga and it demands faith, patience, quietude and firm determination. It is in that spirit that you have to throw these depressions aside and go steadily on with the Yoga.

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You are “alternately getting” these things [*the impulse to aspire and then to despair*], because you allow the vital despondency to lay hold on you. If you consistently rejected it, it would not be able to recur like this. When the difficulties come, you should call back the faith; that is the use of faith, to carry you through the difficulties and help to dissipate them.

*

Why allow yourself to be overpowered like that? These fits of despair are quite irrational — there is no true reason why you should feel so despondent. Our solicitude and help are there always — in spite of these attacks your spiritual capacity is constantly increasing — only remain firm, the victory of the Truth in you is then inevitable. I will do all to change your consciousness — only open yourself. Keep yourself open as much as you can in quietude — that is the *only* condition I ask of you.

*

I did not receive any letter from you so recently as a fortnight or three weeks ago. If you feel in a pitiable condition, it is certainly not because you have incurred our displeasure. I have said that we are always with you and it is true, but to feel it you must

draw back from your vital and be able to concentrate in your inner being. If you do that faithfully and sincerely, after a time you will feel the connection and the support.

The meaning of the phrase you speak of is this, that usually the vital tries to resist the call to change. That is what is meant by revolt or opposition. If the inner will insists and forbids revolt or opposition, the vital unwillingness may often take the form of depression and dejection, accompanied by a resistance in the physical mind which supports the repetition of old ideas, habits, movements or actions while the body consciousness suffers from an apprehension or fear of the called-for change, a drawing back from it or a dullness which does not receive the call.

It is these things you have to get rid of. But a sorrowful or despondent mood is not the proper condition for doing that. You have to stand back from the feeling of suffering, anguish and apprehension, reject it and look quietly at the resistance, affirming always to yourself your will to change and insisting that it shall be done and cannot fail to be done now or later with the divine help, because the divine help is there. It is then that the strength can come to you that will overcome the difficulties.

*

The weakness in yourself of which you speak is there, as the persistency of these movements [*of despondency*] shows, but it is not in the heart — your heart is all right — but in the lower vital nature. All your weaknesses are there; the rest of your being is quite strong enough for the spiritual life. But this inadequacy of the lower vital is not peculiar to you, it is present in almost every human being. This tendency to irrational sadness and despondency and these imaginations, fears and perverse reasonings — always repeating, if you will take careful notice, the same movements, ideas and feelings and even the same language and phrases like a machine — is a characteristic working of the lower vital nature. The only way to get rid of it is to meet it with a fixed resolution of the higher vital and the mind and psychic being to combat, reject and master it. As you were determined to master the sex impulse and the desire of the palate, so you

must determine to master this “irrational knot” of despondency in the lower vital nature. If you indulge it and regard it as a natural part of yourself with good causes for existence or if you busy yourself finding this or that justification for it when it comes, there is no reason why it should let go its unpleasant grip upon you. Be firm and courageous here, as you have learnt to be with other movements of your lower vital; you will then, I think, find less difficulty in your meditation and your general sadhana.

*

It is surely better to seek to right yourself than to let yourself float in the stream of vital despondency and weakness. What do you expect the Mother to answer to such prayers [*for death*]? It is not the soul’s demand or need, but an outcry of vital weakness. X did not pray for death, but for light and progress out of his lower consciousness towards the Truth. Ramana Maharshi, whatever his objections to birth in this world, did not pray or seek for death, but for elevation to a height of consciousness for which there is neither birth nor death: he is certainly not so ignorant as to believe that the mere death of the body brings by itself a release; if he were, he would not have taken the trouble to go through so prolonged and intense a tapasya. If a way out is wanted, that is the only way out and there is no other.

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The outer reasons [*for despondency*] are created by the mind and it is the mind that responds or does not respond to them. Nothing outward can affect unless the mind (vital mind usually) represents them to itself in a particular way and makes its own response.

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If the mind does not respond to any suggested reasons for despondency, that is indeed a great liberation.

Chapter Four

Sentimentalism, Sensitiveness, Instability, Laxity

Sentimentalism

It is not a question of feeling sorrow or joy or any other emotion, everybody does that who has not overcome the ordinary Nature. That is not sentimental but emotional. Sentimentalism comes in when you take a pleasure either in indulging or in displaying the feelings or when you have them for no reason or without sufficient reason.

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It is a sentimental part of the vital nature that quarrels with people and refuses to speak to them and it is the same part in a reaction against that mood that wants to speak and get the pleasure of the relation. So long as there is either of these movements, the other also is possible. It is only when you get rid of this sentimentalism and turn all your purified feelings towards the Divine, that these fluctuations disappear and a calm goodwill to all takes their place.

Sensitiveness

It [*sensitiveness*] is a matter of temperament. Some are psychically and vitally sensitive and responsive to all that comes from anywhere; others are solid of nerve and walled against invasion. It is not at all a question of strength or weakness. The first have a greater sense of life and answer to life; they suffer more from life and get more from it. It is the difference between the Greek and the Roman. Even without egoism the difference remains because it is of the temperament. In Yoga the first type are more able to feel everything directly and know everything in detail by

close experience; it is their great advantage. The others have to use the mind to know and their grasp is less intimate.

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It [*vital sensitiveness*] is neither good nor bad. It comes like that in the course of the development. Some are incapable of consciously or visibly opening to others because they are insensitive. On the other hand to be too open is troublesome.

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There can be no transformation of the being in an insensitive consciousness.

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Most sensitiveness is the result or sign of ego.

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It was indeed a microscopically small cause for so strong an upsetting, but really it is the whole difficulty of this raw and unreasonable sensitiveness which cropped up with this very infinitesimally small excuse — and that sensitiveness is one of the most persistent obstacles of many sadhaks here. There are two remedies for it — the psychic's confidence in the Mother and the surrender that goes with it, i.e. "whatever she wills is best for me", and the vastness which you feel now, — it is the wideness of the true self, of the true mental, vital, physical being also, from which such things fall off like dust, for they are of no importance to it whatever.

It is the one thing to do, to get permanently into the wideness, peace and silence and let the ego dissolve in it and the attachments fall away.

*

The portion below the navel is the lower vital, — in your case it has become very sensitive to the condition of the same part in others or perhaps even to their general condition — so that it gives a sort of reflection or an appropriate reaction to that. It is a

phase in the development that must be overpassed, because the lower vital must get a perfect peace in it and even if it feels the condition of others do it as an act of perception or knowledge without any reaction or reflection.

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One has not to cure oneself of one's sensitiveness, but only acquire the power to rise to a higher consciousness taking such disenchantments as a sort of jumping-board. One way is not to expect even square dealings from others, no matter who the others are. And besides, it is good to have such experiences of the real nature of some people to which a generous nature is often blind, for that helps the growth of one's consciousness. The blow you wince at seems to you so hard because it is a blow the world of your mental formation has sustained. Such a world often becomes a part of our being. The result is that a blow dealt to it gives almost physical pain. The great compensation is that it makes you live more and more in the real world in contradistinction to the world of your imagination which is what you would like the real world to be. But the real world is not all that could be desired, you know, and that is why it has to be acted upon and transformed by the Divine Consciousness. But for that, knowledge of the reality, however unpalatable, is almost the first requisite. This knowledge often enough is best brought home to us through blows and bleedings. True, idealistic people, sensitive people, refined natures smart under such disillusionments more than do others who are somewhat thick-skinned, but that is no reason why fine feelings should be deprecated and the keen edge of fine susceptibilities be blunted. The thing is to learn to detach oneself from any such experience and learn to look at such perversions of others from a higher altitude from where one can regard these manifestations in the proper perspective—the impersonal one. Then our difficulties really and literally become opportunities. For knowledge, when it goes to the root of our troubles, has in itself a marvellous healing-power as it were. As soon as you touch the quick of the trouble, as soon as you, diving down and down, get at what really ails you, the

pain disappears as though by a miracle. Unflinching courage to reach true Knowledge is therefore of the very essence of Yoga. No lasting superstructure can be erected except on a solid basis of true Knowledge. The feet must be sure of their ground before the head can hope to kiss the skies.

Shyness

As for shyness, there are two kinds: one is egoistic, being ashamed of expressing the Truth or showing allegiance to it in ways which would not be understood by others — the other is a certain reserve, an unwillingness to expose one's deeper feelings to the gaze of others, the wish to keep sacred and secret the relations of love with the Divine — that is a psychic feeling.

Indecision and Instability

The first [*case*] is vital indecision — the other is vital instability.¹ Those who can't choose, have the vital indecision and it is usually due to a too active physical mind, seeing too many things or too many sides at a time. The other rises from a lack of control and too much impulse.

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It [*failure in whatever one tries to do*] usually comes from a certain instability in the lower vital which does not give a consistent support to the Will, but is restless and fluctuates from one interest to another. It does not mean an incapacity for success — usually one who has that could succeed in many directions, but the fluctuation prevents sustained success in any. It is a defect that has to be got over and can be got over.

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The failure [*in studies and in sadhana*] is due not to want of capacity but to want of steadiness — a restlessness in the vital

¹ *The correspondent wrote: "There are people who cannot come to a definite decision when the situation demands it. There are others who are constantly changing their decisions. Are both of these cases of vital indecision?" — Ed.*

and a sort of ardent hastiness that lacks in care of detail and in perseverance. What you need is the inner silence and the solid strength and force that can act through this inner silence, making the vital its instrument but not allowing it to condition the action by its defects.

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There are some who are solid and tenacious in their vital, it is they who can be steady — others are more mercurial and easily moved by impulses, it is these who are sometimes enthusiastic, sometimes drop into fatigue. It is a matter of temperament. On the other hand the mercurial people are often capable of a quicker ardour, so that they can progress fast if they want in their own way. In any case the remedy for all that is to find one's true self above mind and vital and so not bound by temperament.

Laxity

The rigidity was in the obstinacy with which your mind and vital clung to their own ideas and vital habits and did not want to change. But the result was rather laxity, a general looseness which did not want to tune the nature to the spiritual endeavour, but let all sorts of things wander over its strings at their pleasure. Plasticity of the consciousness is necessary, but plasticity to the true touch of the Power, not to any ordinary touch of the forces in Nature. To tune all to the Higher should be your aim — then there will be the full poetry of the spirit not in writing only but in life.

Section Three

Vital Defects

Chapter One

Ego and Its Forms

Ego and Egoism

I suppose the ego came there [*into human activity*] first as a means of the outer consciousness individualising itself in the flux of Nature and, secondly, as an incentive for tamasic animal man to act and get something done. Otherwise he might merely have contented himself with food and sleep and done nothing else. With that incentive of ego (possession, vanity, ambition, eagerness for power etc. etc.) he began doing all sorts of things he might never otherwise have done. But now that he has to go higher, this ego comes badly in the way.

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Yes, ego is the reason of the difficulty in everybody.

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But that [*pride of the ego*] is the case with all human beings. All the action is shot through with ego, acts, feelings, thoughts, everything, big or small, good or bad. Even humility and what is called altruism is with most people only a form of ego. It does not depend on having something to be proud of.

*

It is so with everybody. Human nature is shot through in all its stuff with the threads of the ego. Even when one tries to get away from it, it is in front or walks behind all the thoughts and actions like one's shadow. To see that is the first step — to discern the falsity and absurdity of the ego movements is the second — to discourage and refuse it at every step is the third — but it goes entirely only when one sees, experiences and lives

the One in everything and equally everywhere.

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The human being is naturally egoistic and ego-centred — all he does, thinks, feels has the stamp of the ego on it and it cannot be otherwise until he learns to make not the ego but the Divine the centre of his existence and thinks, acts, feels only for the Divine — or until he enters into the higher or divine consciousness or the divine consciousness into him — for in the divine consciousness there is no ego.

*

All human beings are full of ego. If you want to change, you must be very quiet and always aspire for a higher consciousness to come down into you in which there is not the ego. When it comes down, the real change will come. But you must be quiet within, not worried and restless — you must open confidently to the Mother's Force and let it work in you.

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The human consciousness is permeated in all its past ideas with this substance of egoism. It is only by a constant quiet vigilance and increasing consciousness that it can be got out — for if it is not allowed to play openly, it conceals itself and takes subtle and disguised forms.

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It is the ego that is showing itself in its true character. Formerly, it was associating with the sadhana because it either got something of what it desired or had great expectations. Now that these things are held back and the demand for the true attitude is made on it, it resists or non-cooperates, saying, "No value in such a sadhana." In all the sadhaks here, the ego (in its physical or vital physical roots) is proving to be the stumbling block. No transformation is possible unless it changes.

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Obviously, unless the object is Nirvana, the small ego has to be attended to — not indulged, but transformed out of existence.

*

Yes, that is right — to remember constantly and live in the peace and calmness so that the Force may work and the Light may come. The small things of daily life must go on in the surface consciousness, not filling too large a place in it, until the Force and Light have taken possession and can lay direct hold of these also. It is the ego that gives them too big a place — the ego must be discouraged. “Not for myself, but for the Divine” should grow to be the law of the whole consciousness and thought and action. It cannot be done thoroughly all at once, but that must become the insistent note in the mind as soon as possible.

*

I meant [*by “thinking of the Divine”*] the giving up of the pre-occupation with your ego and its rights and claims and ideas of unfair treatment and all the rest and to think more of the Divine and the seeking for the Divine for which you came here and make that your chief preoccupation. It is not in meditation alone, but in life and thought and act and feeling that that has to be done.

*

Human nature has always been egoistic in its basis and so it brings in the ego motive into the work for the Divine also. That can only be overcome slowly, for what is ingrained in the human vital nature and has been active through hundreds of lives cannot disappear at once. To be conscious and to have the steady will to change and make the inner motive of bhakti and self-giving prevail over the outer motives is the one thing necessary.

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If you are becoming so conscious of the ego and the animal which fill so large a place in every human being, it is really a progress, because to be conscious is the first step. But along with

it you must have an aspiration and a confident faith in the Divine Power and Grace and in the divine element within you, psychic and spiritual, that through these the nature will be transformed and the ego replaced by the true person and the animal by the true vital and physical being become fit instruments of the Divine Mother.

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Yes, these experiences [*of the smallness of the egoistic person*] always come when one is opening into the wideness of the cosmic consciousness and your conclusions are correct. The self-importance of the ego has to dissolve — the importance of life or the progress of the being can come only from its being a vehicle of the Divine's play, evolution, realisation and that is independent of the vastness of Space and Time.

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The right attitude is to see that as a separate being, as an ego, one has no importance whatever and the insistence on one's own desires, pride, position etc. is an ignorance, but one matters only as a spirit, as a portion of the Divine, not more than others, but as all souls matter to the Soul of all.

*

Impersonality in itself is not the Divine. All these mistakes can be and are made by many who claim to be in an impersonalised consciousness. A force may be impersonal but may be also a wrong force. Many think they are impersonal and free from ego because they are obeying a force or something bigger than their own personality — but that force or that something may be quite other than the Divine and it may hold them by something in their personality and ego.

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It [*the degree of sensitivity*] depends on the nature of the ego. Some egoists are hard-skinned and not sensitive at all; others are hyper-sensitive.

Ego in Different Parts of the Being

It [*the ego*] rises because it is its nature to do so; it wants to keep hold of the being which it considers its property and field of expression.

*

Your ego does come up from time to time without your seeing that it is the ego. It comes up not in your higher parts but in your physical mind and consciousness and you think that because your higher parts are clear this also is clear.

*

Ego, whatever its basis, can reproduce itself in different parts of the being, e.g. a vital ego, a mental ego, but fundamentally it is one.

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The mind and the vital are much more full of ego than the body — in the body the ego is obscure and instinctive only. There is no reason why ego should not be conquered in the end — although it is difficult — even in the external nature.

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The fight with the ego is part of the fight with the physical nature, for it is the superficial ego in the physical consciousness, irrational and instinctive, that refuses to go.

*

No, it need not.¹ It is so thought because the old Yogas did not care about the liberation of the body and other instruments, and thought only of the separation of the soul from the Prakriti. If you do not liberate the Prakriti, ego and other forms of bondage will naturally remain so long as there is any action of Prakriti.

¹ *The correspondent asked whether egoism remains, at least in the physical being, as long as the body remains. — Ed.*

The Vital Ego

The earth-consciousness does not want to change, so it rejects what comes down to it from above — it has always done so. It is only if those who have taken this Yoga open themselves and are willing to change their lower nature that this unwillingness can disappear.

What stands in the way of course is always the vital ego with its ignorance and the pride of its ignorance and the physical consciousness with its inertia which resents and resists any call to change and its indolence which does not like to take the trouble — it finds it more comfortable to go on its own way repeating always the same old movements and, at best, expecting everything to be done for it in some way at some time.

The first thing is to have the right inner attitude — you have that; the rest is the will to transform oneself and the vigilance to perceive and reject all that belongs to the ego and the tamasic persistence of the lower nature. Finally, to keep oneself always open to the Mother in every part of the being so that the process of transformation may find no hindrance.

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Yes, even in ordinary life there must be a control over the vital and the ego — otherwise life would be impossible. Even many animals, those who live in groups, have their strict rules imposing a control on the play of the ego and those who disobey will have a bad time of it. The Europeans especially understand this and even though they are full of ego, yet when there is a question of team work or group life, they are adepts at keeping it in leash, even if it growls inside; it is the secret of their success. But in Yoga life of course it is a question not of controlling ego but of getting rid of it and rising to a higher principle, so demand is much more strongly and insistently discouraged.

*

It is much better to tell [*any feelings of dissatisfaction*]. But you

are not alone in these feelings — two-thirds of the Asram have them in more or less vehemence — it is the unregenerate vital ego which is just the thing that stands most in the way of the transformation — other things are comparatively mild obstacles compared with this part of the being. It is much better that the Mother refused consideration to this part of you — consideration would have been a much more dangerous test than refusal.

*

Yes, it [*a false sense of importance*] is a thing which comes to many; exaggerated and made a principal part of the vital attitude, it has been the cause of failure and departure of several who consider themselves great sadhaks — they made it an excuse for indulging and magnifying the vital ego. Since you see that it is ridiculous, you should have no difficulty in getting rid of it. The only truth in it is that each one who opens himself in such a way that the Force can get through to his material so as to change it, will by that be contributing to the victory of the Force — but it applies to everybody, not to any one individual.

*

Yes, the talk about “advanced” sadhaks is a thing I have always discouraged — but people go on because that appeals to the vital ego.

*

I have already told you the nature of the difficulty that has arisen in you, that it is nothing but the revolt of your vital mind and vital ego and I have pointed out to you the only way in which it can be overcome. You had by an effort supported by a special concentration from us arrived at a first psychic opening in your mind and heart which enabled you even to throw out for a time the sexual obsession from your vital consciousness. But, as often happens, soon after all that is obscure, egoistic, self-centred in the vital being rose up in revolt and created a confused farrago of desires, demands, disappointments, grievances, misapprehen-

sions,² false reasonings and especially a wrong attitude of claim and demand which was the entire contradiction of the psychic and spiritual attitude and wholly inconsistent with the right conditions of sadhana. It is this of which your recent letters were full. The forces that use this kind of vital condition for the breaking of a sadhak's spiritual chances became active and turned all into a drive to go away. Your only chance is to refuse to listen to all these ideas and suggestions and adopt resolutely an attitude of complete self-giving and the refusal of all feelings of desire, claim and ego and all justifications of these feelings by the vital mind which is full of a false view of things and therefore cannot be trusted even when its reasonings seem to be plausible.

Others before you have entered into this whirl of the vital mind and ego and have gone on justifying it and indulging it. The only result was a constant repetition of vital crises sometimes ending in departure and the failure of the sadhana; others by a repeated reaction of their psychic being finally succeeded in emerging out of the chaos. But we have found that to comply with the claims, demands, clamours, ultimatums of the vital mind in this condition is the worst way to meet the difficulty. It only increases the demands, revolts, outbursts of ego and makes the recurrence or continuance of the vital crises endless. You must get out of your head the idea that you have a right to demand this or that from the Mother because she is accepted by you as the Divine and that she is bound to satisfy you and any refusal is an offence and an outrage. The Mother acts and decides in all freedom according to her vision and judgment and she cannot be expected to act according to the desires, opinions or demands of the sadhaks nor can they judge by their minds her reasons or motives, for these do not belong to the ordinary consciousness in which the mind moves. For her to obey the dictates of the sadhaks or their claims and desires would be to make her work meaningless and a failure. Apart from that, the

² Your present attitude to your poetry and painting is one of these misapprehensions of the vital mind and ego and is a mistake calculated to injure your sadhana.

basis of this Yoga is self-giving and surrender of the sadhak to the Divine, his acceptance of guidance by a higher consciousness than his own. A reversal of the position, an imposition of the will of the lower consciousness on the Divine or the Guru is not admissible; yet the position you have taken in your letters of demand amounts to that and nothing else. This attitude must cease if you want to get out of your difficulty.

I have tried to make the position clear to you. It is for you to accept or not to accept what I have said; but it is the only way possible for the sadhana.

*

Once the universality [*of the consciousness*] is established, there is no longer a secure fortress in the nature for the vital egoism — the walls of it having been broken down. They [*vital forces*] may still attack from outside, but it now lies in the power of the sadhak to prevent their making a settled formation in him any longer.

Rajasic and Tamasic Ego (Ahankara)

What you speak of as your nature, the distrust etc., is not the nature but only a particular turn or habit that has got into it like a crease in a dress. It can be smoothed out of the nature. Of course it has to be smoothed out, for just as the rajasic ahankara which exalts itself unduly is not good for the sadhana, creating pride, vanity and delusion, so this opposite thing, called often tamasic ahankara, is not good, for it creates diffidence, despondency and in some people inertia.

*

The tamasic ego is that which accepts and supports despondency, weakness, inertia, self-depreciation, unwillingness to act, unwillingness to know or be open, fatigue, indolence, do-nothingness. Contrary to the rajasic it says, “I am so weak, so obscure, so miserable, so oppressed and ill-used — there is no hope for me, no success, I am denied everything, I am unsupported — how

can I do this, how can I do that, I have no power for it, no capacity, I am helpless; let me die; let me lie still and moan," etc. etc. Of course not all that at once or in every case; but I am giving the general character of the thing.

*

All that [*self-depreciation and depression*] is the usual play of the vital and the ego. It is the vital that can find satisfaction neither in talking with others nor in solitude—it has lost the old satisfaction in talks, but it cannot reconcile itself either to giving up the old attachment—it still feels a tie to it and so cannot get the joy of solitude.

It is the ego that is self-important and makes much of itself, but depression, self-depreciation and the feeling that others do not like or appreciate your company is also a working of the ego. The first is rajasic ego, the second tamasic ego. To be occupied always with oneself and the action of others on oneself is ego. One who is free from ego does not trouble about these things. In Yoga one must be unattached and indifferent to these things, concerned only with Sadhana and the Divine and towards others the attitude must be one of quiet goodwill without any demand or expectation. If one can't arrive at this yet, one must always endeavour to arrive at that and not feed the lower vital movement by brooding on these other things.

To depend on letters from me for getting free from depression will only create a habit of depression, demand for a tonic in the shape of a letter, then again depression, tonic and revival and the circle will go on. It is only by a resolute will to get rid of the vital and the ego through their reactions that you can keep yourself open to the Mother. Success may take time, but the steady will and aspiration must be there.

*

In spite of the outbreak of temper and violence with regard to the boy I do not think it can be said that you have not changed at all or made any progress. There are three obstacles that one has to overcome in the vital and they are very difficult to

overcome, lust (sexual desire), wrath and rajasic ego. I think you have progressed much in all three. Even in regard to anger, the outbreaks are surely less common, less overpowering and long-continued than they were before. It has been so much in your vital nature that you have to be on your guard against fits like these coming back; you have also to overcome excitement and violence of speech; but if you persevere without being discouraged, the freedom will come. Rajasic ego is the ground of the others. I think your idea about X is good for this purpose. If you can accustom yourself to do as scrupulously work not attractive to you as you do what attracts you and to do it in accordance with the ideas and standards of another, not insisting on your own, that should be an excellent discipline for the rajasic ego and bring into the vital a greater power of self-giving and peace.

*

Do you mean to say that you never had any rajasic element in you? There is not a human being who has not got it in him so long as he is not divinised in his vital. What were all the vital suggestions coming to you so insistently always except appeals to the rajasic ego? When you threw out sex, jealousy, vanity, etc. what were you throwing out but the rajasic ego? What was the demand at the pranam or the disturbance caused there but a movement of the rajasic ego? Some of these things you threw out successfully — others still kept a response.

*

So long as you had fully the attitude of surrender, the rajasic ego could only take the form of suggestions from outside, uprisings from the subconscious. It was suppressed in the vital. When the inertia rose and the energy of will receded, it began to try to come in again.

*

These [*feelings of hopelessness*] are the feelings of the tamasic ego — the reaction to a disappointment in the rajasic ego. Mingled with the true attitude and experience or running

concurrently along with it was a demand of the vital, “What I am having now, I must always have, otherwise I can’t do sadhana; if I ever lose that, I shall die” — whereas the proper attitude is, “Even if I lose it for a time, it will be because something in me has to be changed in order that the Mother’s consciousness may be fulfilled in me not only in the self but in every part.” The lower forces attacked at this weak point, made demands through the vital and brought about a state of inertia in which what you had clung to seemed to be lost, went back behind the veil. So came the tamasic reaction of the ego, “What is the use of living, I prefer to die.” Obviously it is not the whole of you that says it, it is a part in the disappointed vital and tamasic physical. It is not enough that the active demands should be broken and removed; for this also is a passive way of demand, “I can’t have my demands; very well, I abdicate, don’t want to exist.” That must disappear.

*

Tamas and tamasic ego are implied in each other. When one yields to tamas, one indulges the tamasic ego.

Ego-centricity

The ego-centric man feels and values things as they affect him. “Does this please me or displease, give me gladness or pain, flatter my pride, vanity, ambition or hurt it, satisfy my desires or thwart them?” etc. The unegoistic man does not look at things like that. He looks to see what things are in themselves and would be even if he were not there, what is their meaning, how they fit into the scheme of things — or else he feels calm and equal, refers everything to the Divine, or if he is a man of action how they will serve the work that has to be done or the life of the world or the cause he serves etc. etc. There can be many points of view which are not ego-centric.

*

It is true about living and doing all for oneself, but that is the

nature of man, he is centred in his ego, ego-centric, and does all for his ego; even his love and liking is mostly based on ego. All that has to be changed and all has to be centred in the Divine, done for the Divine Mother. It is the work of the sadhana to get that done. The silence, the growth of the psychic and all else is meant to bring about that — but it cannot be done all at once. When the consciousness is ready, then the psychic love, the impulse for self-giving begins to open out in the heart and the change is made — more and more till there is the complete self-giving.

*

But in what way do they [*internal and external things*] belong to the Divine, so long as the ego appropriates and uses them for its own purposes? Self-giving in fact means a change from ego-centricity to God-centricity; also such a giving as would lead to a change of the whole base of the consciousness.

*

Your nature like that of almost everybody has been largely ego-centric and the first stages of the sadhana are with almost everybody ego-centric. The main idea in it is always one's own sadhana, one's own endeavour, one's own development, perfection, siddhi. It is inevitable for most, for without that personal endeavour there would not be sufficient will or push to bring about the first necessary changes. But none of these things — development, perfection or siddhi — can really come in any degree of completeness or unmixed finality until this ego-centric attitude changes into the God-centric, until it becomes the development, perfection, siddhi of the Divine Consciousness, its will and its instrumentation in this body — and that can only be when these things become secondary, and bhakti for the Divine, love for the Divine, oneness with the Divine in consciousness, will, heart and body, become the sole aim — the rest is then only the fulfilment of the Divine Will by the Divine Power. This attitude is never difficult for the psychic, it is its natural position and feeling, and whenever your psychic was in front, you had

it in your central consciousness. But there were the outer mind, vital and physical that brought in their mixture of desire and ego and there could be no effective liberation in life and action till these were liberated. The thinking mind and higher vital can accept without too much difficulty, but the difficulty is with the lower vital and physical and especially with the most external parts of them; for these are entirely creatures of habit, recurring movement, an obstinate repetition of the same movement always. This habit is so blind and obstinate and persistent as to seem almost invincible, especially when it is used at a juncture like this by the Forces of Ignorance as their last refuge or point of attack. But the apparent invincibility is not true. The most ego-centric can change and do change by the psychic principle becoming established in the external nature. That it can be done only by the Divine Grace and Power is true (that is true of all spiritual change) — but with the full consent of the being. As it was done in the inner being, so it can be done in the outer; give the adhesion of your full will and faith and, whatever the difficulty, it will be done.

*

Obviously one must not get egoistic about it [*one's sadhana*], but withdrawal from the outer or lower consciousness into the inner is not in itself an egoistic movement. If it were so, all sadhana would be egoism and to be always social and on the surface would be the only thing!

The Egoism of the Instrument and the Magnified Ego

The form of ego has to be dissolved,³ it has not to be replaced by a bigger ego or another kind of ego. It has to be replaced by the true being which feels itself, even though individual, yet one with all and one with the Divine.

*

³ *The correspondent asked whether the ego has to be transformed or dissolved. — Ed.*

The egoism of the instrument can be as dangerous or more dangerous to spiritual progress than the egoism of the doer. The ego-sense is contrary to spiritual realisation, so how can any kind of ego be a thing to be encouraged? As for the magnified ego, it is one of the most perilous obstacles to release and perfection. There should be no big I, not even a small one.

What is meant by the magnified ego is that when the limits of the ordinary mind and vital are broken, one feels a far vaster and more powerful consciousness and unlimited possibilities, but if one ties all that to the tail of one's own ego, then one becomes a thousand times more egoistic than the ordinary man. The greatness of the Divine becomes an excuse and a support for one's own greatness and the big I swells itself to fill not only the earth but the heavens. That magnification of the ego is a thing to be guarded against with a watchful care.

*

What you say about the ahankara of the instrument is true — it is one of the most sticky of the ego's self-deceptions and there are few who can detect it soon or get easily clear of it. I think I can congratulate you on your becoming aware of it at so early a stage. There are some who do not discover it even after ten or twenty years of sadhana.

*

Yes — these [*pride, a sense of superiority, the desire to show one's worth*] are small signs or little forms of the ego of the instrument — not very serious, but often rather sticky. There is a bigger kind of egoism which is not so common which can rise into a kind of megalomania: “I, I am *the* instrument — how great an instrument I am — through me all will be done”, — there are three or four who have had that in a distressingly acute form, secretly or openly; often it ends by their going away to do great things outside — great things which somehow do not get done.

*

The Divine is there in all men, so the Divine and the ego do

live together. But the Divine is veiled by the ego and manifests in proportion as the ego *first submits itself*, then recedes and disappears. There can be no complete possession by the Divine without disappearance of the ego. Any man can be an instrument of the Divine — the thing is to be a perfectly conscious instrument.

*

Well, it can hardly be that you alone are a chosen instrument. All who arrive at the realisation in this Yoga will be instruments — it is part of the realisation that the sadhak should turn himself into an instrument of the Divine Mother.

Getting Rid of the Ego and of Egoism

What you say [*about the need to purify oneself of ego*] is perfectly correct — I am glad you are becoming so lucid and clear-sighted, the result surely of a psychic change. Ego is a very curious thing and in nothing more than in its way of hiding itself and pretending it is not the ego. It can always hide even behind an aspiration to serve the Mother. The only way of getting rid of it is to chase it out of all its veils and corners.

You are right also in thinking that this is really the most important part of your Yoga. The Rajayogis are right in putting purification in front of everything and a preliminary to successful meditation — as I was also right in putting it in front along with concentration in the *Synthesis*. You have only to look around you to see that experiences and even realisations cannot bring one to the goal if this is not done — at any moment they can fall owing to the vital still being impure and full of ego.

*

Yes, that [*the elimination of egoism*] is the first requisite of a true foundation in the sadhana. It is because people do not realise this and are satisfied with experiences, keeping the vital ego, not insisting on an egoless higher consciousness, that there is so much difficulty.

*

Obviously all that must go — it is the old vital egoism of the human being always preoccupied with itself, so that the being cannot give itself simply and unquestioningly to the adoration of the Divine.

*

Yes — it is from looking at things from the ego point of view that there comes all the confusion and trouble and ignorance. One has to think of the Divine, be still and let the divine consciousness come in and replace the egoistic human — then all that disappears.

*

All attachment and ego must disappear. No temptation of power, for power is given only to do the Divine's work and the power itself is the Divine's. No attachment to work, for the work is not the ego's, but the Divine's. No attachment or insistence on the fruits, for that too belongs to the Divine and will come when mind and circumstances are ready. It is the same with sadhana. Only one thing is to be the aim, to be in union and contact with the Divine through love and surrender, — the rest will come out of that, whatever is needed for the manifestation.

*

If the ego is gone and the full surrender is there, then there should be no obstacles [*to following the sunlit path of sadhana*]. If however the rajas of the vital is only quiescent, then its quiescence may bring up the tamas in its place, and that would be the obstacle.

*

Only calm in the vital is hardly sufficient [*to have psychic experiences*]. There must be something throwing out the ego from the vital.

*

Of course, they [*the ego and the vital*] always resist a pressure

to get rid of them — and if one fixes a given time, they are all the more resistant in the hope of creating disappointment and discouragement by the failure to do it in the given time.

*

You cannot expect to drive the ego out of the movements in a short time. What is necessary is to see it quietly without being discouraged by its presence, and by a steady persistent action work it out of the system.

*

It is not possible to get rid of the ego-movements all at once. They have to be worked out of the nature by a constant consciousness and rejection. Even when the central ego has gone, the habitual movements stick for a long time.

*

These things [*little expressions of egoism*] either fade slowly out by constant rejection or else they drop off when the higher consciousness gets steadily down into the lower vital and, as it were, swallows it up. A sudden extinction is perhaps possible — at least there are reported cases of it — but usually they linger and go slowly, losing gradually force as if worn out.

*

For the ego, however insistent it may be, one has to keep one's eye on it and say no to all its suggestions so that each position it takes up proves to be a fruitless move. Treated in that way, it becomes ready for the moment when the psychic has only to give a slight push for it to fall away in each field of its activity from its loosened roots. Persevere steadily in the present movement and it cannot fail to be effective.

*

Ego is not so easy to get rid of. It remains not only in spite of work, but in spite of knowledge or bhakti. The disappearance of ego means complete *mukti*. But even the Yogi who feels

his separate being swallowed up in cosmic consciousness or some kind of transcendental consciousness, yet when it comes to outward action and reaction finds the superficial ego still there. That is why the ascetic has a horror of action and says that without ego it can't be done. It can, but fully only when even these outermost things are finally taken up by the higher Consciousness entirely.

*

If you think there is no ego or desire in you, only pure devotion, that shows a great unconsciousness. To be free from ego and desire is a condition which needs a high siddhi in Yoga — even many Yogis of a great spiritual attainment are not free from it. For a sadhak at your stage of development to think he is free from ego and desire is to blind himself and prevent the clear perception of one's own nature movements which is necessary for progress towards spiritual perfection.

The Mother does not need to have your writings before her in order to see what is in you.

If your writings show ego and desire, and they certainly do, it is because they are there without your perceiving it and express themselves without your intending it. What the surface mind thinks and intends is one thing and what is behind the thoughts and actions is another thing. A man's surface mind shapes its own idea of oneself and one's nature in an entire self-ignorance. The first thing one has to do to get rid of this ignorance is to draw back from the surface mind and get into contact with the psychic which does not allow such delusions and shows one clearly the truth about one's movements.

*

Even if there is no consciousness of ego in the higher parts where oneness of all things has been realised, it does not follow that in the lower parts ego has been abolished. It can on the contrary become very strong and the actions can be very egoistic even while the mind is thinking "I have no ego."

*

Of course, such suggestions [*that one can be an instrument to help someone else on the path of Yoga*] are meant to wake the ego. I suppose they persist because they still have a hope of waking the ego. Even when one is quite free, all kinds of suggestions can come. One either takes no notice of them or else gives a glance to see whether there is any fragment of ego still lurking somewhere.

Getting Rid of the Ego Altogether

But what is this ego of which you speak? Everybody has the ego and it is impossible to get rid of it altogether except by two things — the opening of the psychic within and the descent of a wider ego-free consciousness from above. The psychic being opening does not get rid of the ego at once but purifies it and offers it and all the movements to the Divine, so that one becomes unegoistic through self-giving and surrender. At the same time the nature opens above and the wider ego-free consciousness comes down and ego disappears and by the power of the psychic you know your own true being which is a portion of the Mother. This is what has to happen, but it cannot happen in so short a time. Do not be always thinking of the vital movements and the ego — you have seen them and know that they are, it is enough. Concentrate rather in the heart on the opening there; concentrate persistently and aspire persistently and do not mind if it takes time. Call in any way, even if you cannot call yet deeply — then the deeper call will come.

*

It is possible [*to diminish the ego by the action of the Force*] if your consciousness associates itself with the action; then at least one can get rid of its major action and leave only minor traces. To get rid of the ego altogether however comes usually only by the descent of Consciousness from above and its occupation of the whole being aided of course by the rule of the psychic in the nature.

*

I think you still give an exaggerated importance and attention to the ego and other elements that are interwoven in the nature of humanity and cannot be entirely got rid of except by the coming of a new consciousness which replaces them by higher movements. If one rejects centrally and with all sincerity the ego and rajas, their roots get loosened and sattwa can prevail in the nature, but the expulsion of all ego and rajas cannot be done by the will and its effort. After a certain stage of preparation therefore one must stress more on the positive side of the sadhana than on the negative side of rejection, — though this of course must remain to help the other. Still what is important is to develop the psychic within and bring down the higher consciousness from above. The psychic as it grows and manifests detects immediately all wrong movements or elements and at the same time supplies almost automatically the true element or movement which will replace them — this psychic process is much easier and more effective than that of a severe tapasya of purification. The higher consciousness in descending brings peace and purity into all the inner parts; the inner being separates itself from the imperfect outer consciousness and at the same time the peace that comes carries in it a power which can throw out what contradicts the peace and purity. Ego can then slowly or swiftly but surely disappear — rajas and tamas change into their divine substitutes.

*

It is rather a wider than a higher consciousness that is necessary for the liberation from the ego. Going high is necessary of course, but by itself it is not sufficient.

*

Without persistent rejection it [*liberation from movements of the ego*] cannot be done. Going up into the self liberates the higher parts but the ego remains in the lower parts. The most effective force for this liberation is the psychic control along with steady rejection.

*

The sense of ego can disappear into that of the Self or the Purusha but that of itself does not bring about the disappearance of the old ego reactions in the Prakriti. The Purusha has to get rid of these by a process of constant rejection and remoulding. The remoulding consists in throwing everything into a consecration to the Mother and doing all for her without regard to oneself, one's desires, opinions, vital reactions as if they were the things to be fulfilled. This is most easily done if the psychic being becomes quite awake.

*

Without the liberation of the psychic and the realisation of the true Self the ego cannot go, both are necessary. If there is no consciousness of the Self how can the ego disappear? The psychic can be liberated by love and devotion, but I was speaking of a case in which it is not so liberated, and the realisation of the Self seems more easy — a case like yours.

Selfishness

To go away and suffer the consequences is not a solution. As for the rest, the selfishness of the ego is not a reason for not calling down the higher (divine) consciousness of which the peace and the force are as it were the front or the basis. How can you get rid of the selfish ego unless you call down that higher consciousness to which the ego is not a necessity?

In the evolution of the lower consciousness here ego and selfishness were a necessity. So long as the higher consciousness above ordinary mind does not descend, ego remains a necessity even in aspiring towards the Divine or towards Mukti, even if it becomes a sattwic ego. It is only in the higher consciousness that ego can dissolve, either by ascending there or by its descent into the consciousness below.

*

Why is it selfishness [*to be concentrated on the Divine*]? Selfishness is to live for oneself and not for something greater than the

self. To be concentrated on the Divine at all times is to get out of the personal self and its aims into something greater and serve the aims of that greater Existence. It is no more selfishness than to live for others always would be selfishness.

*

As to egoism and selfishness, one can be generous and yet egoistic — one can be generous with vanity, pride etc. in the generosity; one can even be egoistic in self-sacrifice.

Ambition

Ambition is always a force of the vital.

*

A kind of siddhi or siddhis can come [*even if there is ambition in the nature*] — siddhis of power etc. There are Yogins who have great powers and also a big ego. Of course there can be no liberation without overcoming ambition and ego.

*

Suggestions of ambition etc. are always born in the vital mind or, as it might be called, the mind of the vital and from there they rush up to the thinking mind and claim its assent and the sanction of the mental will. When the thinking mind gets clouded by the uprush, it gets carried away and gives its assent. The thinking mind (reason) has always to remain unmoved above and judge what is right without being caught and carried away by the vital.

*

Ambition and vanity are things so natural to the human consciousness — they have even their use in ordinary life — that it is quite natural that at first they should enter into the sadhana also and linger even when they are rejected. But they have to be pushed out, before one is far on the path — otherwise they are very dangerous attendants and can pervert both aspiration and siddhi.

Vanity

It [*vanity*] is one of the things most difficult to get rid of. Even when the mind is unmoved, something in the vital or physical or perhaps even some little bit on the surface at once starts vibrating.

*

It is possible that X has experiences for he has probably some mental force and through that can build up mental realisations of what he reads, but he lives in the vital and whatever he experiences or receives the vital takes it and makes it a hundred times bigger in its construction than it really is. His claims *are* preposterous. It is evident that, like most people, he has no idea what the supramental is or he would never talk like that. People who live in the vital and have much vanity (there have been several examples here too) easily get the idea that they have attained everything, are without ego, all they receive is from the Divine (even when a magnified ego is driving them) etc. etc., for the vital ego is eager to arrive, to be big, to be siddha, and it persuades itself very easily that it is all these things. Let him however go on his own way; it is no use disturbing his self-content, as probably it is the only kind of self-expression he can do.

*

When vanity is there on a big scale, it usually works like that. The man feels the energy in all he does and mistakes the energy for high accomplishment. It is a common error. The high accomplishment is in only one or two fields.

*

It is vanity, but it is not humbug,⁴ unless he does not believe in it. If he does not believe in it, it is humbug, but it is not vanity.

⁴ A doctor went about claiming that he could cure people because the Mother's Force worked through him. The correspondent asked, "Is not all this humbug?" — Ed.

Pride and Self-Esteem

Pride is only one form of ego — there are ten thousand others. Every action of man is full of ego — the good ones as well as the bad, his humility as much as his pride, his virtues as much as his vices.

To get the ego out of the human nature is not so simple as that. If one is free from ego, does nothing with reference to himself or for his own sake but only for the Divine and all his thoughts and feelings are for the Divine, then he is Jivanmukta and a Siddha Yogi.

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For many sadhaks there is a first stage governed by the mind or higher vital in which they go on very well, because in the mind and higher vital there are elements that are strong enough to control the rest while the first experiences or first progress is made. But a time comes when the sadhak has to deal with the lower parts of the being, *then* all the vital difficulties arise. If the early progress or experiences have engendered pride or ego or if there is a serious flaw somewhere, then they are unable to deal with these so long as the ego is not removed or broken or the flaw mended. X developed a pride of self-righteousness that stood in his way altogether; he has also the flaw of a narrow obstinate mind that sticks to its own ideas as if they alone were right — the instances you give of his conduct are illustrations of this defect. That is why here he quarrels with everyone thinking that he is right and they are very bad and mischievous, cannot see his own faults and mistakes and when he is not heard by the Mother or myself feels hurt and offended because we do not support his saintliness and righteousness against the wicked who oppress him. He is a good and clever worker but he cannot progress in sadhana so long as he keeps this stiffness and ego.

*

But that [*inability to recognise one's defects*] is a very common human weakness, although it ought not to exist in a sadhak

whose progress depends largely on his recognising what has to be changed in him. Not that the recognition by itself is sufficient, but it is a necessary element. It is of course a kind of pride or vanity which considers this necessary for strength and standing. Not only will they not recognise it before others but they hide their defects from themselves or even if obliged to look at it with one eye look away from it with the other. Or they weave a veil of words and excuses and justifications trying to make it something other than it really is. X's saying [*"I would die if I had to admit my faults."*] is very characteristic of him — that has been his main stumbling block in the path of Yoga.

*

It is little use our trying to convey to you *our* will (in words), because what your vital seeks after is a sanction for your own will and its way of action, — and it is little use our trying to give you light, because your mind follows always its own light. Any attempt to correct from us you have always rejected as our error, our misunderstanding of you, an attempt to give you kicks, as you express it. In such a case we can only be silent, try to help your sadhana silently as much as you will allow and for the rest leave you to learn by experience as far as you may become willing to do so. You have capacities and Yogic stuff, but along with them goes a very strong self-esteem and a self-righteous spirit which stand in the way of perfection and constitute a very serious obstacle. So long as a sadhak has that, the attempt of the Truth to manifest in him will always be baffled by his changing it into mental and vital constructions which distort it, turn it into ineffective half-truth or even make truth itself a source of error.

I would not have written even so much if you had not pressed so persistently for an answer. I hope you will not take it as misunderstanding or merely another "kick". If you do not want criticism or correction from us, you should at least develop better the power of self-criticism and self-correction in yourself without which no perfection is possible.

*

The egoism in yourself of which you speak belongs to the relation of one human being with another and is common to almost all men and women; it is extremely difficult to get rid of, but if one sees it clearly and determines not to have it, then it can first be brought under control and then dismissed from the nature. But the egoism which made people go away from here through pride in their sadhana and attachment to the supposed greatness of their experiences is another kind and far more dangerous spiritually. You do not have it and I do not think you are in danger of ever having it.

Self-Respect, Amour-Propre, Superiority

Self-respect and a sense of superiority are two very different things. Self-respect is not necessarily a sign of egoism any more than its absence is a sign of liberation from egoism. Self-respect means observing a certain standard of conduct which is proper to the level of manhood to which I belong — e.g. I cannot make a false statement out of self-respect though it would be advantageous to do it and most people under the circumstances would make it. Amour-propre is different and belongs to the sattvic type of ego. When one is not free from ego, then amour-propre (as well as self-respect — for that can be with ego or without ego) is a necessary support for the maintenance of the personality at its proper level.

*

Amour-propre does not mean conceit. It means at its best the feeling not to make mistakes and to do as well as possible — at its worst it means to try to appear well and without mistakes or faults to others and not to like faults being pointed out.

*

Ideas of superiority and inferiority are not of much use or validity. Each one is himself with his own possibilities to which there need be no limit except that of will and development and time. Each nature has its own lines and own things that are more

developed or less developed, but the standard should be set by what he in himself aims to be. Comparison with others brings in a wrong standard of values.

Jealousy and Abhiman

This is a very common disease with the sadhaks — making comparisons with feelings of jealousy and envy — in some it leads to revolt and self-assertion, in others to self-depreciation and depression. Naturally, these feelings are quite out of place and the judgments created are out of focus. Each sadhak has his own movement, his own relation with the Divine, his own place in the work or the general sadhana and to compare with others immediately brings in a wrong standard. It is on the truth of his own inner movement that he has to take his base — swadharma.

*

Jealousy should not be there if there is no ground for it, for then it is absurd and meaningless — but also when there is reason for it according to common standards, it should not be there, for it is a sentiment lacking in nobility and quite unyogic.

As for getting rid of *lobha*, certainly the Mother's full help will be with you.

*

It is jealousy of course.⁵ Fame and success always create a great amount of jealousy and ill-will anywhere but most in countries where there has been a suppressed public life and solidarity does not exist.

*

This jealousy (which is a very common affliction of the vital) will go like the rest. If you have the aspiration to get rid of it, it

⁵ An Indian philosopher was invited to Europe to deliver several lectures and was received well everywhere. When he returned to India, he found that the number of his critics had greatly increased. He wrote to ask Sri Aurobindo the reason. — Ed.

can only come by force of habit, and with the psychic growing in you and the Mother's force acting, the power of the habit is sure to diminish and fade away. Do not be discouraged by its occasional return, but reject it so that it may be unable to stay long and will be obliged to retire. Very soon then it will cease to come at all.

*

All that [*vanity, jealousy, the sense of not being loved*] of course is not love, but self-love. Jealousy is only an ugly form of self-love. That is what people do not understand — they even think that demands and jealousy and wounded vanity are signs of love or at least natural attendants of it.

*

The sooner you get rid of that [*abhiman*] the better. Anyone who indulges *abhiman* puts himself under the influence of the hostile forces. *Abhiman* has nothing to do with true love; it is like jealousy a part of the vital egoism.

*

The feeling of jealousy and *abhiman* was of course a survival from the past movements of the nature. It is so that these things go out if they are rejected; they lose their force, can stay less and less, can affect less and less the consciousness, — finally, they are able to touch no longer and so come no longer.

*

It is of course the old reaction — jealousy is certainly there, or you would not feel this violent sorrow. That it subsists still in the recesses and rises with such vehemence shows how deeply rooted this movement was in your physical consciousness. You have not been able to root it out, because when it comes you associate yourself entirely with it and abandon yourself to its outcries and violence. You must have the strength to stand back from it in that part of your nature which is free — only then will you be able to push it away from you; and it is only if it is

pushed away from you each time it rises that it will consent to disappear and return no more. As for our support and help it is there, but you must remain conscious of it — and you must not allow any wrong ideas like those of this morning to diminish the sense of unity and contact with the Mother.

*

I do not see why you make such a big difference between the quarrels and jealousy over other women and quarrels and jealousy over other attractions not of a sexual character. They both spring from the same primary impulse, the possessive instinct which is at the base of ordinary vital love. In the latter case, as often sexual jealousy is not possible, the mind supports itself on other motives which seem to it quite reasonable and justifiable — it may not be conscious that it is being pushed by the vital, but the quarrels and the vivacity of the disagreement are there all the same. Whether you had or had not both forms of it, is not very material and does not make things better or worse. It is the getting rid of the instinct itself that matters, whether from the psychological point of view or from that of a spiritual change.

The one thing that is of any importance is the fact that the old personality which you were throwing out has reasserted itself for the moment, as you yourself see. It has confused your mind, otherwise you would not ask the question whether it is there still and how that agrees with my description of your aspiration and glimpse of turning entirely to the Mother as true and real. Of course, they were true and real and sincere and they are still there even if for a moment clouded over. You know well enough by this time that the whole being is not one block so that if one part changes, all changes miraculously at the same time. Something of the old things may be there submerged and rise up again if the pressure and fixed resolution to get rid of them slackens. I do not know to what you refer when you speak of the statement that “Light and Darkness, truth and falsehood cannot dwell together”, but certainly it can only mean that in the spiritual endeavour one cannot allow them to dwell together, — the Light, the Truth must be kept, the Darkness, the falsehood

or error pushed out altogether. It certainly did not mean that in the human being there can be either only all light or only all darkness and whoever has any weakness in him has no light and no sincere aspiration and no truth in his nature. If that were so, Yoga would be impossible. All the sadhaks in this Asram would be convicted of insincerity and of having no true sadhana — for who is there in whom there is no obscurity and no movement of ignorance?

If you have fallen down from the consciousness you had, it is because instead of dismissing the dispute with X as a moment's movement, you begin to brood on it and prolong the wrong turn it gave. It is no use persisting in the feelings that it created in you. You have only to do what I have been trying to tell you. Draw back from them and, having seen what was lingering in the nature, dismiss them quietly and turn back again to the true consciousness, opening yourself to receive once more the Truth that is creating you anew and let it come down into all your nature.

Wounded Feeling

Your letter of the morning came entirely from the disturbed and wounded vital; that was why I was in no hurry to answer. I do not know why you are so ready to believe that myself or the Mother act from ordinary movements of anger, vexation or displeasure; there was nothing of the kind in what I wrote. You had been repeatedly falling from your attained level of a higher consciousness and, in spite of our suggestions to you to see what was pulling you down, your only reply was that you could see nothing. We knew perfectly well that it was part of the vital which did not want to change and, not wanting to change, was hiding itself from the mind and the mind itself did not seem very willing to see, — so we thought it necessary when you gave us a chance by what you wrote — first about X and secondly about the thoughts of the past — to indicate plainly and strongly the nature of the obstacle — on one side your old sentiment persisting in the *viparīta* form of anger, resentment and wounded feeling, on the other the vital's habit of self-esteem,

ensorious judgment of others, a sense of superiority in sadhana or in other respects, a wish to appear well before others and before yourself also. This especially has a blinding influence and prevents the clear examination of oneself and the perception of the obstacles that are interfering with the spiritual progress. Even if the mind aspires to know and change, a habit of that kind acting concealed in the vital is quite enough to stand in the way and prevent both the knowledge and the change. I was therefore careful to speak plainly of vanity and self-righteousness — so that this part of the vital might not try not to see. The Mother speaks or writes much more pointedly and sharply to those whom she wishes to push rapidly on the way because they are capable of it and they do not resent or suffer but are glad of the pressure and the plainness because they know by experience that it helps them to see their obstacles and change. If you wish to progress rapidly, you must get rid of this vital reaction of *abhimāna*, suffering, wounded feeling, seeking for arguments of self-justification, outcry against the touch that is intended to liberate, — for so long as you have these, it is difficult for us to deal openly and firmly with the obstacles created by the vital nature.

In regard to the difference between you and X, the Mother's warning to you against the undesirability of too much talk, loose chat and gossip, social self-dispersion was entirely meant and stands; when you indulge in these things, you throw yourself out into a very small and ignorant consciousness in which your vital defects get free play and this is likely to bring you out of what you have developed in your inner consciousness. That was why we said that if you felt a reaction against these things when you went to X's, it was a sign of (psychic) sensitiveness coming into you — into your vital and nervous being — and we meant that it was all for the good. But in dealing with others, in withdrawing from these things you should not allow any sense of superiority to creep in or force on them by your manner or spirit a sense of disapproval or condemnation or pressure on them to change. It is for your personal inward need that you draw back from these things, that is all. As for them what they

do in these matters, right or wrong, is their affair — and ours; we will deal with them according to what we see as necessary and possible for them at the moment and for that purpose we can not only deal quite differently with different people, allowing for one what we forbid for another, but we may deal differently with the same person at different times, allowing or even encouraging today what we shall forbid tomorrow. X's case is quite different from yours, for there is no resemblance in your natures. I told you that or something like it long ago and I emphasised in my letter to X that what might be the rule for myself or Y was not to be applied or going to be applied to his case. To deal otherwise would be to create difficulties in his sadhana and not to make it easier for him or swifter. I have also told him quite clearly in my letter that the attempt at meeting and mixing with others — which in the ordinary human life is attempted by sociableness and other contacts — has to be realised in Yoga on another plane of consciousness and without the lower mixture — for a higher unity with all on a spiritual and psychic basis. But the way, the time, the order of movements by which this is done, need not be the same for everybody. If he attempted to force himself it would lead to gloom, despondency and an artificial movement which would not be the true way to success. A human soul and nature cannot be dealt with by a set of mental rules applicable to everybody in the same way; if it were so, there would be no need of a Guru, each could set his chart of Yogic rules before him like the rules of Sandow's exercise and follow them till he became the perfect siddha!

I have said so much in order to let you understand why we do not deal in the same way with X as with you or another. The tendency to take what I lay down for one and apply it without discrimination to another is responsible for much misunderstanding. A general statement too, true in itself, cannot be applied to everyone alike or applied now and immediately without consideration of condition or circumstance or person or time. I may say generally that to bring down the supermind is my aim in the Yoga or that to do that one has first to rise out of mind into overmind, but if on the strength of that, anybody and

everybody began trying to pull down the supermind or force his way immediately out of mind into overmind, the result would be disaster.

Therefore concern yourself with your own progress and follow there the lead the Mother gives you. Leave X or others to do the same; the Mother is there to guide and help them according to their need and their nature. It does not in the least matter if the way she follows with him seems different or the opposite of that which she takes with you. That is the right one for him as this is the right one for you.

You have now begun to see the difficulties that are still there in your vital; keep to that clear perception, let it grow clearer and more precise. Concentrate on what you have to do and do not let yourself be distracted this way and that by irrelevant preoccupations or any other influence.

Ingratitude

Your surprise at your cousin X's behaviour shows that you do not yet know what kind of thing is the average human nature. Did you never hear of the answer of Vidyasagar when he was told that a certain man was abusing him: "Why does he abuse me? I never did him a good turn (*upakāra*).” The unregenerate vital is not grateful for a benefit, it resents being under an obligation. So long as the benefit continues, it is effusive and says sweet things, as soon as it expects nothing more it turns round and bites the hand that fed it. Sometimes it does that even before, when it thinks it can do it without the benefactor knowing the origin of the slander, fault-finding or abuse. In all these dealings of your uncles and cousins with you there is nothing unusual, nothing, as you think, peculiar to you. Most have this kind of experience, few escape it altogether. Of course, people with a developed psychic element are by nature grateful and do not behave in this way.

Chapter Two

Desire

The Nature of Desire

Most men are, like animals, driven by the forces of Nature: whatever desires come, they fulfil them, whatever emotions come they allow them to play, whatever physical wants they have, they try to satisfy. We say then that the activities and feelings of men are controlled by their Prakriti, and mostly by the vital and physical nature. The body is the instrument of the Prakriti or Nature — it obeys its own nature or it obeys the vital forces of desire, passion, etc.

But man has also a mind and, as he develops, he learns to control his vital and physical nature by his reason and by his will. This control is very partial: for the reason is often deluded by vital desires and the ignorance of the physical and it puts itself on their side and tries to justify by its ideas, reasonings or arguments their mistakes and wrong movements. Even if the reason keeps free and tells the vital or the body, “Do not do this”, yet the vital and the body often follow their own movement in spite of the prohibition — man’s mental will is not strong enough to compel them.

When people do sadhana, there is a higher Nature that works within, the psychic and spiritual, and they have to put their nature under the influence of the psychic being and the higher spiritual self or of the Divine. Not only the vital and the body but the mind also has to learn the Divine Truth and obey the divine rule. But because of the lower nature and its continued hold on them, they are unable at first and for a long time to prevent their nature from following the old ways — even when they know or are told from within what to do or what not to do. It is only by persistent sadhana, by getting into the higher spiritual consciousness and spiritual nature that this difficulty

can be overcome; but even for the strongest and best sadhaks it takes a long time.

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All the ordinary vital movements are foreign to the true being and come from outside; they do not belong to the soul nor do they originate in it but are waves from the general Nature, Prakriti.

The desires come from outside, enter the subconscious vital and rise to the surface. It is only when they rise to the surface and the mind becomes aware of them, that we become conscious of the desire. It seems to us to be our own because we feel it thus rising from the vital into the mind and do not know that it came from outside. What belongs to the vital, to the being, what makes it responsible is not the desire itself, but the habit of responding to the waves or the currents of suggestion that come into it from the universal Prakriti.

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It should be quite clear to you what the two opposite things are, the two things with which every sadhak is faced. One is the vehemence of earthly egoistic desire which brings only confusion and suffering and the other is the peace, force, joy, light of understanding which is the divine in you and which we are striving to establish in you. When you put yourself on the right side, things become easy; when you hesitate and are divided, there is a double state; when something in you receives and clings to the desires, then all goes wrong. You *must* learn to put always the weight of your choice on the right side. Certainly I shall do all to get the wrong will changed and the right one put in its place — whatever is the resistance or difficulty, that I shall do always.

*

It is again the old vain imagination prompted by an uprising of the dissatisfied desires of the vital nature. Evidently the old wrong attitude of desire must have been waiting for its opportunity and it gave the opportunity also for the old vital to

rise and indulge in its accustomed movements. It is also evident that it was the pressure of the desire coming up from below that removed the Ananda. The psychic Ananda and the desires of the complaining and clamouring vital cannot go together; if desire comes up, the Ananda is obliged to draw back — unless you reject the desire in time and refuse to make any compromise with it. Especially when the Mother was giving you wideness and peace and intense Ananda, it was irrational in the extreme to give room to an external desire and sacrifice all that for its sake.

*

Saturate your mind and vital with the Truth and remain calm and still. It is from unsatisfied desire that all suffering arises; take your stand on a calm free from desire. When that has come, all else of the Divine Truth, Love and Ananda can come and stand securely upon it.

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All belongs to the Divine — there must be no ego or desire — only the Divine and its Light, Knowledge, Power, Ananda, action. But all this must come from above — not from the mixed lower cosmic forces.

*

It is the vital which (in everybody and not in you only) is restless, full of desires, always falling into dejection and disappointment and sorrow. The only way to escape from it is to get rid of desires — to have no will or desire other than the will of the Divine.

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That is the nature of the vital and its desires¹ — vital desire and its enjoyment and dissatisfactions and uneasinesses almost always go together.

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¹ *The correspondent wrote that when he had tried to fulfil a vital desire, it led to a condition of unquietness and misery. — Ed.*

If you are anxious for them [*material possessions*], that means that you have desire and are bound. Ananda is one thing and vital enjoyment is another. One can have the *rasa* of a beautiful thing, for instance a picture, without wanting or needing to possess it or turn it to one's own purpose. Where that want comes in, there is vital desire. The sign of freedom from attachment is that one has no craving and can do without things without feeling anything for that or disappointment at their loss or absence or hankering or wish to have them. If one has, one takes the *rasa* in a free unattached way — if one does not get or loses them, it makes not the slightest difference. The true Ananda is the Ananda of the Divine and when one has the Yogic consciousness, it is the Divine one sees everywhere and has the Ananda of that, but there is no attachment to objects as objects.

It is not necessary to be a Sannyasi to have this inner freedom; it is only necessary to be sincere. There are many who say, "I have no attachment", but it is a self-deception. Therefore one must examine oneself very closely and strictly and see what is left of desire or attachment and reject it. This is difficult for the ordinary consciousness and never wholly achieved by it, even if things are outwardly given up; it is easy if the higher consciousness is there in all the parts of the being, provided one opens all one's movements to its Light.

*

About the attachment to things, the physical rejection of them is not the best way to get rid of it. Accept what is given you, ask for what is needed and think no more of it — attaching no importance, using them when you have, not troubled if you have not. That is the best way of getting rid of the attachment.

*

Kāmanā bāsanā have no part in Yoga, they cannot be its help (*sahāya*), they can only be hindrances. So long as desire and ego remain, there can be no surrender to the Divine, no fulfilment in the Yoga. They are movements of the vital and cannot be anything else.

Egoless strength is strength which does not act for selfish motives or for the desires of the vital or to carry out the ideas of one's own mind, but exists only for the service of the Divine and as an instrument of the Divine.

*

The seat of desire is not so much in the emotional as in the lower vital — but the desires rise up from there into the emotional part and even into the thinking mind.

*

It is always the habit of the vital being to find out things by which it persuades the mind and justifies its desires; and circumstances usually shape themselves to justify it still farther. For what we have within us creates the circumstances outside us. What matters is that you should take inwardly a different position in the future.

*

When you clutch at anything and try to make it your own with an egoistic sense of possession, then however beautiful and wonderful it may be, it loses its value and becomes ordinary.

*

It is often the experience that when one gives up the insistence of desire for a thing, then the thing itself comes. The right attitude is to wait on the Divine Will and seek that only — desire always creates perturbation and even its fulfilment does not satisfy. Aspiration is a different thing. The oscillation between the two conditions you speak of, is the sign of a struggle in the physical consciousness — it must end by the Peace and Power fixing itself there, then the other will disappear.

*

The desire for the Divine or bhakti for the Divine is the one desire which can free one from all the others — at the core it is not a desire, but an aspiration, a soul need, the breath of

existence of the inmost being, and as such it cannot be counted among desires.

The Small Desires of the Vital Physical

It is the vital physical that receives these suggestions and obeys these desires. What you have to do is to get the consciousness down into the whole of the vital proper — so that not only the mind but the vital itself will reject these desires. In that case the vital-physical desires will lose half their force.

*

If the peace and power that were acting on the head and in the chest have come down into the stomach and below, that would indicate that they are no longer acting on the mind and emotional being only, but fully on the vital also — that is a great progress.

The desires you refer to are those of the vital-physical in the subtle physical consciousness — impulse to talk, essential hunger, thirst, etc. Peace and quietude full in the vital-physical and subtle physical and down even in the lowest levels are necessary for the whole change to be made. The heat of which you speak is that of this subtle principle of vital-physical desire which exists for its own sake, not for the real needs of the body — that is why physical satisfaction does not diminish it.

*

These habits of the physical vital are almost automatic in their action and it takes either a very strong will or a persistent effort of self-discipline to get out this automatic, almost reflex action. You should not therefore be discouraged by the difficulty, but go on with the necessary perseverance of the will to press it out of existence.

*

It is the small habits of the lower vital being which gather all their strength to resist eviction and try to occupy the con-

sciousness. When they come you must learn to detach your inner consciousness from them entirely so that even when they strongly come they will not be able to occupy the consciousness or get any assent.

*

The vital in the physical easily slips back to its old small habits if it gets a chance. It is there that they stick. They go entirely only when that part gets equanimity and a simple natural freedom from all desires.

*

You have done rightly about the things. These small desires obstruct greatly the change in the outer consciousness and the being must be free from them if the transformation is not to be hampered there.

Desire and Need

It would certainly be very easy if all that one had to do were to follow one's desires; but to be governed by one's desires is not Yoga.

Need and want are not the same thing. The fact that they [*the sadhaks*] could go on without it [*a lemon each day*] for so long shows that it was not a need.

*

Desire is a psychological movement, and it can attach itself to a "true need" as well as to things that are not true needs. One must approach even true needs without desire. If one does not get them, one must feel nothing.

*

The *necessities* of a sadhak should be as few as possible; for there are only a very few things that are real necessities in life. The rest are either utilities or things decorative to life or luxuries. These a Yogi has a right to possess or enjoy only on one of two conditions —

(1) if he uses them during his sadhana solely to train himself in possessing things without attachment or desire and learn to use them rightly, in harmony with the Divine Will, with a proper handling, a just organisation, arrangement and measure — or,

(2) if he has already attained a true freedom from desire and attachment and is not in the least moved or affected in any way by loss or withholding or deprivation. If he has any greed, desire, demand, claim for possession or enjoyment, any anxiety, grief, anger or vexation when denied or deprived, he is not free in spirit and his use of the things he possesses is contrary to the spirit of sadhana. Even if he is free in spirit, he will not be fit for possession if he has not learned to use things not for himself, but for the Divine Will, as an instrument, with the right knowledge and action in the use for the proper equipment of a life lived not for oneself but for and in the Divine.

*

It should not be difficult for the man devoted to the spiritual aim [*to depend on the Divine for material things*] — for he is always expected to rely on the Divine even in his ordinary life in the world — such dependence being part of his mental atmosphere and the constitution of his vital nature.

Demand and Desire

If to you X says that her suffering and ill-health are due to your behaviour, to Y she has said it is all due to the bad room she has got! In fact it is due to her vital cherishing desires and getting disappointed because they are not fulfilled. If one cherishes desires, there is bound to be disappointment and suffering, especially if at the same time one does Yoga and takes up the spiritual life. For such desires, demand for vital affection and love from men and demand for physical comforts are not consistent with the spirit of Yoga in which one must turn one's heart to the Divine and be vitally pure and in physical things must be content with what one gets and equal-minded in all conditions. You were quite right in telling her that these outer

demands should be given up altogether.

*

To yield to depression when things go wrong is the worst way of meeting the difficulty. There must be some desire or demand within you, conscious or subconscious, that gets excited and revolts against its not being satisfied. The best way is to be conscious of it, face it calmly and steadily throw it out.

If the lower vital (not the mind only) could permanently make up its mind that all desire and demand are contrary to the Truth and no longer call for them, these things would lose very soon their force of return.

*

It is not a demand to ask for things that one finds helpful, but it becomes a demand if there enters into it a feeling of claim, resentment when it is not conceded or other vital reactions. Be on your guard against any invasion by these reactions; the vital can only be conquered and changed and the physical opened up on a basis of faith and surrender and the psychic response overpowering all others.

*

Demand and desire are only two different aspects of the same thing — nor is it necessary that a feeling should be agitated or restless to be a desire; it can be, on the contrary, quietly fixed and persistent or persistently recurrent. Demand or desire comes from the mental or the vital and a psychic or spiritual need is a different thing. The psychic does not demand or desire; it aspires; it does not make conditions for its surrender or withdraw if its aspiration is not immediately satisfied — for the psychic has complete trust in the Divine or in the guru and can wait for the right time or the hour of the divine grace. The psychic has an insistence of its own, but it puts its pressure not on the Divine, but on the nature, placing a finger of light on all the defects there that stand in the way of the realisation, sifting out all that is mixed, ignorant or imperfect in the experience or in

the movements of the Yoga and never satisfied with itself or with the nature till it has got it perfectly open to the Divine, free from all forms of ego, surrendered, simple and right in the attitude and all the movements. This is what has to be established entirely in the mind and vital and in the physical consciousness before supramentalisation of the whole nature is possible. Otherwise what one gets is more or less brilliant, half luminous, half cloudy illuminations and experiences on the mental and vital and physical planes, half truth, half error or at the best true only for those planes and inspired either from some larger mind or larger vital or at the best from the mental reaches above the human that intervene between the intellect and the Overmind. These can be very stimulating and satisfying up to a certain point and are good for those who want some spiritual realisation on these planes; but the supramental realisation is something much more difficult and exacting in its conditions and the most difficult of all is to bring it down on to the physical level.

Getting Rid of Desire

The satisfaction of the vital desires is a normal feature of the ordinary life, only it must be controlled and regulated by the mental will, so that one may not be enslaved to the desires. It is only if one turns to the spiritual life that one has to get rid of vital desires.

*

It is not Yoga to give free play to the natural instincts and desires. Yoga demands mastery over the nature, not subjection to the nature.

*

Is there any time in the “straight path” for satisfying desires? If desire is not mastered, how can there be any straight walking on the straight path?

*

You do not seem to have a correct idea of the nature of vital

desire. Vital desire grows by being indulged, it does not become satisfied. If your desire were indulged, it would begin to grow more and more and ask for more and more. That has been our constant experience with the sadhaks and it confirms what has always been known about desire. Desire and envy have to be thrown out of the consciousness — there is no other way to deal with them.

*

That [*indulging desire*] is a mistake many have made because the vital wanted to make it.² Whether ascetic or non-ascetic, the Yogi, the sadhak must become free from vital desire and spiritually master of the movements of his nature — and for that he must be free from ego and desire and duality. I have always made that quite clear — that indulgence of desire is no more part of this Yoga than it is of Sannyasa. One must be able to use and handle physical things and physical life, but from the spiritual consciousness, not from the level of the vital ego.

*

It is the old vital nature that feels its human worldly desires will not be satisfied and feels like this. All that has not to be indulged but rejected and swept aside. In its place must come the wideness in which there is a self-existent peace and satisfaction and into that peace and wideness must come the Mother's greater peace, force, light, knowledge, Ananda.

*

The vital always wants the things of ordinary life, sex, rich food, enjoyments of all kinds; it does not get full satisfaction out of them, but it feels dissatisfied without them. The only way to get rid of it is to reject desire of these things from the vital itself and to have only the aspiration for the Divine in all parts of the being.

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² The correspondent observed that because Sri Aurobindo had condemned asceticism, many took it as a sanction to continue fulfilling their desires. — Ed.

Everything which it hankers after is desirable to the vital — but the desire has to be rejected. “I won’t desire” is quite the right thing to say, even if “I don’t desire” cannot yet be said by the vital. Still there is something in the being that can even say “I don’t desire” and refuse to recognise the vital desire as part of the true being. It is that consciousness which the peace and power bring that has to be recognised as the true “I” and made permanent in front.

*

It is difficult to get rid of desires *altogether* all at once — if the right ones have the upper hand, that already makes the ultimate victory sure. Therefore don’t allow that to trouble you. A progressive change is the way these things work out — and if the progress has begun, then there can be a fundamental sense of certitude about the outcome of the sadhana and a quiet view upon what has to be done because it is sure to be done.

*

Desire always takes a long time to get rid of entirely. But, if you can once get it out of the nature and realise it as a force coming from outside and putting its claws into the vital and physical, it will be easier to get rid of the invader. You are too accustomed to feel it as part of yourself or planted in you — that makes it more difficult for you to deal with its movements and dismiss its ancient control over you.

You should not rely on anything else alone, however helpful it may seem, but chiefly, primarily, fundamentally on the Mother’s Force. The Sun and the Light may be a help, and will be if it is the true Light and the true Sun, but cannot take the place of the Mother’s Force.

*

It is good. No one can easily get rid of desires. What has first to be done is to exteriorise them, to push them out on the surface and get the inner parts quiet and clear. Afterwards they can be

thrown out and replaced by the true thing, a happy and luminous will one with the Divine's.

*

It is because both your mind and vital have become sincere that the attack is strong and seems to you abnormal. Before as you were yielding from time to time, the part that wants was not acutely insistent and, when it pressed, it was not so acutely felt by the rest of the vital nature. It is your mental, psychic and higher vital beings that now stand completely apart from it. It is your physical vital that still keeps the desire and is pushed from time to time by opposite forces to make the desire active. It was also this desire that created the physical disturbance from which you suffered a few days ago. You must get rid of this desire of the lower vital altogether.

*

The fear is again that of the physical consciousness or of the vital element in it — it is afraid if it gives up desire that it will lose everything — or everything *it* wants — and gain nothing in exchange or at least nothing *it* wants. It does not realise that it will get something far greater and more powerful and happy in place of this troubled desire and its doubtful and precarious fruits — for it has been accustomed to think of desire as the only possible motive of life. It does not know that the divine Force is there waiting to descend with its light and peace and joy bringing much greater things and a happier life. When this part can be enlightened and persuaded to want wholeheartedly the change, then a great difficulty, indeed the central difficulty will have gone.

*

There was and is the opening before you of a new stage in your spiritual development. For it to realise itself you must progress first in two directions. The first we have already pressed on you — the surmounting of these vital temptations and desires which linked you to the lower movements and invited the pressure of a

hostile Force on your lower vital and your body and the complete surrender of life and body to the One alone. The other is the descent of a full calm and strength and equanimity into these parts so that you may conquer life and its difficulties and do your work for the Divine. This calm and strength had often descended into your mind and higher vital, but these other parts were still open to much weakness and attachment and a self-indulgent movement. That must go if one wants to become a hero and master of spiritual action. In your life at Bogra these things were too much sheltered and allowed to remain; at Shillong you have a chance to be by yourself with the Divine Force and look life in the face from the soul's inner strength and become master of circumstances. Outer difficulties or inconveniences you should not allow to alarm or depress you. Inner difficulties should also be met with detachment, calm equality, the unshakable will to conquer.

For the rest, you have rightly said, "I must preserve my equanimity and have faith in Divine Guidance when falsehood" — or any trouble or difficulty — "confronts me." The defect that opened the way to the bodily and other troubles was the faltering in your resolution to conquer the vital and follow the straight and high path and the consequent violent despair and depression it brought in its wake. Let those disappear altogether and do not allow them to rise in that way again. The path of spiritual calm and strength and the consecration of all your forces to the Divine is the one safe way for you and that you must now consistently follow.

Desire and Suppression (Nigraha)

The rejection of desire is essentially the rejection of the element of craving, putting that out from the consciousness itself as a foreign element not belonging to the true self and the inner nature. But refusal to indulge the suggestions of desire is also a part of the rejection; to abstain from the action suggested, if it is not the right action, must be included in the Yogic discipline. It is only when this is done in the wrong way, by a mental ascetic principle or a hard moral rule, that it can be called suppression.

The difference between suppression and an inward essential rejection is the difference between mental or moral control and a spiritual purification.

When one lives in the true consciousness one feels the desires outside oneself, entering from outside, from the universal lower Prakriti, into the mind and the vital parts. In the ordinary human condition this is not felt; men become aware of the desire only when it is there, when it has come inside and found a lodging or a habitual harbourage and so they think it is their own and a part of themselves. The first condition for getting rid of desire is, therefore, to become conscious with the true consciousness; for then it becomes much easier to dismiss it than when one has to struggle with it as if it were a constituent part of oneself to be thrown out from the being. It is easier to cast off an accretion than to excise what is felt as a parcel of our substance.

When the psychic being is in front, then also to get rid of desire becomes easy; for the psychic being has in itself no desires, it has only aspirations and a seeking and love for the Divine and all things that are or tend towards the Divine. The constant prominence of the psychic being tends of itself to bring out the true consciousness and set right almost automatically the movements of the nature.

*

It is true that the mere suppression or holding down of desire is not enough, not by itself truly effective, but that does not mean that desires are to be indulged; it means that desires have not merely to be suppressed, but to be rejected from the nature. In place of desire there must be a single-minded aspiration towards the Divine.

As for love, the love must be turned singly towards the Divine. What men call by that name is a vital interchange for mutual satisfaction of desire, vital impulse or physical pleasure. There must be nothing of this interchange between sadhaks; for to seek for it or indulge this kind of impulse only leads away from the sadhana.

*

Your theory is a mistaken one. The free expression of a passion may relieve the vital for a time, but at the same time it gives it a right to return always. It is not reduced at all. Suppression with inner indulgence in subtle forms is not a cure, but expression in outer indulgence is still less a cure. It is perfectly possible to go on without manifestation if one is resolute to arrive at a complete control, the control being not a mere suppression but an inner and outer rejection.

*

Not necessarily suppression [*is indicated by the refusal to feed a desire*], if the refusal of food is accompanied by detachment in the major part of the being. The difference between suppression (*nigraha*) and self-control (*saṁyama*) is that one says, “I cannot help desiring but I will not satisfy my desire”, while the other says, “I refuse the desire as well as the satisfaction of the desire”.

*

Nigraha means holding down the movement, but a movement merely held down is only suspended—it is better to reject and dismiss, detaching yourself from it.

Chapter Three

Anger and Violence

The Nature of Anger

Yes, anger is a harmful and wasteful force, harmful both to the person himself and to the one on whom it is thrown. You are right in saying that it must be got rid of. Anger immediately opens the door to hostile forces; it is as if you were calling them.

*

It [*a violent outburst of anger*] is obviously a surprise attack that took you off your guard. But you must throw off the tendency to anger with yourself also as well as the other tendency to sudden anger with others — for all anger only disturbs the consciousness and makes it difficult to keep the quiet poise. The whole thing has to be thrown out and the consciousness has to recover and be as if it had not happened.

*

These things, hard forms of speech, anger etc., are habits formed by the vital-physical consciousness and, as they are supported by the subconscious, very difficult to change. If one can conquer or change them by force of will or mental or spiritual control, so much the better. But if one cannot do this at once, one must not be upset or think oneself unfit. It is easier for most to realise the Divine or enter into the psychic consciousness than to change this part of the nature; but once the psychic consciousness governs or the higher consciousness descends then it is much easier for these to go. You must not therefore be discouraged by these recurrences or persistences, but try always to stand back in an inner quietude and if they come let them pass away like a cloud across the light. In time these things will be finally dealt with by the Force.

*

It [*an outburst of anger*] is really simply the recurrence of an old habit of the nature. Look at it and see how trifling is the occasion of the rising of this anger and its outburst — it becomes more and more causeless and the absurdity of such movements reveals itself. It would not really be difficult to get rid of it if when it comes you looked at it calmly — for it is perfectly possible to stand back in one part of the being observing in a detached equanimity even while the anger rises on the surface, as if it were someone else in your being who had the anger. The difficulty is that you get alarmed, grieved and upset and that makes it easier for the thing to get hold of your mind which it should not do.

Help we are giving you — stand back so as to be able to feel it and not the obsession of these surface movements.

*

When you have such thoughts, it makes a formation of force which falls on the man against whom you are angry. If he is not on his guard or if he is sensitive in any way, it may become effective upon him. That is why such thoughts should be avoided altogether.

*

The reason why quietness is not yet fixed and anger returns is that you allow your physical mind to become active. In regard to the sadhana it begins to think there is this defect in you and that defect and therefore the sadhana does not become immediately effective and perfect. This makes the vital nervous or despondent and in the despondency a state of irritation arises. At the same time this mind becomes active as it has now with regard to *X* or begins to judge and criticise and this too leads to nervousness and irritation. These things belong to the old mind you are trying to leave and therefore stand in the way of concentration and quietude. They should be stopped at their root by rejecting the suggestions of the physical mind as soon as they begin. A new consciousness is coming based upon inner silence and quietude. You must wait quietly for that to develop. True knowledge,

true perceptions of people and things will come in that new silent consciousness. The mind's view of people and things must necessarily be either limited and defective or erroneous — to go on judging by it is now a waste of time. Wait for the new consciousness to develop and show you all in a new and true light. Then the tendency to anger which arises from this mind and is a violent impatience directed against things the mind and vital do not like, would have no ground to rise at all — or if it rose without cause could be more easily rejected. Rely for the sadhana on the Mother's grace and her Force, yourself remembering always to keep only two things, quietude and confidence. For things and people, leave them to the Mother also; as you have difficulties in your nature, so they have too; but to deal with them needs insight, sympathy, patience.

*

It is indeed a very good sign that the anger when it comes is brief and subdued and no longer expressed in the outward — for that is one very marked stage always of the rejection of something not wanted by the nature. It comes still but it has no longer the old force, duration, intensity, completeness. The externalised condition is often used to show or test the progress made in the outer nature itself, for when one is entirely within these outward movements remain quiescent, so the extent to which they are changed cannot be so easily measured. But of course it is the going inward that most helps to deliver the nature.

*

If the anger did not come, it must be because the vital force of the attack is diminishing and it must be more in the physical mind and the external (physical) vital that it acts. You have a great strength for action; as for the inner growth and action of the sadhana you have a strength there too of the psychic and the vital, — it is only the external being that finds these difficulties in its way and is momentarily overcome or affected by them. Things always come in the way when one wants to progress in the sadhana, but in the end if one is sincere in one's aspiration

these troubles help to prepare the victory of the soul over all that opposes.

The inner will prevails sometimes, sometimes it does not prevail for the time being. That is quite normal. It depends on certain conditions which the physical mind does not see. As one grows in knowledge, one becomes aware of these unseen conditions and understands better what happens.

The fire is always the fire of purification—it is very red when it is acting on the vital; when the vital no longer covers the psychic, then the rose colour of the psychic comes out more and more.

The house you saw is the new building of the nature, especially in the vital, which is being prepared by the sadhana.

*

Because anger etc. once used to come, it does not follow that they cannot die down in a short time, so his incredulity is not justifiable. This is just the way that these things do go. They come vehemently and resist the force used to eject them, but if they are still rejected or if there is a change in the consciousness, they lose their force and the consciousness quietly rejects them when they come.

*

It is rather perilous to think of anything like that—“Now it [*anger*] is finished”—it is better to wait some time and see. The hostiles have a habit of trying their strength when they hear anything like that; they want to show you that it is not so.

*

But is it true that even anger which is of the lower vital and therefore close to the body, invariably produces these effects?¹ Of course the psychologist can't know that another man is angry

¹ *Physical effects such as flushing of the face, flaring of the nostrils, clenched teeth and “ebullition” in the chest. The correspondent had read a book on psychology in which the author suggested that one cannot “fancy” the state of rage without such visible signs of anger. — Ed.*

unless he shows physical signs of it, but also he can't know what a man is thinking unless the man speaks or writes — does it follow that the state of thought cannot be “fancied” without its sign in speaking or writing? A Japanese who is accustomed to control all his “emotions” and give no sign (if he is angry the first sign you will have of it is a knife in your stomach from a calm or smiling assailant) will have none of these things when he is angry — not even the “ebullition” in the chest, — in its place there will be a settled fire that will burn till his anger achieves itself in action.

*

It is your angers that have resulted in these pains. Get rid of the bad temper and the stomach will be more at ease.

*

For some sex is more difficult [*to conquer than anger*], for some greed.

*

It [*the equivalent of anger in the higher nature*] is a *rudra* power of severity and indignation (in the deepest sense of the word) against what should not be — the warrior force of Mahakali in combating the Asura.

*

Yes, certainly. Infinite peace, universal love can remove anger — if they are complete and stable.

Anger Comes from Outside

The fact that the anger comes with such force is itself enough to show that it is not in you that it is, but that it comes from outside. It is a rush of force from the universal Nature that tries to take possession of the individual being and make that being act according to the will of this outside force and not according to the will of the soul within. These things come in the course

of the sadhana because the sadhak is liberating himself from the lower nature and trying to turn towards the Mother and live in her divine consciousness and the higher nature. The forces of the lower nature do not want that and so they make these rushes in order to recover their rule. It is necessary when that comes to remain quiet within remembering the Mother or calling her and reject the anger or whatever else comes, whenever it comes or however often it comes. If that is done, then these forces begin to lose their power to invade. It is easier if one clearly feels them to be outside forces and foreign to oneself; but even if you cannot feel that yet when they enter, still the mind must keep that idea and refuse to accept them as any longer a part of the nature. The idea of the Mother being severe was of course a suggestion that came with the invading force so as to help it to enter. Such suggestions come to many sadhaks (though not so many as before) at Pranam and is the cause to them of much disturbance. Such suggestions must be firmly rejected at once.

*

I think you have always had an idea that to give expression to an impulse or a movement is the best way or even the only way to get rid of it. But that is a mistaken idea. If you give expression to anger, you prolong or confirm the habit of the recurrence of anger; you do not diminish or get rid of the habit. The very first step towards weakening the power of anger in the nature and afterwards getting rid of it altogether, is to refuse all expression to it in act or speech. Afterwards one can go on with more likelihood of success to throw it out from the thought and feeling also. And so with all other wrong movements.

All these movements come from outside, from the universal lower nature, or are suggested or thrown upon you by adverse forces — adverse to your spiritual progress. Your method of taking them as your own is again a wrong method; for by doing that you increase their power to recur and take hold of you. If you take them as your own, that gives them a kind of right to be there. If you feel them as *not* your own, then they have no right, and the will can develop more power to send them away. What

you must always have and feel as yours, is this will, the power to refuse assent, to refuse admission to a wrong movement. Or if it comes in, the power to send it away, without expressing it.

If you find it difficult to reject in the sense of throwing away, what you have to do is to refuse assent. As for instance, as regards voices or suggestions, not to listen to them, not to believe what they want you to believe, not to do what they want or push you to do.

Of course the best way will be if you can keep the contact more with the Mother and her Light and Force and receive and accept and follow only what comes from that higher force. Secondly, to keep the mind quiet, not to allow it to be too active, going from one thing to another. That brings the confusion.

*

Anger comes from the vital nature or if it has been driven out from there rises back into it from the subconscious or from the environmental Nature.

*

It [*rejection*] is the way to get rid of these things [*anger and sex desire*] — when rejected they either sink into the subconscious or pass out into the surrounding (environmental) consciousness through which one is connected with the universal forces. They may try to rise up from the subconscious or come in again from outside; but if one always rejects them, calling in the aid of the Mother and does not allow them to take hold, their force of recurrence dies away and finally they come no more. Sometimes a very decisive rejection gets rid of them at a stroke once for all.

*

These things [*anger, desire etc.*] can only be got rid of if you do not accept them. When they come, you must stand back from them in your mind, look at them and say, “I don’t want this.” If it comes in spite of your not wanting and refusing them, then it shows it is not your own movement, but something thrown upon you by the outside Nature. If you can once see that and

feel them as not yours, then by degrees you can get free of anger, desire and other things that trouble you.

*

In fact all these ignorant vital movements originate from outside in the ignorant universal Nature; the human being forms in his superficial parts of being, mental, vital, physical, a habit of certain responses to these waves from outside. It is these responses that he takes as his own character (anger, desire, sex etc.) and thinks he cannot be otherwise. But that is not so; he can change. There is another consciousness deeper within him, his true inner being, which is his real self, but is covered over by the superficial nature. This the ordinary man does not know, but the Yogi becomes aware of it as he progresses in his sadhana. As the consciousness of this inner being increases by sadhana, the surface nature and its responses are pushed out and can be got rid of altogether. But the ignorant universal Nature does not want to let go and throws the old movements on the sadhak and tries to get them inside him again; owing to a habit the superficial nature gives the old responses. If one can get the firm knowledge that these things are from outside and not a real part of oneself, then it is easier for the sadhak to repel such returns, or if they lay hold, he can get rid of them sooner. That is why I say repeatedly that these things rise not in yourself, but from outside.

Anger and the Psychic

If the will is strong enough, it [*anger*] can be held in check—but usually it is only if the psychic being becomes entirely awake and governs the vital that the tendency to anger can entirely disappear.

*

When it is the psychic that rules all the movements of the being, then it [*anger*] completely disappears and when the equanimity of the higher consciousness takes complete possession of the

lower vital. Till then one can establish a control, diminish and reduce it to a touch that has no outward effect or a wave that passes without self-expression.

*

That [*inner detachment*] is the right thing that must happen always when anger or anything else rises. The psychic reply must become habitual pointing out that anger is neither right nor helpful and then the being must draw back from these outward things and take its stand in its inner self, detach from all these things and people. It is this detachment that is the first thing that must be gained by the sadhak — he must cease to live in these outward things and live in his inner being. The more that is done the more there is a release and peacefulness. Afterwards when one is secure in this inner being, the right thing to do, the right way to deal with men and things will begin to come.

*

It is true that anger and strife are in the nature of the human vital and do not go easily; but what is important is to have the will to change and the clear perception that these things must go. If that will and perception are there, then in the end they will go. The most important help to it is, here also, for the psychic being to grow within — for that brings a certain kindness, patience, charity towards all and one no longer regards everything from the point of view of one's own ego and its pain or pleasure, likings and dislikings. The second help is the growth of the inner peace which outward things cannot trouble. With the peace comes a calm wideness in which one perceives all as one self, all beings as the children of the Mother and the Mother dwelling in oneself and in all. It is that towards which your sadhana will move, for these are the things which come with the growth of the psychic and spiritual consciousness. Then these troubled reactions to outward things will no longer come.

*

It is indeed when the quietude comes down from above or comes

out from the psychic that the vital becomes full of peace or of kindness and goodwill. It is therefore that the inner psychic quietude first and afterwards the peace from above must occupy the whole being. Otherwise such things as anger in the vital can be controlled but it is difficult to get rid of them altogether without this occupation by the inner quietude and higher peace. That you should depend on the Mother for the sadhana is the best attitude, for it is indeed her Force that does the sadhana in you.

*

It is not at all unnatural that the anger brought back peace and harmony:² for this anger was a form of loyalty to the Divine and that put you into touch with your psychic consciousness again. Sri Ramakrishna was quite right about anger. The hostile powers are proof against gentleness and sweetness and non-resistance and soul-force, but a current of righteous anger often sends them flying.

Vindictiveness and Cruelty

Vindictiveness, with or without a real cause for it, is even worse than anger because it is more cold and deliberate in its action and less of an impulse. One should be generous in nature and free from all rancour.

*

You must get rid of it [*cruelty*]. Cruelty and falsehood are the two things that separate most from the Divine.

Violence

An inner psychic or spiritual change is not brought about by violence. It is not a change of conduct that has to be done in the

² *The correspondent wrote that he grew angry when he read some false statements about Sri Aurobindo made by a journalist and that his anger relieved him of a slight depression. He was reminded of a remark made by Sri Ramakrishna: "The ripus (passions) too can help in the spiritual life provided you know the secret of the game: for instance, anger may help you if you turn it against all who are hostile to the Divine."* — Ed.

sadhak, but a change of soul and spirit governing the mind and vital and body instead of the mind and vital governing. Violence is the drastic contradiction of that; it makes mental egoism and vital passion and fury or else cruelty the rulers. Violence in ordinary Nature does not justify violence in a spiritual work.

*

The *Essays on the Gita* explain the ordinary karmayoga as developed in the Gita, in which the work done is the ordinary work of human life with only an inward change. There too the violence to be used is not a personal violence done from egoistic motives, but part of the ordered system of social life. Nothing can spiritually justify individual violence done in anger or passion or from any vital motive. In our Yoga our object is to rise higher than the ordinary life of man and in it violence has to be left aside altogether.

*

All vital violence in speech or action is rajasic and unyogic. One must be master of oneself and controlled in speech and act.

*

You must not accept everything; you should reject all suggestions of uncontrolled desire or anger. *You must not allow any wrong force to get hold of your body and use it.* It is not safe to accept these things and you should be very careful to reject them always.

It is necessary that there should be control and organisation, and these cannot come and get fixed if you accept *uncontrolled desires, violent anger, confusion or extreme restlessness of mind*, for all these are things that disorganise and destroy control.

Chapter Four

Fear

Fear and Yoga

If you want to do Yoga, you must get rid of fear. Yoga and fear do not go together.

*

There is no fear in the higher Nature. Fear is a creation of the vital plane, an instinct of the ignorance, a sense of danger with a violent vital reaction that replaces and usually prevents or distorts the intelligence of things. It might almost be considered as an invention of the hostile forces.

*

Yes, fear creates imaginary terrors — even if there is real danger, fear does not help; it clouds the intelligence, takes away presence of mind and prevents one seeing the right thing to do.

Let the Force at work increase, till it clears out the mixed consciousness altogether.

*

It is true that what one fears has the tendency to come until one is able to look it in the face and overcome one's shrinking. One must learn to take one's foundation on the Divine and overcome the fear, relying on the help to carry one through all things even unpleasant and adverse. There is a Force that works even through them for the seeker and carries him towards his goal.

*

You can write to her that to get rid of fear is the first necessity. Yoga can only be done on a basis of faith and confidence in the Divine.

At the same time one must be on guard against undesirable

movements or phenomena in the sadhana. The motion of her head is not a result of the descent of Force, or a sign that it is too much for her, but a wrong movement of the body which she must check and get rid of altogether.

The colours are only a sign that the inner vision is open; if it develops things of a more definite kind will appear.

*

Write to her again that if she wants to do sadhana, she must get rid of fear altogether; fear opens the door to the adverse forces. She should not listen to people who try to put fear in her. If ugly forms or sounds are seen and heard, one has not to fear but reject them and call in the Mother's protection. If she feels calmness in the meditation, that is the necessary basis — with that basis one can safely practise the Yoga. It is not indispensable that the mind should be entirely *blank* — it is sufficient that it is quiet with a fundamental silence which is not disturbed even if thoughts pass across it.

*

You should throw away fear as well as anger and go quietly on your way putting your confidence in the Mother.

*

It is a mistake to think that by fearing or being unhappy you can progress. Fear is always a feeling to be rejected, because what you fear is just the thing that is likely to come to you: fear attracts the object of fear. Unhappiness weakens the strength and lays one more open to the causes of unhappiness.

One can be quiet, happy, cheerful without being all that in a light or shallow way — and the happiness need not bring any vital reaction. All that you need to do is to be observant and vigilant, — watchful so that you may not give assent to wrong movements or the return of the old feelings, darkness, confusion etc. Not fear, but vigilance. If you remain vigilant, then with the increase of the Force upholding you, a power of self-control will come, a power to see and reject the wrong turn or the wrong

reaction when it comes. Fear and unhappiness will not give you that. It is only by this vigilance accompanied by an opening to the supporting and guiding Force that it will come. What you describe as a capacity to choose the right and the feeling of strength or power that can stop the wrong movement and take the right one as soon as it recognises them, is just this control and vigilance. It is by this control and vigilance supported by the Force that you can prevent the love and devotion too from being mixed with or replaced by selfish desires and impurities. The more you open, the more this power will increase in you.

Certainly, if talking about old things or excessive speaking brings the wrong reactions at night, it is better to abstain from such talk or speech. Here also control is the thing you have to develop.

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By bringing down strength and calm into the lower vital (region below the navel) [*fear can be eliminated*]. Also by will and imposing calm on the system when the fear arises. It can be done in either way or both together.

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Fear is of course a vital and physical thing. Many people who have shown great courage, were not physically or even vitally brave; yet by force of mind they pushed themselves into all sorts of battle and danger. Henry IV of France, a great fighter and victor, was an example. Just because his body consciousness was in a panic, he forced it to go where the danger was thickest.

Section Four

Human Relations in Yoga

Chapter One

Human Relations and the Spiritual Life

Relations with Others in Yoga

The true unity with others, in the sadhana, is founded in the unity in the Divine Consciousness, not in the vital movement.

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It is not because of your nature or evil destiny that the vital cannot find the satisfaction it expected from relations with others. These relations can never give a full or permanent satisfaction; if they did, there would be no reason why the human being would ever seek the Divine. He would remain satisfied in the ordinary earth life. It is only when the Divine is found and the consciousness lifted up into the true consciousness that the true relations with others can come.

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Relations which are part of the ordinary vital nature in human life are of no value in the spiritual life — they rather interfere with the progress; for the mind and vital also should be wholly turned towards the Divine. Moreover, the purpose of sadhana is to enter into a spiritual consciousness and base everything on a new spiritual basis which can only be done when one has entered into complete unity with the Divine. Meanwhile one has to have a calm goodwill for all, but relations of a vital kind do not help — for they keep the consciousness down on a vital basis and prevent its rising to a higher level.

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Until the vital has been purified, illumined and wholly offered to the Divine, there is always a vital mixture in these relations

— a mixture of the movements of the lower nature.

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These movements [*of egoism*] are part of man's ignorant vital nature. The love which human beings feel for one another is also usually an egoistic vital love and these other movements, claim, demand, jealousy, abhiman, anger etc., are its common accompaniments. There is no place for them in Yoga — nor in true love, psychic or divine. In Yoga all love should be turned towards the Divine and to human or other beings only as vessels of the Divine — abhiman and the rest should have no place in it.

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I have always said that the vital is indispensable for the divine or spiritual action — without it there can be no complete expression, no realisation in life — hardly even any realisation in sadhana. When I speak of the vital mixture or of the obstructions, revolts etc. of the vital, it is the unregenerated outer vital full of desire and ego and the lower passions of which I speak. I could say the same against the mind and the physical when they obstruct or oppose, but precisely because the vital is so powerful and indispensable, its obstruction, opposition or refusal of cooperation is more strikingly effective and its wrong mixtures are more dangerous to the sadhana. That is why I have always insisted on the dangers of the unregenerated vital and the necessity of mastery and purification there. It is not because I hold, like the Sannyasis, the vital and its life power to be a thing to be condemned and rejected in its very nature.

Affection, love, tenderness are in their nature psychic, — the vital has them because the psychic is trying to express itself through the vital. It is through the emotional being that the psychic most easily expresses, for it stands just behind it in the heart centre. But it wants these things to be pure. Not that it rejects the outward expression through the vital and the physical, but as the psychic being is the form of the soul, it naturally feels the attraction of soul to soul, the nearness of soul to soul the

union of soul with soul are the things that are to it most abiding and concrete. Mind, vital, body are means of expression and very precious means of expression, but the inner life is for the soul the first thing, the deepest reality, and these have to be subordinated to it and conditioned by it, its expression, its instruments and channel. I do not think that in my emphasis on the inner things, on the psychic and spiritual, I am saying anything new, strange or unintelligible. These things have always been stressed from the beginning and the more the human being is evolved, the more they take on importance. I do not see how Yoga can be possible without this premier stress on the inner life, on the soul and the spirit. The emphasis on the mastery of the vital, its subordination and subjection to the spiritual and the psychic is also nothing new, strange or exorbitant. It has been insisted on always for any kind of spiritual life; even the Yogas which seek most to use the vital, like certain forms of Vaishnavism, yet insist on the purification and the total offering of it to the Divine — and the relations with the Divine are an inner realisation, the soul offering itself through the emotional being. The soul or psychic being is not something unheard of or incomprehensible.

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Absence of love and fellow-feeling is not necessary for nearness to the Divine; on the contrary, a sense of closeness and oneness with others is a part of the divine consciousness into which the sadhak enters by nearness to the Divine and the feeling of oneness with the Divine. An entire rejection of all relations is indeed the final aim of the Mayavadin, and in the ascetic Yoga an entire loss of all relations of friendship and affection and attachment to the world and its living beings would be regarded as a promising sign of advance towards liberation, Moksha; but even there, I think, a feeling of oneness and unattached spiritual sympathy for all is at least a penultimate stage, like the compassion of the Buddhist, before the turning to Moksha or Nirvana. In this Yoga the feeling of unity with others, love, universal joy and Ananda are an essential part of the liberation and perfection which are the aim of the sadhana.

On the other hand, human society, human friendship, love, affection, fellow-feeling are mostly and usually — not entirely or in all cases — founded on a vital basis and are ego-held at their centre. It is because of the pleasure of being loved, the pleasure of enlarging the ego by contact, mutual penetration of spirit, with another, the exhilaration of the vital interchange which feeds their personality that men usually love — and there are also other and still more selfish motives that mix with this essential movement. There are of course higher spiritual, psychic, mental, vital elements that come in or can come in; but the whole thing is very mixed, even at its best. This is the reason why at a certain stage with or without apparent reason the world and life and human society and relations and philanthropy (which is as ego-ridden as the rest) begin to pall. There is sometimes an ostensible reason — a disappointment of the surface vital, the withdrawal of affection by others, the perception that those loved or men generally are not what one thought them to be and a host of other causes; but often the cause is a secret disappointment of some part of the inner being, not translated or not well translated into the mind, because it expected from these things something which they cannot give. It is the case with many who turn or are pushed to the spiritual life. For some it takes the form of a *vairāgya* which drives them towards ascetic indifference and gives the urge towards Moksha. For us, what we hold to be necessary is that the mixture should disappear and that the consciousness should be established on a purer level (not only spiritual and psychic but a purer and higher mental, vital, physical consciousness) in which there is not this mixture. There one would feel the true Ananda of oneness and love and sympathy and fellowship, spiritual and self-existent in its basis but expressing itself through the other parts of the nature. If that is to happen, there must obviously be a change; the old form of these movements must drop off and leave room for a new and higher self to disclose its own way of expression and realisation of itself and of the Divine through these things — that is the inner truth of the matter.

I take it therefore that the condition you describe is a period

of transition and change, negative in its beginning, as these movements often are at first, so as to create a vacant space for the new positive to appear and live in it and fill it. But the vital, not having a long continued or at all sufficient or complete experience of what is to fill the vacancy, feels only the loss and regrets it even while another part of the being, another part even of the vital, is ready to let go what is disappearing and does not yearn to keep it. If it were not for this movement of the vital (which in your case has been very strong and large and avid of life), the disappearance of these things would, at least after the first sense of void, bring only a feeling of peace, relief and a still expectation of greater things. What is intended in the first place to fill the void was indicated in the peace and joy which came to you as the touch of Shiva — naturally, this would not be all but a beginning, a basis for a new self, a new consciousness, an activity of a greater nature; as I told you, it is a deep spiritual calm and peace that is the only stable foundation for a lasting Bhakti and Ananda. In that new consciousness there would be a new basis for relations with others; for an ascetic dryness or isolated loneliness cannot be your spiritual destiny since it is not consonant with your Swabhava which is made for joy, largeness, expansion, a comprehensive movement of the life-force. Therefore do not be discouraged; wait upon the purifying movement of Shiva.

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There is no taboo in the Yoga on any feeling that is true and pure, but all the feelings undergo the stress of a pressure from the spiritual consciousness and whatever there is that is mixed, impure, egoistic or the feeling itself if it is fundamentally self-regarding, either disappears or, if it remains, becomes an obstacle to the progress. In the ascetic Yoga all human feelings are regarded as illusory and have to disappear — “the knots of the heart are cut” — so as to leave only the one supreme aspiration. In this Yoga the emotional being has not to be got rid of, but to undergo a transformation; the shortest way of transformation is to turn all the being to the Divine. But when that is done, then

it is found that what is pure and true in any human relation survives, but with a rich and subtle change, or else new relations are established that come straight from the Divine. If, however, something resists the change, then it is quite possible that there may be an oscillation between blank indifference or vairagya and the indulgence of the untransformed feeling—the human vital on one side, the disillusioned Vairagi on the other side. Some even have to pass through this vairagya in order to reach the possibility of a divinised emotional nature, but that is not the normal movement of this Yoga.

As for being self-centred, it is obviously not the right thing for Yoga to be centred in the ego and revolving round it; one has to be centred in the Divine with all the movements turning round that centre—until they can all be in the Divine. One has naturally to think much of one's own nature and its change, but that is inevitable for the sadhana—to prevent its turning into a self-centred condition, the aspiration to the Divine, vision of the Divine everywhere, the surrender to the Divine have to be made the main objective of the sadhana.

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The idea that all sadhaks must be aloof from each other and at daggers drawn is itself a preconceived idea that must be abandoned. Harmony and not strife is the law of Yogic living. This preconceived idea arises perhaps from the old notion of Nirvana as the aim; but Nirvana is not the aim here. The aim here is fulfilment of the Divine in life and for that union and solidarity are indispensable. I find it difficult to see in the mind's eye X developing an aversion for you and it would not be easy for you to develop an aversion for X; so these nightmares of the vital imagination ought not to emerge. Aversion and quarrelling are unyogic, not Yogic tendencies; the fact that this Asram is full of quarrels only shows that it is still an Asram of very imperfect sadhaks, not yet an Asram of Yogis—it does not at all mean that aversion and quarrelling are the dharma of the spiritual seeker.

The ideal of the Yoga is that all should be centred in and around the Divine and the life of the sadhaks must be founded

on that firm foundation, their personal relations also should have the Divine for their centre. Moreover, all relations should pass from the vital to the spiritual basis with the vital only as a form and instrument of the spiritual;—this means that from whatever relations they have with each other all jealousy, strife, hatred, aversion, rancour and other evil vital feelings should be abandoned, for they can be no part of the spiritual life. So also all egoistic love and attachment will have to disappear—the love that loves only for the ego's sake and as soon as the ego is hurt and dissatisfied ceases to love or even cherishes rancour and hate. There must be a real living and lasting unity behind the love. It is understood of course that such things as sexual impurity must disappear also.

That is the ideal, but as for the way of attainment, it may differ for different people. One way is that in which one leaves everything else to follow the Divine alone. This does not mean an aversion for anybody any more than it means aversion for the world and life. It only means absorption in one's central aim, with the idea that once that is attained it will be easy to found all relations on the true basis, to become truly united with others in the heart and the spirit and the life, united in the spiritual truth and in the Divine. The other way is to go forward from where one is, seeking the Divine centrally and subordinating all else to that, but not putting everything else aside, rather seeking to transform gradually and progressively whatever is capable of such transformation. All the things that are not wanted in the relation,—impurity, jealousy, anger, egoistic demand,—drop away as the inner being grows purer and is replaced by the unity of soul with soul and the binding together of the social life in the hoop of the Divine. Your eagerness to bring your friends into the Yoga was perhaps in reality due to a recognition somewhere in the being that this was the safest way to preserve the relation, to found it on the common search for the Divine. If quarrels intervene and there is strife, it is because the old ego-basis stuck still and brought in old reactions not of a Yogic character; but for that the Yoga is not to blame.

It is not that one cannot have relations with people outside

the circle of the sadhaks, but there too if the spiritual life grows within, it must necessarily affect the relation and spiritualise it on the sadhak's side. And there must be no such attachment as would make the relation an obstacle or a rival to the Divine. Attachment to family etc. often is like that and, if so, it falls away from the sadhana. That is an exigence which, I think, should not be considered excessive. All that however can be progressively done; a severing of existing relations is necessary for some; it is not so for all. A transformation, however gradual, is indispensable, — severance where severance is the right thing to do.

P.S. I must repeat also that each case differs — one rule for all is not practical or practicable. What is needed by each for his spiritual progress is the one consideration to be held in view.

Love for Others and Love for the Divine

The love of the sadhak should be for the Divine. It is only when he has that fully that he can love others in the right way.

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Yes. First, one should enter into union with the Divine, and learn to live in the true light, true consciousness, true force. Yogic relations with others should come only when one lives in the Divine — then it will be safe and then there can be no influence [*from others*], for the only influence will be that of the Divine.

*

It cannot be said that it [*one's affinity for certain persons*] is either bad or good in a general way. It depends on the person, the effects and many other things. As a general rule, all these affinities have to be surrendered to the Divine along with the rest of the old nature — so that only what is in harmony with the Divine Truth can be kept and transformed for its work in you. All relations with others must be relations in the Divine and not of the old personal nature.

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It is not necessary to have love for everybody just now. If you have a general goodwill, that is enough.

*

It is as the love of the Divine grows that the other things cease to trouble the mind.

*

There is a love in which the emotion is turned towards the Divine in an increasing receptivity and growing union. What it receives from the Divine it pours out on others, but freely without demanding a return. If you are capable of that, then that is the highest and most satisfying way to love.¹

Family Ties and Duties

What you write about the family ties is perfectly correct. It creates an unnecessary interchange and comes in the way of a complete turning to the Divine. Relations after taking up Yoga should be less and less based on a physical origin or the habits of the physical consciousness and more and more on the basis of sadhana — of sadhak with sadhaks, of others as souls travelling the same path or children of the Mother than in the ordinary way or with the old viewpoint.

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When one enters the spiritual life, the family ties which belong to the ordinary nature fall away — one becomes indifferent to the old things. This indifference is a release. There need be no harshness in it at all. To remain tied to the old physical affections would mean to remain tied to the ordinary nature and that would prevent the spiritual progress.

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¹ *The next day the correspondent asked, "What must one do to have this love?" Sri Aurobindo replied, "First you must want it in a continuous way."* — Ed.

Human physical relations are necessarily temporary — the soul has to go away and prepare itself for other lives through which it will move eventually nearer to the Divine. Regard it so and open yourself to the peace from above; turn yourself towards that which is Eternal and Divine.

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You ought to be able to see, after receiving today's telegram, that the cause of the unrest is in yourself and not in the outward circumstances. It is your vital attachment to family ties and the ordinary social ideas and feelings that has risen in you and creates the difficulty. If you want to practise Yoga, you must be able to live in the world, so long as you are there, with a mind set upon the Divine and not bound by the environment. One who does this, can help those around him a hundred times more than one who is bound and attached to the world.

*

The question about the family duties can be answered in this way — the family duties exist so long as one is in the ordinary consciousness of the *grahasthan*; if the call to a spiritual life comes, whether one keeps to them or not depends partly upon the way of Yoga one follows, partly on one's own spiritual necessity. There are many who pursue inwardly the spiritual life and keep the family duties, not as social duties but as a field for the practice of *karmayoga*, others abandon everything to follow the spiritual call or line and they are justified if that is necessary for the Yoga they practise or if that is the imperative demand of the soul within them.

*

There is no harm in devoting yourself to occupations which will help the *sadhana*. The earning of money and family affairs have only to be looked after if the circumstances are such as to compel it. They should then be done in a spirit of entire detachment, dealing with them so as to develop in oneself the consciousness described in the *Gita*.

Relations between Parents and Children

There are many kinds of truth and in the Shastra you will find all kinds, some seeming in conflict with others. Service to parents is part of family and social duty. It has nothing to do in itself with Yoga. Yoga is truth not of family or society, but of spiritual life, and in spiritual life the seeking for the Divine takes precedence of everything.

If we ask you to remain still with your father and mother, it is not from the point of view of Truth, but of charity. Four of their children have already left them to come to the Asram; it would be too hard a blow if you also left them now. As you have remained with them so long, you might remain a little longer. Even while in the family, you can prepare yourself for the spiritual life, by remembering the Divine in all you do and by doing it as a sacrifice for the sake of the Divine.

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It [*a child's debt to his parents*] is a law of human society, not a law of Karma. The child did not ask the father to bring him into the world — and if the father has done it for his own pleasure, it is the least he can do to bring up the child. All these are social relations (and it is not at all a one-sided debt of the child to the father, either), but whatever they are, they cease once one takes to the spiritual life. For the spiritual life does not at all rest on the external physical relations; it is the Divine alone with whom one has then to do.

*

The attachment to parents belongs to the ordinary physical nature — it has nothing to do with Divine Love.

Old Relations

We are sorry to hear that she is suffering from such serious difficulties and certainly we are prepared to give her what inner help we can. It is not, however, any force from us that has worked to

separate her from her old supporters and friends. It is, evidently, one result of some change and progress in her consciousness which has disturbed the old relation between her internal nature and her external surroundings and power of action upon them. To try to go back to the old relation does not usually succeed; the only safe course is to progress still farther and arrive at a new consciousness and new power which will enable her to establish a fresh relation with her external environment. If one keeps courage and always looks forward, relying on the Force behind which supports, there are no troubles, no difficulties, no apparent disasters even which cannot be passed through safely and eventually overcome.

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Yes. The inner being turned to the Divine naturally draws away from old vital relations and outer movements and contacts till it can bring a new consciousness into the external being.

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The movement [*of rejection*] of which you speak is not psychic but emotive. It is a vital emotive force that you put out and waste. It is also harmful because, while on the one side you try to reject a past vital relation or tie with these people, you by this movement re-establish in another way a vital relation with them. If there was anything wrong in your first movement, this is quite a false way of remedying the defect.

Certainly, it would be better to reject without any violent feeling against any person, because the violence is a sign of a certain weakness in the vital which must be corrected — not for any other reason. The rejection should be quiet, firm, self-assured, decisive; it will then be more radical and effective.

Friendship and Affection

All are not indifferent in this Asram to each other, nor is friendship or affection excluded from the Yoga. Friendship with the Divine is a recognised relation in the sadhana. Friendships be-

tween the sadhaks exist and are encouraged by the Mother. Only we seek to found them on a surer basis than that on which the bulk of human friendships are insecurely founded. It is precisely because we hold friendship, brotherhood, love to be sacred things that we want this change — because we do not want to see them broken at every moment by the movements of the ego, soiled and spoiled and destroyed by the passions, jealousies, treacheries to which the vital is prone — it is to make them truly sacred and secure that we want them rooted in the soul, founded on the rock of the Divine. Our Yoga is not an ascetic Yoga: it aims at purity, but not at a cold austerity. Friendship and love are indispensable notes in the harmony to which we aspire. It is not a vain dream, for we have seen that even in imperfect conditions when a little of the indispensable element is there at the very root the thing is possible. It is difficult and the old obstacles still cling obstinately. But no victory can be won without a fixed fidelity to the aim and a long effort. There is no other way than to persevere.

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In Yoga friendship can remain, but attachment has to fall away or any such engrossing affection as would keep one tied to the ordinary life and consciousness — human relations must take quite a small and secondary place and not interfere with the turn to the Divine.

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As to the question about affections etc. I answered X long ago that in Yoga all attachments have to be given up so that there may be no rival to the Divine, but love and affection can be there — only as a new basis of consciousness has to be reached love and affection have to be rebased on that deeper and higher consciousness, not allowed to remain in their old form or on their old level — all the life must be centred round the Divine. It is so in this Yoga at least. There are others in which a man must become aloof from all things, but that is when one is bound towards Nirvana.

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Human affection is obviously unreliable because it is so much bound up with selfishness and desire; it is a flame of the ego sometimes turbid and misty, sometimes more clear and brightly coloured—sometimes tamasic based on instinct and habit, sometimes rajasic and fed by passion or the cry for vital interchange, sometimes more sattwic and trying to be or look to itself disinterested. But fundamentally it depends on a personal need or a return of some kind inward or outward and when the need is not satisfied or the return ceases or is not given, it most often diminishes or dies or exists only as a tepid or troubled remnant of habit from the past or else turns for satisfaction elsewhere. The more intense it is, the more it is apt to be troubled by tumults, clashes, quarrels, egoistic disturbances of all kinds, selfishness, exactions, lapses even to rage and hatred, ruptures. It is not that these affections cannot last—tamasic instinctive affections last because of habit in spite of everything dividing the persons, e.g. certain family affections; rajasic affections can last sometimes in spite of all disturbances and incompatibilities and furious ruptures because one has a vital need of the other and clings because of that or because both have that need and are constantly separating to return and returning to separate, or proceeding from quarrel to reconciliation and from reconciliation to quarrel; sattwic affections last very often from duty to the ideal or with some other support though they may lose their keenness or intensity or brightness. But the true reliability is there only when the psychic element in human affection becomes strong enough to colour or dominate the rest. For that reason friendship is or rather can oftenest be the most durable of the human affections because there there is less interference of the vital and even though a flame of the ego it can be a quiet and pure fire giving always its warmth and light. Nevertheless reliable friendship is almost always with a very few; to have a horde of loving, unselfishly faithful friends is a phenomenon so rare that it can be safely taken as an illusion. In any case human affection whatever its value has its place, because through it the psychic being gets the emotional experiences it needs until it is ready to prefer the true

to the apparent, the perfect to the imperfect, the divine to the human. As the consciousness has to rise to a higher level, so the activities of the heart also have to rise to that higher level and change their basis and character. Yoga is the founding of all the life and consciousness in the Divine, so also love and affection must be rooted in the Divine and a spiritual and psychic oneness in the Divine must be their foundation — to reach the Divine first leaving other things aside or to seek the Divine alone is the straight road towards that change. That means no attachment — it need not mean turning affection into disaffection or chill indifference. But X seems to want to take his vital emotions just as they are — *tels quels* — into the Divine — let him try and don't bother him with criticisms and lectures; if it can't be done, he will have to find it out himself. Or perhaps he wants to clap on the Divine to the rest as a crowning ornament, shikhara, of his pyramid of love and affections.

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It [*ordinary affection*] is the vital seeking to pour itself out with the implicit idea of getting a return, an interchange. The consciousness of oneness is something behind all life and all forms of affection come no doubt from it, but not consciously, and they get changed, mixed, perverted when the vital takes up the action of the force of Love of whose true or divine nature it is unconscious.

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But that is the nature of human vital affection, it is all selfishness disguised as love. Sometimes when there is a strong vital passion, need or tie, then the person is ready to do anything to retain the affection of the other. But it is only when the psychic is able to get into the movement that there is real unselfish affection or at least some element of it.

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It is meant [*by not retaining vital relations*] that you should have the relation of sadhaks with each other, one of goodwill and friendly feeling, but not any special relation of a vital character.

If there is anyone you cannot meet without such a vital relation coming up, then only it is not advisable to meet him or her.

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What you write is quite correct — each sadhak must have the direct inner contact with the Mother and rely on her for the spiritual help and progress. But there may be psychic or spiritual friendships which may be helpful in another way and especially in certain difficult stages before the inner contact with the Mother is consciously established.

Vital Love

It is not helpful to make so much of the past and give it such a primary value. Whatever may be the glamour of a vital love, once it falls away and one gets to a higher level, it should be seen to have been not the great thing one imagined. To keep the exaggerated estimate of it is to hold the consciousness back from the full *essor* towards the greater thing with which that cannot for a moment compare. If one keeps a fervour like that for an inferior past, it must make it more difficult to develop the entire person for a higher future. It is indeed not the Mother's wish that X or you either should look back in a spirit of enthusiastic appreciation to the old vital love. It was indeed "so little" in any true estimate of things. It is not at all a question of comparison or of exalting the vital passion of one at the expense of that of the other. It is the whole thing that must dwindle in its proportions and recede into the shadowy constructions of the past which have no longer any importance.

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It is the ordinary nature of vital love not to last or, if it tries to last, not to satisfy, because it is a passion which Nature has thrown in in order to serve a temporary purpose; it is good enough therefore for a temporary purpose and its normal tendency is to wane when it has sufficiently served Nature's purpose. In mankind, as man is a more complex being, she calls in the aid of imagination

and idealism to help her push, gives a sense of ardour, of beauty and fire and glory, but all that wanes after a time. It cannot last, because it is all a borrowed light and power, borrowed in the sense of being a reflection caught from something beyond and not native to the reflecting vital medium which imagination uses for the purpose. Moreover nothing lasts in the mind and vital, all is in a flux there. The one thing that endures is the soul, the spirit. Therefore love can last or satisfy only if it bases itself on the soul and spirit, if it has its roots there. But that means living no longer in the vital but in the soul and spirit.

The difficulty of the vital giving up is because the vital is not governed by reason or knowledge, but by instinct and impulse and the desire of pleasure. It draws back because it is disappointed, because it realises that the disappointment will always repeat itself, but it does not realise that the whole thing is in itself a glamour or, if it does, it repines that it should be so. Where the vairagya is sattwic, born not of disappointment but of the sense of greater and truer things to be attained, this difficulty does not arise. However the vital can learn by experience, can learn so much as to turn away from its regret of the beauty of the will-o'-the-wisp. Its vairagya can become sattwic and decisive.

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There is nothing unusual in your feelings towards X. It is the way that vital love usually takes when there is no strong psychic force to correct and uphold it. After the first vital glow is over, the incompatibility of the two egos begins to show itself and there is more and more strain in the relations — for one or both the demands of the other become intolerable to the vital part, there is constant irritation and the claim is felt as a burden and a yoke. Naturally in a life of sadhana there is no room for vital relations — they are a stumbling block preventing the wholesale turning of the nature towards the Divine.

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The phenomenon of which you speak is normal to human nature. People are drawn together or one is drawn to another

by a certain feeling of affinity, of agreement or of attraction between some part of one's own nature and some part of the other's nature. At first this only is felt; one sees all that is good or pleasant to one in the other's nature and even attributes, perhaps, qualities to him that are not there or not so much there as one thinks. But with closer acquaintance other parts of the nature are felt with which one is not in affinity — perhaps there is a clash of ideas or opposition of feelings or conflict of two egos. If there is a strong love or friendship of a lasting character, then one may overcome these difficulties of contact and arrive at a harmonising or accommodation; but very often this is not there or the disagreement is so acute as to counteract the tendency of accommodation or else the ego gets so hurt as to recoil. Then it is quite possible for one to begin to see too much and exaggerate the faults of the other or to attribute things to him of a bad or unpleasant character that are not there. The whole view can change, the good feeling change into ill-feeling, alienation, even enmity or antipathy. This is always happening in human life. The opposite also happens, but less easily — i.e. the change from ill-feeling to good feeling, from opposition to harmony. But of course ill-opinion or ill-feeling towards a person need not arise from this cause alone. It happens from many causes, instinctive dislike, jealousy, conflicting interests, etc.

One must try to look calmly on others, not overstress either virtues or defects, without ill-feeling or misunderstanding or injustice, with a calm mind and vision.

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There is the selfishness which is always a part if not the whole of human love — and it is the reaction of the demand and desire it brings that creates the opposite feeling. It is when this selfish element is rejected that one can feel the true psychic or divine love.

*

Love does not consist in demands and desires — demand and desire spring from ego. Love exists for its own sake and does

not offer itself on conditions. These feelings do not spring from the psychic and it is only by the psychic prevailing in you that the true consciousness can become free and full in the nature and all these repinings and unhappinesses disappear.

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The love in the vital or other parts is the true thing, good for the spiritual life, only when in the vital love is changed into a form of the psychic love and becomes an instrument for the transformation of the soul's love, no longer for the desires of the ego which men call love.

Vital Love and Psychic Love

Ordinary human love is vital, emotional and physical and always egoistic — a form of self-love. The psychic element is very small except in a few.

*

Human love is mainly vital, when it is not vital and physical together. It is also sometimes psychic + vital. But the Love with a dominant psychic element is rare.

*

It is difficult to define its [*psychic love's*] limits or to recognise it. For even when there is the psychic love for another person, it gets in the human being so mixed up with the vital that it is the commonest thing to justify a vital love by claiming for it a psychic character. One could say that psychic love is distinguished by an essential purity and selflessness — but the vital can put on a very brilliant imitation of that character, when it likes.

*

It depends on what you mean by psychic "love". One can have a psychic feeling for all beings; it does not depend on sex nor has it anything sexual in it.

*

There is a fundamental psychic feeling which is the same for all; but there can also be a special psychic feeling for one or another.

*

It [*psychic love*] is sometimes turned to the human person, but it never gets its true satisfaction till it turns to the Divine.

*

Men are necessarily separated by the individualisation of their nature and can only establish contacts there. In the psychic being one gets the sense of oneness by psychic sympathy, but not any unification, for the psychic is the individual soul and must unify itself with the Divine before it can through the Divine unify with others. In spiritual realisation there are two quite opposite forms — one in which one withdraws from all outer things including all material beings in the world to merge in the Divine and one in which one feels the Self or the Divine in all and through that realisation attains to a universal oneness.

*

Certainly, as the psychic attitude develops it is bound to have an effect not only on oneself but on the relations with others.

Personal Relations in Yoga

Personal relation is not a part of the Yoga. When one has the union with the Divine, then only can there be a true spiritual relation with others.

*

A personal relation is formed when there is an exclusive mutual looking to each other. The rule about personal relations in this Yoga is this: (1) All personal relations to disappear in the single relation between the sadhaka and the Divine; (2) All personal (psychic-spiritual) relations to proceed from the Divine Mother, determined by her, and to be part of the single relation with the Divine Mother. In so far as it keeps to this double rule and

admits no physical indulgence or vital deformation or mixture, a personal relation can be there. But since as yet the Supramental has not taken possession but is only descending and there is still struggle in the vital and physical levels, there must be a great carefulness such as would not be necessary if the supramental transformation were already there. Both have to be in direct relation with the Mother and in a total dependence on her and to see that that remains and that nothing diminishes its totality or cuts across it in the least degree.

*

I don't think it is much use writing about personal relations in the true spiritual life (which does not yet exist here). None would understand it except as a form of words. Only three points —

(1) Its very base would have to be spiritual and psychic and *not* vital. The vital would be there but as an instrument only.

(2) It would be a relation flowing from the higher Truth, not continued from the lower Ignorance.

(3) It would not be impersonal in the sense of being colourless, but whatever colours were there would not be the egoistic and muddy colours of the present relations.

*

The Yoga cannot be done if equality is not established. Personal relations must be founded on the relation with the Divine in himself and the Divine in all and they must not be “ties” to pull one down and keep bound to the lower nature but part of the higher unity.

*

The natural feeling of one sadhak to another should be kindness and good feeling to all and the friendliness which is natural or ought to be so between all who follow the same spiritual aim, but personal attachment is supposed to be overcome, as all attachments of the vital must be. Personal relations *can* exist if they are founded on the spiritual consciousness or help towards it, but nothing that holds one back or turns one away from

the Divine. I have not opposed any sadhak having a friendly relation with another. But if it is based on ego, on vital desires and impulses or, if these come strongly in, then obviously there is something there that makes it undesirable. In this case, you have written very frankly that your intimacy with X would be of that character on your side. So I could not but acquiesce in your feeling that it would be better not to go to his room or resume the old close contact.

P.S. In what I have written of the relation of sadhaks, I mean of course the relation on the way. I leave aside the spiritual or psychic love for all which can come afterwards and be the radiation of the union with the Divine.

*

Our experience is that it is only when both are in the true consciousness centred round the Divine that there is some chance of a true meeting in the Divine. Otherwise, with the personal relation that forms there comes in either disappointment and alienation or else reactions that are not pure.

Universal Love and Personal Relations

One can talk to all, unless one has a reason for not doing so. The oneness with all is an internal realisation, but it does not necessarily impose the same dealing with all. It is the old story of *bāthi brahman* and *māhout brahman*. There is the fundamental realisation and there are the disparities of the Lila — both have to be taken into account.

*

No, that by itself [*expressing one's affection to all*] is not the wideness needed — the spiritual wideness brings the sense of being one being with all, of containing all in oneself, as it were, and with that comes a kind of universal love which is spiritual, free and pure, but which one is not moved to show to everybody by outward signs, but which has its effect. The personal relation can be only with some, not with all.

*

That was exactly what X tried to do—to express the love in connection with this or that person. But universal love is not personal—it has to be held within as a condition of the consciousness which will have its effects according to the Divine Will or be used by that Will if necessary, but to run about expressing it for one's personal satisfaction or the satisfaction of others is only to spoil and lose it.

*

The *dynamic* Love cannot go out equally to all—that would create a chaotic disturbance because of the unpreparedness of the majority. It is only the static immutable universal Love that can apply equally to all—that which comes in a still wideness of the heart which corresponds with the still wideness of the mind in which there is the equanimity and infinite peace.

*

So long as the whole consciousness is not clear of doubtful stuff and the realisation of oneness confirmed in the supreme purity, the expression of the all-love is not advisable. It is by holding it in oneself that it becomes a real part of the nature, established and purified by joining with it the other realisations still to come. At present it is only a first touch and to dissipate it by expression would be very imprudent. The sex and vital might easily become active—I have known cases of very good Yogis in whom the *viśvaprema* became the *viśvakāma*, all-love becoming all-lust. This has happened with many both in Europe and the East. Even apart from that it is always best to solidify and to confirm rather than to throw out and disperse. When the sadhana has progressed and the knowledge from above comes to enlighten and guide the love, then it will be another matter. My insistence on rejection of all untransformed vital movements is based on experience, mine and others' and that of past Yogas like the Vaishnava movement of Chaitanya (not to speak of the old Buddhist Sahaja dharma) which ended in much corruption. A wide movement such as that of all-love can only take place when the ground of Nature has been solidly prepared for

it. I have no objection to your mixing with others, but only under a continual guard and control by a vigilant mind and will.

Relations between Men and Women in Yoga

As for turning all to the Divine, that is a counsel of perfection for those who don't care to carry any luggage. But otherwise friendship between man and man or man and woman or woman and woman is not forbidden provided it is the true thing and sex does not come in and also provided it does not turn one away from the goal. If the central aim is strong, that is sufficient. When I spoke of personal relation I certainly did not mean pure indifference, for indifference does not create a relation: it tends to non-relation altogether. Emotional friendship need not be an obstacle.

*

The only relation permissible between a sadhak and sadhika here is the same as between a sadhak and sadhak or between a sadhika and sadhika — a friendly relation between followers of the same path of Yoga and children of the Mother.

*

In a general way the only method for succeeding in having between a man and a woman the free and natural Yogic relations that should exist between a sadhak and a sadhika in this Yoga is to be able to meet each other without thinking at all that one is a man and another a woman — both are simply human beings, both sadhaks, both striving to serve the Divine and seeking the Divine alone and none else. Have that fully in yourself and no difficulty is likely to come.

*

Even in the world there have been relations between man and woman in which sex could not intervene — purely psychic relations. The consciousness of sex difference would be there no

doubt, but without coming in as a source of desire or disturbance into the relation. But naturally it needs a certain psychic development before that is possible.

*

It is certainly easier to have friendship between man and man or between woman and woman than between man and woman, because there the sexual intrusion is normally absent. In a friendship between man and woman the sexual turn can at any moment come in in a subtle or a direct way and produce perturbations. But there is no impossibility of friendship between man and woman pure of this element; such friendships can exist and have always existed. All that is needed is that the lower vital should not look in at the back door or be permitted to enter. There is often a harmony between a masculine and a feminine nature, an attraction or an affinity which rests on something other than any open or covert lower vital (sexual) basis — it depends sometimes predominantly on the mental or on the psychic or on the higher vital, sometimes on a mixture of these for its substance. In such cases friendship is natural and there is little chance of other elements coming in to pull it downwards or break it.

It is also a mistake to think that the vital alone has warmth and the psychic is something frigid without any flame in it. A clear limpid goodwill is a very good and desirable thing — one has only to consider what a changed place the Asram would be if all had it for each other. But that is not what is meant by psychic love. Love is love and not merely goodwill. Psychic love can have a warmth and a flame as intense and more intense than the vital, only it is a pure fire, not dependent on the satisfaction of ego-desire or on the eating up of the fuel it embraces. It is a white flame, not a red one; but white heat is not inferior to the red variety in its ardour. It is true that the psychic love does not usually get its full play in human relations and human nature, it finds the fullness of its fire and ecstasy more easily when it is lifted towards the Divine. In the human relation the psychic love gets mixed up with other elements which seek at

once to use it and overshadow it. It gets an outlet for its own full intensities only at rare moments. Otherwise it comes in only as an element, but even so it contributes all the higher things in a love that is predominantly vital—all the finer sweetness, tenderness, fidelity, self-giving, self-sacrifice, reachings of soul to soul, idealising sublimations that lift up human love beyond itself come from the psychic. If it could dominate and govern and transmute the other elements, mental, vital, physical, of human love, then love could be on the earth some reflection or preparation of the real thing, an integral union of the soul and its instruments in a dual life. But even some imperfect appearance of that is rare.

Here we do not talk of psychic love between sadhaks, for the reason that that comes usually to be employed as a cover and excuse for things that are not at all psychic and have no place in the spiritual life. Our view is that the normal thing is in Yoga for the entire flame of the nature to turn towards the Divine and the rest must wait for the true basis; to build higher things on the sand and mire of the ordinary consciousness is not safe. That does not necessarily exclude friendships or comradeships, but these must be subordinate altogether to the central fire. If anyone makes meanwhile the relation with the Divine his one absorbing aim, that is quite natural and gives the full force to the sadhana. Psychic love finds itself wholly when it is the radiation of the diviner consciousness for which we are seeking; till then it is difficult for it to put out its undimmed integral self and figure.

P. S. Mind, vital, physical are properly instruments for the soul and spirit; when they work for themselves then they produce ignorant and imperfect things—if they can be made into conscious instruments of the psychic and the spirit, then they get their own diviner fulfilment; that is the idea contained in what we call transformation in this Yoga.

*

To avoid X is not the way to get rid of these feelings [*of possessiveness and jealousy*]. The Mother allowed the relation between you because you had need of help and there was a need also of

psychic and spiritual comradeship in the work, a support to each other among its difficulties. That something vital got into the relationship and caused the disturbances of jealousy, sense of possession etc. is true; but the remedy is not to break off but to let it grow into the true thing. It is difficult to get rid of the vital mixture all at once, because these movements had created in you a habit of recurrence supported by forces that wanted to break your sadhana. These forces have now lost a great deal of their power, — but the movement itself still recurs and from force of habit your nature responds and gets troubled. Do not be discouraged by this recurrence; it happens with everyone. Keep your psychic perception and quietly stand back from the jealousy and sense of possession when it occurs, not accepting it as a thing right or natural, but not desponding either because of its recurrence. In time the growth of the psychic in you will help you to turn the relation into the true thing altogether.

*

The first thing you have to do is to make up your mind what you want. If you want to have a free mind and vital to pursue your sadhana, you must get rid of the attachment for X left from the past; if you once do so entirely, you can either mix with him or not meet him without any reaction or inconvenience. Till then both the impulse or need of seeing him and the recoil from it carry too much of the savour of the old relation to be effective.

*

For a sadhak the suitable partner does not exist — and any “partner” would create a barrier between him and the Divine. A companion, not of the same sex, is a different matter.

*

It [*mixing with women*] is not so harmful for a woman as mixing freely with men under the vital impulse — but all mixing on the vital plane has its dangers. What you should do in mixing with women is not to give yourself vitally, to remain within yourself,

but to mix with them outwardly in a quiet way — forming no vital relation with any.

*

The first [*question*] was about a complementary soul and marriage. The answer is easy to give; the way of the spiritual life lies for you in one direction and marriage lies in quite another and opposite. All talk about a complementary soul is a camouflage with which the mind tries to cover the sentimental, sensational and physical wants of the lower vital nature. It is that vital nature in you which puts the question and would like an answer reconciling its desires and demands with the call of the true soul in you. But it must not expect a sanction for any such incongruous reconciliation from here. The way of the supramental Yoga is clear; it lies not through any concession to these things, — not, in your case, through the satisfaction, under a spiritual cover if possible, of its craving for the comforts and gratifications of a domestic and conjugal life and the enjoyment of the ordinary emotional desires and physical passions, but through the purification and transformation of the forces which these movements pervert and misuse. Not these human and animal demands, but the divine Ananda which is above and beyond them and which the indulgence of these degraded forms would prevent from descending, is the great thing that the aspiration of the vital being must demand in the sadhaka.

*

If that [*contempt*] is your feeling about women the sooner you get rid of it the better — for it is very silly. As for shyness etc., it should be got rid of, but do not replace it by familiarity or overintimacy.

Loneliness

The inner loneliness can only be cured by the inner experience of union with the Divine; no human association can fill the void. In the same way, for the spiritual life the harmony with others

must be founded not on mental and vital affinities, but on the divine consciousness and the union with the Divine. When one finds the Divine and finds others in the Divine, then the real harmony comes. Meanwhile what there can be is the goodwill and unity founded on the feeling of a common divine goal and the sense of being all children of the Mother. Real harmony can come only on a psychic or a spiritual basis.

*

To be alone with the Divine is the highest of all privileged states for the sadhak, for it is that in which inwardly he comes nearest to the Divine and can make all existence a communion in the chamber of the heart as well as in the temple of the universe. Moreover that is the beginning and base of the real oneness with all, for it establishes that oneness in its true base, on the Divine, for it is in the Divine that he meets and unites with all and no longer in a precarious interchange of the mental and vital ego. So do not fear loneliness but put your trust in the Mother and go forward on the Path in her strength and Grace.

Chapter Two

Interactions with Others and the Practice of Yoga

Cultivating Equality and Goodwill

The inequality of feelings towards others, liking and disliking, is ingrained in the nature of the human vital. This is because some harmonise with one's own vital temperament, others do not; also there is the vital ego which gets displeased when it is hurt or when things do not go or people do not act according to its preferences or its idea of what they should do. In the self above there is a spiritual calm and equality, a goodwill to all or at a certain stage a quiet indifference to all except the Divine; in the psychic there is an equal kindness or love to all fundamentally, but there may be special relations with one — but the vital is always unequal and full of likes and dislikes. By the sadhana the vital must be quieted down; it must receive from the self above its quiet goodwill and equality to all things and from the psychic its general kindness or love. This will come, but it may take time to come. You must get rid of all inner as well as all outer movements of anger, impatience or dislike. If things go wrong or are done wrongly, you will simply say, "The Mother knows" and go on quietly doing or getting things done as well as you can without friction. At a later period we will show you how to use the Mother's force so that things may go better, but first you must get your inner poise in a quiet vital, for only so can the Force be used with its full possible success.

*

There are two attitudes that a sadhak can have — either a quiet equality to all regardless of their friendliness or hostility or a general goodwill.

*

I would ask you not to let resentment or anything else rise or dictate your conduct. Put these things aside and see that peace within and the seeking of the Divine are the one thing important — these clashes being only spurts of the ego. Turn yourself in the one direction, but for the rest keep a quiet goodwill to all.

*

You must certainly give up all personal feelings of that kind [*resentment, ill will*]. Also you must not think if people differ from you and express their difference of opinion freely that that arises from personal hostility. In all things keep *samatā* and, if there are differences, try to see the other's point of view as well as yours.

*

As for the inconveniences, you should take them as a training in *samata*. To be able to bear inconveniences is one of the most elementary necessities if one wants to enter into the true spirit of Yoga.

*

The proper thing is to see all with an unmoved calm, both the “good” and “bad”, but as a movement of Nature on the surface. But to do this truly without error or egoism or wrong reactions needs a consciousness and knowledge that is not personal and limited.

*

If you want to have knowledge or see all as brothers or have peace, you must think less of yourself, your desires, feelings, people's treatment of you, and think more of the Divine — living for the Divine, not for yourself.

Indifference to What Others Think or Say

It is not what others think of you that matters, but what you are yourself.

*

When you are doing sadhana, you have not to care what others want or think or say, but only for what is right and what the Divine wants of you.

*

It is no use listening to what people say or to suggestions. Both are things by which one must learn not to be affected. A certain samata in these matters is needed in order to get the true poise. The one thing that matters is realisation of the Divine.

*

So long as you go on listening to what people say or listening to your own wrong imaginations or insisting on your desires, how do you hope to get peace? Nobody ever got peace in that way.

*

To become entirely indifferent to the good and bad opinion of others, especially those who are or were near, and stand on the Truth alone is very difficult; some reaction of the old nature can easily come across; but if one remains calm and firm within, these surface reactions quickly disappear and their rejection helps the remnants of the old nature to disappear.

*

If you look closely, you will see that all these things — the rudeness of one, the anger of another — are exceedingly slight things which should be received with indifference. Do not allow them to trouble you so much. The one thing of supreme importance is your sadhana and your spiritual growth. Let nothing touch or disturb that.

*

It is not good to allow yourself to be upset so much by what others say or do — whether it be X or anybody else. There is a quietude and happiness which you can find by living in yourself in contact with the Divine which you will never get from outside.

*

I cannot quite say how far *X* is responsible — it is certainly always possible to get a lowering of consciousness from someone who is always gossiping or talking of her fears and difficulties. As for being kind, there is nothing harmful in kindness itself, but there is no reason why you should allow another to invade you with things you don't want to feel or hear. There is a measure in all things — and besides one should keep oneself inwardly free and not admit that the vital movements of others should be a cause of difficulties — one has enough to do combating one's own.

*

Such reproaches (the stone etc.) are quite usual from those who do not understand against the sadhak when he remains firm in his path against the ordinary human vital demands upon him. But that should not perturb you. It is better to be a stone on the road to the Divine than soft and weak clay in the muddy paths of the ordinary vital human nature.

Overcoming Dependence

What you say about your dependence on others is true, because this dependence is accompanied by a demand on those others, the desire that they should always be occupied with you alone, think, feel and act according to your own ideas, feelings and desires. This is not possible and so this dependence brings disappointment and, if the feelings are excessive, despair.

But for this demand the remedy for this dependence, which is the character of many especially among women, would be to depend not on others but on the Divine. But here too the demand comes and spoils the dependence. A dependence without demand is what is needed, then the Divine Power comes in and at every moment guides, helps and sustains the being. When the sadhana was going on in you, you had periods when you had this right attitude and could get glimpses of the true happiness and dedication. But the physical mind became active and with it there began the period of obscuration and trouble. The physical

mind must become quiet and the heart open and the psychic become again active. It is for this you should aspire always and in time it will come.

It was not the Mother's intention in putting you with X that you should depend on him alone, but that with his help you should come to depend on the Mother. Owing to your weakness and his, it turned out otherwise.

*

If you wish to be free from people's expectations and the sense of obligation, it is indeed best not to take from anybody; for the sense of claim will otherwise be there. Not that it will be entirely absent even if you take nothing, but you will not be bound any longer.

Overcoming Attachment

All attachment is a hindrance to sadhana. Goodwill you should have for all, psychic kindness for all, but no vital attachment.

*

Yes, certainly, there should be no attachment [*to another person*]. The emotional feeling is safe only when it is governed by the psychic — for the psychic love is essentially a permanent soul-sympathy which is not attached but self-existent and self-content pouring itself out but asking for nothing.

The safest course in sadhana is to turn all to the Divine and to leave any other relation till all relations can be founded in the Divine; but that is not easy for everybody — only a few seem able to do it.

*

Yes, that is the bother of these attachments — the reason why the Yogis were so down on them — the Vedantists especially with their insistence on the breaking of the heart-knots. They must have known from their own difficulties in the matter.

*

If you expect a return for your kindness, you are bound to be disappointed. It is only those who give love or kindness for its own sake without expecting a return who escape from this experience. A relation also can be established on a sure basis only when it is free from attachment or when it is predominantly psychic on both sides.

*

When one deals with people there can be always a projection of consciousness to them or a reception of them into the consciousness, but that does not amount to an attachment — something more is needed, a grip of the vital on the person or a grip of the person on one's vital etc.

Helping Others

To concentrate most on one's own spiritual growth and experience is the first necessity of the sadhak — to be too eager to help others draws away from the inner work. There is also likely to be an overzeal and haste which clouds the discrimination and makes what help is given less effective than it should be. To grow in the spirit is the greatest help one can give to others, for then something flows out naturally to those around that helps them.

*

It [*trying to help someone through words*] is a relative and partial help, of course, but it is sometimes useful. A radical help can only come from within through the action of the Divine Force and the assent of the being. It must be said of course that it is not everyone that thinks he is helping who is really doing it; also if the help is accompanied with the exercising of an "influence", that influence may be of a mixed character and harm as well as help if the instrument is not pure.

*

Yes, it is always so with human conduct — men want to help

each other with a motive behind or a feeling which proceeds from the ego.

*

The idea of helping others is a subtle form of the ego. It is only the Divine Force that can help. One can be its instrument, but you should first learn to be a fit and egoless instrument.

*

The idea of helping others is a delusion of the ego. It is only when the Mother commissions and gives the force that one can help and even then only within limits.

*

The attempt to help people and clear things for others was an ego impulse. It magnified the ego and brought boasting, imagination, vital flattery. To clear yourself was the first necessity — afterwards to work not by one's own initiative, but in obedience to the will of the Mother, without ego.

*

As for helping [*others*], you can only be sure of that if you yourself have an assured basis, with the psychic being always prominent, full of faith and joy and strength, — then others can gather strength and faith and joy from such a one by speech or contact. But to arrive at that you must, as I have been telling you, open yourself to the Light and Force that come from myself and the Mother and *to no other influence*.

*

This “helping others” is a perilous business — it brings the “guru” ego or else you very uncertainly rid others of their difficulties and very certainly get them yourself. “Why do you have all these disciples?” said a sage to some Maratha saint (I have forgotten the names); “to have disciples means to add all their difficulties to your own.” “Helping others” has the same disadvantage.

*

Of course it is the disadvantage of helping others that one comes into contact with their consciousness and their difficulties and also gets more externalised.

*

In “helping” one often gets part of the other’s inconvenience and many Yogis refuse to take disciples because they will have to assume others’ burdens as well as their own. There are also other dangers — growth of ego etc.

*

The bearing of others’ difficulties would, I fear, be a heavy burden for anybody and I doubt the efficacy of the method. What one can do much more usefully is, if one has strength to give out of one’s strength to the other, if one has peace to shed the peace on the other etc. This one can do without losing one’s strength or peace — if it is done in the right way.

*

There are two possible attitudes in the matter [*of helping others*] and each has something to be said for it. There is much to be said for X’s attitude [*of reserve*] — first, because until one’s own siddhi is complete, the help one gives is always a little doubtful and imperfect and, secondly, there is the danger so often emphasised by experienced Yogis of taking on oneself the difficulties of those one helps. But all the same to wait for perfection is not always possible.

*

These things [*mixing with outsiders etc.*] (most of them, to take a walk or write a letter home are different) can be described as not safe. If one has the strong spiritual condition secure in its basis one can do them without invasion from outside or a stumble; if one has the divine protection and can remain in it wherever he goes because the psychic being is in front and the vital obedient, then also one will not suffer. But otherwise in so acting one is opened to the influences that hang around

these outside people, one enters by sympathy with them into the movement of other forces than those of the spiritual life — and then it is quite possible that there may be untoward results as with X and Y and others too, in the physical, or in the vital, wherever there is most weakness.

*

To give oneself to an outsider is to go out from the atmosphere of sadhana and give oneself to the outer world forces.

One can have a psychic feeling of love for someone, a universal love for all creatures, but one has to give oneself only to the Divine.

*

To want unwaveringly the welfare of another both in the head and the heart, is the best help one can give.

*

It [*a sense of harmony and delight and love*] is in you and when it is like that it spreads out in the atmosphere — but naturally only those can share who are open and sensitive to the influence. Still everyone who has peace or love in him becomes an added influence for its increase in the atmosphere.

Receiving Help from Others

All change must come from within with the felt or the secret support of the Divine Power; it is only by one's own inner opening to that that one can receive help, not by mental, vital or physical contact with others.

Concern for Others

Whatever or whomever you have handed over to the Divine, you should not be any longer attached or anxious about him or it but leave all to the Divine to do for the best.

*

If your husband is in a perilous period of his life and suffering from ill-health and you feel for him, the best thing for him is still that you should tranquillise yourself and call the Divine to his help to pass through. Even in the ordinary life disquietude and depression create an unhelpful atmosphere for one who is ill or in difficulties. Once you are a sadhak, then whether for yourself or to help others for whom you still feel, the true spiritual attitude of reliance on the Divine Will and call for the help from above is always the best and most effective course.

*

It is very good that the condition you speak of has settled itself — that is a great progress. As for the prayers, the fact of praying and the attitude it brings, especially unselfish prayer for others, itself opens you to the higher Power, even if there is no corresponding result in the person prayed for. Nothing can be positively said about that, for the result must necessarily depend on the persons, whether they are open or receptive or something in them can respond to any Force the prayer brings down.

Sympathy for Others

By the sympathy you get into contact and receive what is in the other — or also you may give or let go or have drawn from you part of your force which goes to the other. It is the vital sympathy which has this effect; a calm spiritual or psychic goodwill does not bring these reactions.

*

Yes, it is dangerous [*to sympathise with someone who has gone wrong*], because it puts one in touch with the adverse Force that upset him and that Force at once tries to touch you and make its suggestions and contaminate by a sort of contagion or infection.

Mothering Others

You need not trouble yourself much about X's ideas or attach

importance to them. The only truth about it is that a vital mixture does very easily get into the movements even of the sadhana, if one is not careful. The one safeguard against that is to turn all towards the Divine and draw all from the Divine, getting rid of attachment, ego and desire. In one's relations with other sadhaks there should be neither stiffness and hardness nor attachment and sentimental leanings.

As for the motherly feeling — it has to be transformed like everything else. The danger of all these relations when they are untransformed is that they may minister in a subtle way to the ego. To avoid that, one has to make oneself an instrument merely, but without even the ego of the instrument, and to be conscious of the source, not insisting on the action or any relation, but simply allowing it to be useful whenever one can clearly feel that it is intended. Also one must be careful that no force comes through one except the right forces, those which are in harmony with the higher consciousness and help. If one does always in that spirit and with that care, then even if mistakes are made, it does not matter — the growing consciousness will set them right and progress towards a more perfect working.

*

The real failing of the motherlike ambition — at least as it manifests in many — is that it conceals an ego movement, the desire to play a big part, to have people depending on one, to have the motherly reputation etc. etc. Most human altruism has really this ego basis. If one gets rid of that, then the will to help can take its true place as a movement of pure sympathy and psychic feeling.

Working with Others

Work is always best done in silence except so far as it is necessary to speak for the work itself. Conversation is best kept for leisure hours. So nobody should object to your silence during work.

For the rest what you should do is to keep your right attitude towards the others and not allow yourself to be upset, irritated

or displeased by anything they may say or do — in other words keep the *samatā* and universal goodwill proper to a sadhak of Yoga. If you do that and still others get upset or displeased, you must not mind as you will not be responsible for their wrong reaction.

*

I have read your letter and I understand now what it is that you find trying — but they do not seem to us such serious things as to be rightly felt as a cause of disturbance. They are the kind of inconveniences that one always has when people live and work together. It arises from a misunderstanding between two minds or two wills, each pulling his own way and feeling hurt or vexed if the other does not follow. This can only be cured by a change of consciousness — for when one goes into a deeper consciousness, first, one sees the cause of these things and is not troubled; one acquires an understanding, patience and tolerance that makes one free from vexation and other reactions. If both or all grow in consciousness, then there arises a mutual understanding of each other's view-points which makes it easier to bring in harmony and smooth working. It is this that should be sought by the change within — to create the same harmony from outside by exterior means is not so easy, as the human mind is stiff in its perceptions and the human vital insistent on its own way of action. Let this be your main will — to grow yourself within and let the clearer and deeper consciousness come and have a good will for the same change to come in others so that clarity and harmony may come in the place of friction and misunderstanding.

Dispersion through Contact with Others

Dispersion and sadhana are two things that cannot go together. In sadhana one has to have a control over the mind and all its actions; in dispersion one is on the contrary controlled and run away with by the mind and unable to keep it to its subject. If the mind is to be always dispersed, then you can't concentrate

on reading either or any other occupation, you will be fit for nothing except perhaps talking, mixing, flirting with women and similar occupations.

*

You are mistaken in thinking that the sadhana of X, Y and Z does not suffer by the dispersion of their minds in all directions. They would have been far farther on the path if they did a concentrated Yoga—even Y who has an enormous receptivity and is eager for progress might have gone thrice as far as he has done. Moreover, your nature is intense in all it does and it was therefore quite its natural path to take the straight way. Naturally, when once the higher consciousness is settled and both the vital and physical sufficiently ready for the sadhana to go on of itself, strict tapasya will no longer be necessary. But till then we consider it very useful and helpful and in many cases indispensable. But we do not insist on it when the nature is not willing. I see too that those who get into the direct line (there are not as yet very many), get of themselves the tendency to give up these mind-dispersing interests and occupations and throw themselves fully into the sadhana.

*

Yes, certainly, dispersion is an inner fact. But certain outer things help the dispersion of the consciousness and if anybody like X says that he is not dispersed when he is wandering about with a companion like Y, I would say he is either not telling the truth or he is deceiving himself. If one is always in the inner consciousness, then one can be not dispersed even when doing outward things—or if one is conscious of the Divine at all times and in all one does, then also can one read newspapers or do much correspondence without dispersion. But even then though there is not dispersion, yet there is less intensity of consciousness when reading a newspaper or writing a letter than when one is not putting part of oneself into quite external things. It is only when the consciousness is quite *siddha* that there is not even this difference. That does not mean one should not do external

things at all, for then one gets no training in joining the two consciousnesses. But one must recognise that certain things do disperse the consciousness or lower it or externalise it more than others. Especially one should not deceive or pretend to oneself that one is not dispersed by them when one is. As for the people who want to draw others to the Yoga, I should say that if they draw themselves nearer to the inner goal that would be a much more fruitful activity. And in the end it would “draw” much more people and in a better way than the writing of many letters.

*

To be too sensitive and upset by any contact is excessive; but to have too many contacts and be always dispersing oneself prevents the sadhana from growing and solidifying in the inner being, since one is always being pulled out into the ordinary outer consciousness.

Mixing with Others

It is true that mixing with others too closely tends to lower the condition, if they are not themselves in the right attitude and live very much in the vital. In all contacts what you have to do is to remain within, keep a detached attitude and not allow yourself to be troubled by the difficulties that arise in work or the movements of people, but keep yourself the true movement. Do not be caught by the desire to “help” others — do and speak yourself the right thing from the inner poise and leave the help to come to them from the Divine. Nobody can really help — only the Divine Grace.

*

It might not be prudent to mix freely and too often. Enough to relieve any tension of the sadhana, but not so much as to dissipate its intensity.

*

Aloofness is very necessary at certain stages of the sadhana, —

but it cannot be maintained all through. One must be able to mix with others and act on them.

*

It is right to mix a little with the others — it helps to keep the balance.

*

You are quite right. Not to mix with others deprives of the test which contact with them imposes on the consciousness and the chance to progress in these respects. Mixing is unprofitable from the spiritual point of view when it is only to indulge the vital, chat, interchange vital movements etc.; but abstention from all mixing and contact is also not desirable. It is only when the consciousness truly needs a full retirement that such retirement can be made and even then it may be full, but not absolute. For in the absolute retirement one lives a purely subjective life and the opportunity for extending the spiritual progress to the outer life and testing it thoroughly is not there.

It is good that you got quickly the right attitude to what had happened; that indicates a good progress in the consciousness.

*

To be able to remain back [*while conversing with others*], entering only superficially without being involved is really the first step towards the secret of mixing with others without lowering the inner consciousness.

Vital Expansiveness

That [*mixing with people, laughing and joking with them*] is a kind of vital expansiveness, it is not vital strength — this expansiveness is also expensive. For when there is this mixing, the vitally strong get strength from it but the vitally weak expend what strength they have and become weaker.

*

I think no rule can be laid down applicable to all. There are some who have the expansive tendency of the vital, others who have the concentrative. The latter are absorbed in their own intensity of endeavour and certainly they gather from that a great force for progress and are saved the expense and loss of energy which frequently comes to the more communicative and also make themselves less open to reactions from others (though this cannot be altogether avoided). The others need to communicate what is in them and cannot wait for the full fullness before they use what they have. Even they may need to give out as well as to take in in order to progress. The only thing is that they must balance the two tendencies, concentrating to receive from above as much or more than they open sideways to distribute.

*

X has a very strong and expansive vital, so it is quite natural that if he likes anybody he can produce this kind of effect on him by meeting. But I do not know that he is conscious of what he gives or receives; it is more likely a spontaneous action. He is not accustomed to give only though, for a strong expansive vital as opposed to a strong self-contained one needs to receive as well as to give.

*

As for living a free outer life it cannot be said that that is good for everybody at every stage any more than living a retired life is good for everybody or at every stage. The disadvantage of a free jolly outward social life without restrictions is that one becomes entirely or mostly externalised and that all sorts of vital interchanges are part of it which can hamper the inner growth or the total self-consecration to the Divine. The disadvantage of too complete a retirement is that it makes the person one-sided and shut up in himself, subjective, without the stabilising contact with earth and consequently with the danger of morbidity and self-delusion. A middle path with the rule of living more and more within, standing back from outward things but not throwing them aside, looking at them with a new consciousness,

a new view and acting on them from this inner consciousness is the best way. But there is need for some at some stages to minimise outward contacts without abolishing them during part of the process of this shifting of the consciousness. No absolute rule can be laid down in this matter.

Vital Interchange

Whenever one mixes with others, things are passing from one to the other. If I talk with a number of people, I bring away with me in my atmosphere many forces that were around them; they may affect me or not, but they remain for a time at least. If in that time I speak with another man, he may receive them from me. It is like a man carrying germs with him from a person he has visited; he may not fall ill himself (or he may), but, even if he does not, he can pass them on to another man he visits afterwards — who falls ill. It is the same thing here in the supraphysical parts.

*

There is always an interchange of vital forces going on between people. If you sit near one who is weak and depressed and needs vital force, you may have your forces pulled from you by his or her need and yourself feel depressed or weak or empty.

*

Small energies of that kind [*vital influences*] are always coming out from people and, if there is a connection, they can flow into another person sitting near. One has to live in one's own consciousness and reject all such interchanges, accepting only what comes from the Mother.

*

If someone throws something on you, you should throw it away and not keep it. It is like mud thrown on the body — immediately one washes it off.

*

You have to find that out [*which people are bad influences*] for yourself. There are people you mix with who have doubts, suggestions, depressions, jealousies, dissatisfactions with the Mother's action. They can easily throw that on you without intending it. These influences are all around in the atmosphere. It is not sufficient to avoid this or that person. You have to learn to be on your guard and self-contained.

*

When one is with another for some time, talking etc., there is always some vital interchange unless one rejects what comes from the other, instinctively or deliberately. If one is impressionable, there may be a strong influence or impression from the other. Then if one goes to another person, it is possible to pass it on to that other; that is a thing which is constantly happening. But these things happen automatically — without the knowledge of the transmitter. When one is conscious, one can prevent it happening.

*

No, people are not conscious of these things, only a few are.¹ The vital exchange is there, but they are not aware of it — because they live in the external mind (physical) and these things go on behind. Even if they feel more energetic after an interchange or depressed or tired, they would not attribute it to the talk or contact, because the interchange is unconscious, their external mind in which they live not being aware of it.

*

I don't suppose people are at all aware of this occult commerce [*of vital energies*]. Some like Daudet may observe the expenditure or throwing out of forces, but not the pulling or the effect on others. The idea of mental interchange is familiar though only of the superficial kind, not the silent action of mind on

¹ *The correspondent wrote that while talking with others he was often conscious of an exchange of vital energies. Sometimes he felt that energy was emptying out of him, sometimes that it was entering in. — Ed.*

mind which is always going on, but the vital impacts are known only to a few occultists. If one becomes very conscious one can become aware of the forces acting in and from all around, e.g. forces of joy or depression or anger.

*

The utility [*of knowing the effects of a vital interchange with someone*] depends upon the development of an inner power based upon peace which will act upon these things and prevent them. So long as one is unconscious, one undergoes the action in the Ignorance and there is no possibility of going out of the circle because there is no knowledge. The consciousness comes with a growing inner development in the being which makes the peace, the liberation a necessity — with that one opens to a higher Force of a new consciousness which puts an end to the vital interchange and creates a new poise for the vital as well as the mental life. If one stops with the increased sensitivity and does not go farther, then of course there is no proper use of it. There are some people like X and Y who got so absorbed in the “occult” knowledge that they stopped there going round and round in it and making all sorts of blunders because the spiritual light was not there. One has not to stop there, but go on and beyond to the spiritual consciousness and the greater light, strength and poise it brings.

*

The consciousness of these things [*such as the forces one feels coming from others*] is intended for knowledge — a psycho-occult knowledge, necessary for the fullness of consciousness and experience. It is not intended that what is felt should be allowed to become an influence, whether a good one or a bad one.

*

There must necessarily be a difference between the vital energy of a cultured and well-educated man and of one who is rough and ignorant. If nothing else, a greater refinement and subtlety in the vital substance and therefore in the energy is there. Drinking

if excessive affects the substance and quality of the energy — but probably a moderate drinking and smoking would have a less perceptible effect. I don't think people in ordinary life notice clearly, but they have often a general impression which they cannot explain or particularise.

*

It is mainly an inner guard that you must keep. At the same time, if you feel unease in crowds it is better to avoid them — except in case of music if you feel secure there. A crowd of people engaged in purely social interchange is necessarily on a lower level of consciousness in which undesirable forces may move, if there is anyone there open to them, and one who is in a stage of consciousness opening to higher things but not yet fixed in steady and self-supporting calm is safer away from it.

In sadhana one is supposed to keep outward forces at a distance or at least not to allow them to invade one. If one faces a difficulty in the right spirit and overcomes it, naturally one progresses, but that is a different thing from letting alien forces or influences enter into the conscious being. No one need invite that, — they are only too ready to do it without being invited. One can look at and become conscious of all forces, even the worst, darkest and most hostile, provided one remains on guard and refuses all credence or support to their suggestions and rejects all claim of theirs to a place in the consciousness and nature. But all cannot do that in the earlier stages.

*

It is not necessary to be so careful as all that.² Ordinary vital interchanges are of a slight character. Nobody can take away another's vital, for the very good reason that if that happened, the person from whom it was taken would die. It is possible of course for one person to drain another's vital forces so as to leave him limp or weak or dry, but it is only the vampire kind

² *The correspondent had been warned about someone who could "take away one's vital when he talks". If that is possible, he said, then one must be very careful in one's exchange with others. — Ed.*

that do that. It is possible also for one to give out too much of one's vital forces so as to weaken oneself or exhaust of energy, a thing which should not be done, — it is only those who know how to draw or can draw freely from the universal vital Force and replenish their life energies that can give out freely. All of course draw to some extent, otherwise they would not remain alive, for expenditure of vital energy is always going on and one has to replace it; but for most the capacity for drawing is limited and the capacity for giving without exhaustion is also limited.

But the ordinary movements of interchange are harmless provided they are kept within moderate limits. What creates a difficulty in the sadhana is that one may easily draw in undesirable influences or pass them on to others. It is the reason why at certain stages a limitation of talk, intercourse etc. is often advisable. But the true remedy is to become inwardly conscious, to know and be able to repel any undesirable incursion or influence, to be able when speaking, mixing etc. to keep a defence round one and allow to pass in only what one can accept and nothing else. Also to measure what one can give out safely and what one cannot. When one has the consciousness and the practice, this working becomes almost automatic.

*

As for what you say about the stimulus of vital interchange, it is true of the vital life. Men are constantly spending their vital energy and need to renew it; one way to do it is by pulling from others in a vital interchange. This however is not necessary if one knows how to draw from the universal Nature or from the Divine, i.e. from above. Moreover when the psychic is active — there is always more lost than gained by the vital interchange.

*

I suppose it depends upon the person [*whether contact with him is harmful*] and upon your reactions to him. If he gives sex vibrations or is an appropriator of vital energy, then opening to him may not be good. But in the ordinary superficial interchange

one need not lose anything or what is lost is so little and so automatically repaired that it does not matter.

*

It is not that you have to speak to no one—that is not possible. But you must keep your body free and pure and reject all vital interchanges with men—do not speak too much or freely; do not allow yourself too much freedom or laughter, be simple and quiet and straight in all your actions and behaviour. Touch no sadhak and let none touch you. Above all, turn to the Divine only and form no relations or attachments with others.

*

It [*intimate vital contact with another person*] gives a temporary pleasure, but that does not last and it is certainly not profitable. After a time the vital interchange can no longer satisfy and the vital itself gets tired of it and turns away elsewhere. Of course for the spiritual aim it is a great interference.

*

A human vital interchange cannot be a true support for the sadhana and is, on the contrary, sure to impair and distort it, leading to self-deception in the consciousness and a wrong turn of the emotional being and vital nature.

Talking, Letter-Writing and Vital Interchange

It is quite possible for one person to get depressed by talking with another. Talking means a vital interchange, so that can always happen. Whether they have observed rightly in a particular case is another matter.

*

The disturbance in talking to people comes of course because they throw their own vibrations upon you and revive your old movements. Once the true consciousness is well fixed in your

physical being, that effect need no longer happen.

*

To discuss with others, especially when they are in a bad state, is always a mistake. It is very easy for the disturbance in them to fall upon you while you speak even without your noticing it; it is afterwards that you feel it. That is why I told you to ignore X and what he says when he is in a bad state.

*

Every letter means an interchange with the person who writes it—for something is there behind the words, something of his person or of the forces he has put out or had around him while writing. Our thoughts and feelings are also forces and can have effects upon others. One has to grow conscious of the movement of these forces and then one can control one's own mental and vital formations and cease to be affected by those of others.

Talking or Thinking about Others

Talking about somebody may very well have an effect on him; it often does, for it can be an effective formulation of a thought or feeling which, so embodied, will reach him. But I don't suppose mere mechanical thoughts or ill-formed imaginations would do that—at any rate it must be rare and need exceptional conditions or a play of forces in which a trifle counts.

*

Yes, one's bad thoughts and good thoughts can have a bad or a good effect on others, though they have not always because they are not strong enough—but still that is the tendency. It is therefore always said by those who have this knowledge that we should abstain from bad thoughts of others for this reason. It is true that both kinds of thought come equally to the mind in its ordinary state; but if the mind and mental will are well developed, one can establish a control over one's thoughts as well as over one's acts and prevent the bad ones from having

their play. But this mental control is not enough for the sadhak. He must attain to a quiet mind and in the silence of the mind receive only the Divine thought-forces or other divine Forces and be their field and instrument.

To silence the mind it is not enough to throw back each thought as it comes, that can only be a subordinate movement. One must get back from all thought and be separate from it, a silent consciousness observing the thoughts if they come, but not oneself thinking or identified with the thoughts. Thoughts must be felt as outside things altogether. It is then easier to reject thoughts or let them pass without their disturbing the quietude of the mind.

Not to be disturbed by either joy or grief, pleasure or displeasure by what people say or do or by any outward things is called in Yoga a state of *samatā*, equality to all things. It is of immense importance in sadhana to be able to reach this state. It helps the mental quietude and silence as well as the vital to come. It means indeed that the vital itself and the vital mind are already falling silent and becoming quiet. The thinking mind is sure to follow.

The Drawing of Vital Forces by Others

When people mix together there is generally some interchange of vital forces which is quite involuntary. X himself suffers from physical weakness and he complains of his vital forces being drawn out of him without knowing why it happens. Vampirising is a special phenomenon — a person who lives upon the vital of others and flourishes vitally at their expense.

*

The tired feeling which the people felt after seeing this X is a sign of vampirism, but very often there is no such feeling but there is an after-effect on the whole. The nerves get gradually wrong — what is called the nervous envelope becomes weak or in one way or another the vitality becomes weak or gets into an abnormal condition — excitable and unstable. There are many

such ways in which the effect shows itself. Sex-vampirism is a different matter — in sex interchange the normal thing is to give and take, but the sex-vampire eats up the other's vital and gives nothing or very little.

*

There is always a drawing of vital forces from one to another in all human social mixture; it takes place automatically. Love-making is one of the most powerful ways of each drawing up the other's vital force, — or of one drawing the other's, which also often happens in a one-sided way to the great detriment of the "other". In the passage come many things good and bad, elation, feelings of strength, fullness, support or weakness and depletion, infiltration of good and bad qualities, interchange of psychological moods, states and movements, ideas helpful and harmful, depression, exhaustion — the whole gamut. In the ordinary consciousness one is not aware of these things; the effects come into the surface being, but the cause and process remain unknown and unnoticed because the interchange is subtle and covert, it takes place through what is called the subconscious, but is rather a behind-consciousness covered by the surface waking mind. When one gets into a certain Yogic consciousness, one becomes very much aware of this covert movement, very sensitive to all this interchange and action and reaction; but one has this advantage that one can consciously build a wall against them, reject, refuse, accept what helps, throw out or throw back what injures or hinders. Illnesses can also pass in this way from one to another, even those which are not medically regarded as contagious or infectious; one can even by will draw another's illness into oneself as did Antigonus of Macedon accepting death in this way in order to save his son Demetrius. This fact of vital interchange, which seems strange and unfamiliar to you, becomes quite intelligible if one realises that ideas, feelings etc. are not abstract things but in their way quite concrete, not confining their movements to the individual's mind or body but moving out very much like the "waves" of science and communicating themselves to anyone who can serve as a receiver. Just as people

are not conscious of the material waves, so it is and still more with these mental or vital waves; but if the subtle mind and senses become active on the surface—and that is what takes place in Yoga—then the consciousness becomes aware in its reception of them and records accurately and automatically their vibrations.

*

It is quite possible that X pulls [*vital energy*] unconsciously, as he is vitally weak and people who are vitally weak do unconsciously and automatically pull on others.

Limiting Contacts with Others

It is certainly a great help to be able to limit one's contacts provided it is not carried too far. I must note however that even with limited contacts undesirable waves can get in—it is a measure of precaution but does not make you absolutely safe. On the other hand complete withdrawal carries one to another extreme and has its own dangers. The complete safety from “stuff” distracting, disturbing, externalising etc., can only come from a growth of the consciousness within. In the interim absorption and limitation of contacts like that can be a helpful measure if used in a judicious way.

*

One has to go inside into the inner being and one can minimise contacts, *if necessary*, not as an absolute rule—provided there is a real living in the inner being and sufficient contact with outside things not to lose one's hold of practical realities. But if there is an isolation which brings depression, inertia, unhappiness, gloom or else morbidity of any kind, then it is evident that the retirement is not wholesome.

*

The avoiding of contacts does not by itself bring the fundamental immunity, it is only a change of that part of the consciousness

that can do it. But it may be advisable to minimise the contacts that strongly bring the trouble so long as the change is not there. It is not certain that a long retirement brings about the change of the subconscious, — the long retirement of the Sannyasin is part preparation of a retirement from life altogether — it is different in our Yoga which wants to change, but not reject life.

*

It is true that one has to try to keep the inner condition under all circumstances, even the most adverse; but that does not mean that one has to accept, unnecessarily, unfavourable conditions when there is no good reason for their being allowed to go on. Especially, the nervous system and the physical cannot bear an excessive strain as well as the mind and higher vital; your fatigue came from the strain of living in one consciousness and at the same time exposing yourself too much to prolonged contacts from the ordinary consciousness. A certain amount of self-defence is necessary — so that the consciousness may not be pulled down or out constantly into the ordinary atmosphere or the physical strained by being forced into activities that have become foreign to you. Those who practise Yoga often seek refuge in solitude from these difficulties; that is unnecessary here, but all the same you need not submit to being put under this kind of useless strain always.

Inner Detachment Preferable to Outer Withdrawal

Inner withdrawal is always much better than physical withdrawal.

*

I say that all that [*no vital relations with anyone*] is magnificent, if you can do it. But can't you see that it is the inward change that is wanted — the inward plunge? These dramatic outward breaks lead only to new joinings. Neither you nor she can keep it up. If there comes a strong ingoing movement, then it is another matter. That of itself would make it possible to readjust the

relations or to withdraw if necessary. But splashings about on the surface — will it lead to anything? It does not look like it.

*

It is not a physical retirement that is needed, but an inner detachment from the mental formations and vital desires. To find the real self above and within and live in that, not in the mind's conceptions or the vital's reactions. These must be observed and looked at not as one's own but as movements of a surface ignorant nature.

Qualified Utility of Retirement for Sadhana

You can see whether such a retirement suits you or not. It is not the same for all. Most cannot stand retirement.

There is no harm in that kind of seclusion [*to find a deeper contact with the Mother*] and it can help provided you maintain the inner peace and a simple quietude turned towards the Mother.

*

We have no objection to your doing this [*withdrawing from social contacts*] for a week, as you propose; I understand that it is not a retirement, but a cessation of social visits. My objection to retirement is that so many have “gone morbid” by it or gone astray into zones of false vital experiences; secondly, that absolute retirement is not necessary for the spiritual life. It is different however for people like X who are to the manner born or at least perfectly trained. A “restriction of publicity” is quite another matter. Also to be capable of solitude and to have the Ananda of solitude can always be helpful to sadhana, and a power of inner solitude is natural to the Yogi.

We will give our help and hope you will succeed — at least, you will have established a precedent for withdrawing whenever you want in the future.

*

Retirement is not necessary for passing from one plane to another. It is needed only in rare cases and with certain temperaments for a time.

*

The impulse to retire comes from some push to concentrate within—but the cause of the push varies in different cases. There are certain cases in which there was a desire to isolate oneself from the Mother's influence (Pranam, meditation etc.) and follow one's own fancies, e.g. X, Y, also perhaps with a sense of superiority = "no need of these things for so great a Yogi as I". In other cases there was a marked desire for isolation, but that was where the brain was already upset (Z) or a wrong influence at work (A). But others have simply desired concentration or wished not to spend themselves in externalisation (B, C in their periods of retirement). So all cannot come under one sentence.

*

How are you going to find the right external relations by withdrawing altogether from external relations? And how do you propose to be *thoroughly* transformed and unified by living only in the internal life, without any test of the transformation and unity by external contact and the ordeals of the external work and life? Thoroughness includes external work and relations and not a retired inner life only.

It is only by the vital ego giving up its demands and claims and the reactions these produce when not satisfied, that the transformation and unification can come, and there is no other way.

*

You must make up your mind what you want. There is no harm in drawing back from all vital and physical relations and wanting only the true relation—that is in fact what happens to everybody who wants the true relation—the only thing kept is the universal goodwill (not vital affection) to all. But if you swing about from one mood to another—then of course they

will not understand and have some ground to say that they are perplexed by your variations. This matter of touching and caressing is one on which you ought to take a firm and unvarying stand. If you don't want it, you should repel it always with the utmost firmness, otherwise there will necessarily be clash and disturbance. All depends upon your inner will and establishing a unity of will in yourself turned exclusively towards the Divine.

I think I have told you that an *entire* physical retirement is seldom healthy, although a comparative retirement is often helpful. But the main thing is the *inner* detachment and complete turning to the Divine.

Dangers of Complete Retirement

To live in the self is of course the proper object of withdrawal and to live in the self brings the higher experiences which must obviously be helpful and not harmful. What I wrote was only to explain what I meant by the danger of too complete retirement and why it turned out to be harmful to X, Y and others. There are some like Z who derived unmixed profit from it. It altogether depends on one's temperament and on one's attitude and aim and inner poise during the silence.

*

Retirement in the sense of all meditation without work is not suitable to this sadhana — it is one-sided and those who resort to it, unless they are very strong, often lose their balance.

*

To have no contact with people and shut oneself entirely is not healthy. But one can for a time diminish outward contacts so as to concentrate.

*

I doubt whether an entire retirement is very healthy except for certain people who have a contemplative nature coupled with a very sound and solid nervous system and firm balance of the

mind—but a restriction of intercourse so as to go more in oneself and limit or select the contacts often has a good effect.

*

Yes, it is better [*not to talk with others except when necessary*] if you want to do sadhana seriously—but if your vital cannot do without these things, it is no use forcing it. Entire retirement is not good—it makes people morbid and they plunge into a world of imaginations without any check from life and actuality. But to avoid useless talk and unhelpful social interchange is good, if the vital can be made to acquiesce in an applied and serious sadhana.

*

Not speaking or contacting when one is in the intensity of the peace is one thing—that can be done. Remaining isolated at other times as a rule of life does not seem to me necessary—it is safe only for those who can live entirely within without losing their hold on outer reality. If one has always a solid poise of peace one can do that or a clear mind balanced and discriminating along with constant experiences which it is able to put in the right place. But some get absorbed in inner experiences which they get lost in and get passionately attached to and this inner life becomes for them the sole reality without the outer to poise it and keep it under check and test—there lies a danger. Again if one remains isolated without the support of a settled inner poise and constant experience over which one has a discriminating control, then in periods of emptiness the vital can arise bringing struggles, difficulties, unrest, suggestions of all kinds, a troubled and turbid state—rather than spend the time in that, as some do, it is better to mix with others or do some work or otherwise externalise oneself in a healthy way.

*

People will certainly regard it [*maintaining absolute silence*] as unnatural and there will be a lot of hubbub for a time. As to the dangers, the one real danger in these retirements (apart from

the pride) is the becoming a prey of subjective influences and imaginations and losing the hold of reality which work and contact with others help to keep up. Of course one can lose that even while keeping contact as happened to X and others. But I suppose you have a sufficiently cool and critical head to avoid that danger.

*

And if some find that retirement is the best way of giving oneself to the Higher, to the Divine by avoiding as much as possible occasions for the bubbling up of the lower, why not? The aim they have come for is that and why blame or look with distrust and suspicion on the means they find best or daub it with disparaging adjectives to discredit it — grim, inhuman and the rest? It is your vital that shrinks from it and your vital mind that supplies these epithets which express only your shrinking and not what the retirement really is. For it is the vital or the social part of it that shrinks from solitude; the thinking mind does not but rather courts it. The poet seeks solitude with himself or with Nature to listen to his inspiration; the thinker plunges into solitude to meditate on things and commune with a deeper knowledge; the scientist shuts himself up in his laboratory to pore by experiment into the secrets of Nature; these retirements are not grim and inhuman. Neither is the retirement of the sadhak into the exclusive concentration of which he feels the need; it is a means to an end, to the end on which his whole heart is set. As for the Yogin or bhakta who has already begun to have the fundamental experience, he is not in a grim and inhuman solitude. The Divine and all the world are there in the being of the one, the supreme Beloved or his Ananda is there in the heart of the other.

I say this as against your depreciation of retirement founded on ignorance of what it really is; but I do not, as I have often said, recommend a total seclusion, for I hold that to be a dangerous expedient which may lead to morbidity and much error. Nor do I impose retirement on anyone as a method or approve of it unless the person himself seeks it, feels its necessity, has the joy of it and the personal proof that it helps to the spiritual

experience. It is not to be imposed on anyone as a principle, for that is the mental way of doing things, the way of the ordinary mind — it is as a need that it has to be accepted, when it is felt as a need, not as a general law or rule.

Relations in Ordinary Life

The best way to prepare oneself for the spiritual life when one has to live in the ordinary occupations and surroundings is to cultivate an entire equality and detachment and the *samatā* of the Gita with the faith that the Divine is there and the Divine Will at work in all things even though at present under the conditions of a world of Ignorance. Beyond this are the Light and Ananda towards which life is working, but the best way for their advent and foundation in the individual being and nature is to grow in this spiritual equality. That would also solve your difficulty about things unpleasant and disagreeable. All unpleasantness should be faced with this spirit of *samatā*.

*

When one is living in the world, one cannot do as in an Asram — one has to mix with others and keep up outwardly at least ordinary relations with others. The important thing is to keep the inner consciousness open to the Divine and grow in it. As one does that, more or less rapidly according to the inner intensity of the sadhana, the attitude towards others will change. All will be seen more and more in the Divine and the feeling, action, etc. will more and more be determined, not by the old external reactions, but by the growing consciousness within you.

*

The difficulty which you experience from relatives and others is always one that intervenes as an obstacle when one has to practise the sadhana in ordinary or unfavourable surroundings. The only way to escape from it is to be able to live in oneself in one's inner being — which becomes possible when the responsiveness and luminosity of which you speak in your letter increase and

become normal, for then you are constantly aware of your inner being and even live in it — the outer becomes an instrument, a means of communication and action in the outer world. It is then possible to make the relations with people outside free from tie or necessary reaction — one can determine from within one's own reaction or absence of reaction; there is a fundamental liberation from the external nexuses, — of course, if one wills it to be so.

*

The life of *samsāra* is in its nature a field of unrest — to go through it in the right way one has to offer one's life and actions to the Divine and pray for the peace of the Divine within. When the mind becomes quiet, one can feel the Divine Mother supporting the life and put everything into her hands.

*

In her condition the one thing by which she can enter into the sadhana is to remember the Divine always, taking her difficulties as ordeals to be passed through, to pray constantly and seek the Divine help and protection and ask for the opening of her heart and consciousness to the supporting Divine Presence.

Chapter Three

Problems in Human Relations

Hatred and Dislike

That is quite right.¹ Only those who sympathise can help — surely also one should be able to see the faults of others without hatred. Hatred injures both parties, it helps none.

*

It is this feeling of dislike that must have been the ground for the attack to come in. All feelings of dislike for other sadhaks should be absolutely rejected. Each has his own nature, his own difficulties and has to struggle out of them with the Divine Help. Defects and limitations in them should not be made a ground for dislike.

*

These things [*reasons for disliking someone*] are not sufficient to justify dislike. These dislikes come from some vital feeling and these reasons put forward by the mind are excuses, not the real cause. This collaboration between the mind and the vital, the vital throwing up the wrong movement, the mind justifying it, is one of the chief difficulties in the way of getting rid of the vital deviations.

*

All antagonism to other sadhaks or dislike of them should go. There should be a calm goodwill and charity to all, but no inner mixing or interchange. Liking and disliking always means interchange of influences.

*

¹ *The correspondent said that he preferred to encourage a fellow sadhak for his good points rather than to hate him for his defects. — Ed.*

You can disapprove [*of what people say*], but there should be no feeling of dislike or disgust for the people.

*

The disgust should be for what is said, but not against those who say it.

*

Yes. One should not do to others what one cannot bear from others.

*

The position you took finally about what happened today is the right one — to make the effort for one's own perfection and not to be disturbed by any mistake in others but reply by a silent will for their perfection also is always the right attitude.

Quarrels and Clashes

Quarrels and clashes are a proof of absence of the Yogic poise and those who seriously want to do Yoga must learn to grow out of these things. It is easy enough not to clash when there is no cause for strife or dispute or quarrel; it is when there is cause and the other side is impossible and unreasonable that one gets the opportunity of rising above one's vital nature.

*

Well, I have said already that quarrels, cuttings are not a part of sadhana; the clashes and friction that you speak of are, just as in the outside world, rubbings of the vital ego. Antagonisms, antipathies, dislikes, quarrellings can no more be proclaimed as part of sadhana than sex impulses or acts can be part of sadhana. Harmony, goodwill, forbearance, equanimity are necessary ideals in the relation of sadhak with sadhak. One is not bound to mix, but if one keeps to oneself, it should be for reasons of sadhana, not out of other motives, — moreover it should be without any sense of superiority or contempt for others. The

cases of friction you speak of seem to me to arise from ordinary motives of discord and they are certainly not the results of any spiritual Force working to heal the dangers of social or vital attraction by the blessings (!) of personal discord. If somebody finds that association with another for any reason raises undesirable vital feelings in him or her, he or she can certainly withdraw from that association as a matter of prudence until he or she gets over the weakness. But ostentation of avoidance, public cuttings etc. are not included in the necessity and betray feelings that equally ought to be overcome. There is a great confusion of thought about these things — for the vital gets in the way and disturbs the right view of things. It is only what is done sincerely with a sound spiritual motive that is proper to Yoga. The rest cannot be claimed as the working of a spiritual force mysteriously advancing its ends by ways contrary to its own nature.

*

Yes — self-justification [*in a quarrel*] keeps the thing going because it gives a mental support. Self-justification is always a sign of ego and ignorance. When one has a wider consciousness, one knows that each one has his own way of looking at things and finds in that way his own justification, so that both parties in a quarrel believe themselves to be in the right. It is only when one looks from above in a consciousness clear of ego that one sees all sides of a thing and also their real truth.

*

These results [*unhappiness, dullness, obscurity*] are not a punishment, they are a natural result of yielding to egoism. All quarrels proceed from egoism which pushes its own opinion and affirms its own importance, considering that it is right and everybody else wrong and thus creates anger and sense of injury etc. These things must not be indulged, but rejected at once.

*

You must remember that anger creates an atmosphere which

spreads and gets hold of those around. If you give free vent to your anger, that spirit catches hold of others who are open to it like *X* and makes them also angry and violent. *X*'s conduct has been serious, but the best way is to show your superiority to him by mastering your own anger. Going outside won't cure this weakness of yours. You must conquer it here in yourself — otherwise it will go wherever you go and create trouble for you.

*

As to *X* and *Y*, I entirely disapprove of *Y*'s action. Violence and blows are out of place in the Yoga. It is not by these means or by any physical or external impulsion or pressure that sadhana can be enforced but only by a psychic or other inner influence. On the other hand *X* ought to be less undisciplined and to put a curb on his temper which seems to be much too fiery; but he must do it himself by his own will, recognising that self-control and self-mastery are necessary even in the ordinary life and still more necessary — quite indispensable — in Yoga.

*

X's vision of *Y* and the spirit among you which it expresses belong to the old quarrelling egoistic movement that spoils your sadhana. It does not matter whether the vision has some foundation or none. Neither he nor anyone else need trouble about *Y* and his defects which are not your concern. If you start this kind of thing again, you are likely to fall back into the same blunders and lose your sadhana.

Obviously, if *Y* indulges the passions of which you speak, it is not surprising that his illnesses continue; they must be the physical expression of his vital disturbances. But on the other hand, *Z* too must understand that he is not to indulge his former obscure arrogance which made him pose as a spiritual head leading people to me. He should understand that there is only one Power at work and neither *Z* nor *Y* nor anybody else matters. Let each one open himself to the working of that Power in him and let there be no attempt at forming a body of sadhakas with somebody leading or intervening between the one Power and

the sadhakas. In that way there will be no room for rivalry or collision between opposing vital egoisms.

*

I am afraid that when vital passion disturbs the atmosphere, people very easily lose right perception and the sense of the thing that ought to be done, even those who are only or should be only onlookers. In this case everybody seems to have done and said or thought what ought not to have been thought and said and done. For you, however, looking at it from your standpoint only, the best thing is not to brood on these things, but to turn away from the memory of them altogether; for brooding on them only prolongs the inner consequences of a mistaken, disturbing and painful movement. There is no need that you should apologise for anything; what we should advise is to bury the past episode and its mistakes and return to normal undisturbing relations. Fix yourself more in an inner life and its opening to your soul's future.

*

It is better not to involve oneself in the dispute and to leave the combatants to throw their brahmastras at each other, oneself safe in a calm and judicious indifference. It is also the attitude most helpful to the sadhana. Of opinions and discussions there is no end and it is much better to remain inside and advance towards another light than the mind's — though there is more fire of a smoky kind than light in these discussions.

*

It is not always possible in life and work to avoid friction and collision; but it can be minimised or deprived of its worst developments if one has a large understanding of the men around one with whom one has to deal and acts in that spirit. If on the other hand one sticks to one's own position, done without regard for the standpoint of others, that creates resistance and friction.

Fault-Finding and Criticism

There is no harm in seeing and observing [*the behaviour of others*] if it is done with sympathy and impartiality — it is the tendency unnecessarily to criticise, find fault, condemn others (often quite wrongly) which creates a bad atmosphere both for oneself and others. And why this harshness and cocksure condemnation? Has not each man his own faults — why should he be so eager to find fault with others and condemn them? Sometimes one has to judge but it should not be done hastily or in a censorious spirit.

*

Men are always more able to criticise sharply the work of others and tell them how to do things or what not to do than skilful to avoid the same mistakes themselves. Often indeed one sees easily in others faults which are there in oneself but which one fails to see. These and other defects such as the last you mention are common to human nature and few escape them. The human mind is not really conscious of itself — that is why in Yoga one has always to look and see what is in oneself and become more and more conscious.

*

In ordinary life people always judge wrongly because they judge by mental standards and generally by conventional standards. The human mind is an instrument not of truth but of ignorance and error.

*

Do not dwell much on the defects of others. It is not helpful. Keep always quiet and peace in the attitude.

*

It is the petty ego in each that likes to discover and talk about the (real or unreal) defects of others — and it does not matter whether they are real or unreal. The ego has no right to judge them, because it has not the right view or the right spirit. It

is only the calm, disinterested, dispassionate, all-compassionate and all-loving Spirit that can judge and see rightly the strength and the weakness in each being.

*

Yes, all that is true. The lower vital takes a mean and petty pleasure in picking out the faults of others and thereby one hampers both one's own progress and that of the subject of the criticism.

*

If you find fault with anybody, that fault is likely to increase in that person and to come also into you.

*

It is true that the habit of gossip and fault-finding with others does interfere because it brings down the consciousness from a higher to a lower level. But I do not think a retirement such as you propose is the way to cure it. It would only be suspended and the tendency come up again when you resumed free intercourse with others. It is on its field itself that it has to be first observed, then cured by detachment from it and rejection of it when it comes. A partial retirement may sometimes be helpful for concentration, — but not for these things; there the only cure is what I suggest or else the descent of a higher consciousness to replace the present imperfect nature.

Benefiting from Criticism

Even sometimes a malignant (not fair or well-intentioned) criticism can be helpful by some aspect of it, if one can look at it without being affected by the unfairness.

*

Naturally, praise and blame may have that effect² (the human

² *The correspondent remarked that praise may lead to pride and vanity, just as blame may lead to resentment and revolt. — Ed.*

nature is more sensitive to these than to almost anything else, more even than to real benefit or injury), unless either equanimity has been established or else there is so entire a confidence and happy dependence upon someone that both praise and blame are helpful to the nature. There are some men who even without Yoga have so balanced a mind that they take and adjudge praise and blame calmly for what they are worth, but that is extremely rare.

Part Three

Sadhana on the Physical, Subconscious and Inconscious Levels

Section One

Sadhana on the Level of the Physical

Chapter One

The Transformation of the Physical

The Need to Transform the Physical

The law of the physical is inertia, dullness, obstruction to whatever is new or not yet established.

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Apart from the individual difficulty there is a general difficulty in the physical earth-nature. Physical nature is slow and inert and unwilling to change; its tendency is to be still and take long periods of time for a little progress. It is very difficult for even the strongest mental or vital or even psychic will to overcome this inertia. It is only by bringing down constantly the consciousness and force and light from above that it can be done. Therefore there must be a constant will and aspiration for that and for the change and it must be a steady and patient will not tired out even by the utmost resistance of the physical nature.

*

It is because your consciousness in the course of the sadhana has come into contact with the lower physical nature and sees it as it is in itself when it is not kept down or controlled either by the mind, the psychic or the spiritual force. This nature is in itself full of low and obscure desires, it is the most animal part of the human being. One has to come into contact with it so as to know what is there and transform it. Most sadhaks of the old type are satisfied with rising into the spiritual or psychic realms and leave this part to itself — but by that it remains unchanged, even if mostly quiescent, and no complete transformation is possible. You have only to remain quiet and undisturbed and let the higher Force work to change this obscure physical nature.

*

There is nothing to be discouraged about. The fact is that after being so long in the mental and vital plane you have become aware of the physical consciousness, and the physical consciousness in everybody is like that. It is inert, conservative, does not want to move, to change — it clings to its habits (what people call their character) or its habits (habitual movements) cling to it and repeat themselves like clockwork in a persistent mechanical way. When you have cleared your vital somewhat, things go down and stick there. You see, if you have become self-conscious, you put pressure, perhaps, but the physical responds very slowly, hardly at first seems to move at all. The remedy? Aspiration steady and unchanging, patient work, wakening the psychic in the physical, calling down the light and force into these obscure parts. The light brings the consciousness of what is there; the force has to follow and work on them till they change or disappear.

*

What you have been doing is to penetrate more into the physical consciousness where the peace and light of the higher consciousness have to be brought down. This often brings at first some relaxation of the intensity of experience, dispersion or recurrence of old movements which had been pushed out from the other levels, but one must not be discouraged by that. The remedy is to be more insistent on bringing down the higher forces (peace etc.) into this field.

*

This negation [*of deeper peace etc.*] is the very nature of the physical resistance and the physical resistance is the whole base of the denial of the Divine in the world. All in the physical is persistent, obstinate, with a massive force of negation and inertia — if it were not so, sadhana would be extremely cursory. You have to face this character of the physical resistance and conquer it however often it may rise. It is the price of the transformation of the earth-consciousness.

*

It is the nature of the physical mind to be obstinate. Physical nature exists by constant repetition of the same thing — only a constant presentation of different forms of itself. This obstinate recurrence is therefore part of its nature when it is in activity; otherwise it remains in a dull inertia. When therefore we want to get rid of the old movements of physical nature, they resist by this kind of obstinate recurrence. One has to be very persistent in rejection to get rid of it.

There are two aspects of physical Nature as of all Nature — the individual and the universal. All things come into one from the universal Nature — but the individual physical keeps some of them and rejects others, and to those it keeps it gives a personal form. So these things can be said to be both inside it and coming outside from within or created by it because it gives a special form and also outside and coming in from outside. But when one wants to get rid of them, one first throws out all that is within into the surrounding Nature — from there the universal Nature tries to bring them back or bring in new and similar things of its own to replace them. One has then constantly to reject this invasion. By constant rejection, the force of recurrence finally dwindles and the individual becomes free and able to bring the higher consciousness and its movements into the physical being.

*

The difference [*between the physical consciousness of those who are doing sadhana and those who are not*] lies in the fact that those who are doing sadhana live on the physical plane in order to transform it — under the pressure of a Force created by the sadhana which urges towards that and must continue till it is achieved. Those who do not do sadhana live on the physical plane not to transform it but to continue it as it is — there is no such Force or pressure or necessity or urge. Those who are not sadhaks but have their minds turned to the higher consciousness are preparing for sadhana and will one day do it — whatever that sadhana may be.

The prevalence of the physical difficulties when one comes

down into the physical is the same phenomenon as the prevalence of the vital difficulties when one is on the vital plane. Transformation implies facing the difficulties and changing or overcoming what arises in each part of the being so that that part may respond to what is higher, but the full change of the whole can only come by the ascent to the Above and the descent from Above. The first step of that (usually though not always) is the realisation of the Self above and the full descent of the higher peace into all the being down to the most physical.

*

For your sadhana it is necessary first to establish the entire openness of the physical being and stabilise in it the descent of calm, strength, purity and joy with the feeling of the presence and working of the Mother's Force in you. It is only on that assured basis that one can become an entirely effective instrument for the work. Once that is done, there is still the dynamic transformation of the instrumental being to achieve and that depends on a descent of a higher and higher power of consciousness into the mind, vital and body — by "higher" being meant nearer and nearer to the supramental Light and Force. But that can only be done on the basis of which I have spoken and with the psychic being constantly in front and acting as an intermediary between the instrumental mind, vital and body and these higher planes of Being. So this basic stabilisation must first be completed.

*

It [*purification of the physical nature*] is rather a necessity of the work itself for the supramental descent. The effect in a particular person will still depend on the person himself though there will be much greater and quicker possibilities than now.

*

It is not possible to bring down the whole power or experience of a higher plane into the physical consciousness; it is only an influence that comes down to help in the transformation. When

the transformation has taken place, the physical will be more capable.

Coming Down into the Physical

I have said that it [*the sadhana*] has come down into direct contact with the external physical nature which is always full of the lower movements and when that happens you see them as they are when they are not under the control of the mind and psychic. Everybody has to come into this direct contact — otherwise there can be no transformation of this part of the being.

*

It is always the effect of the physical consciousness being uppermost (so long as it is not entirely changed) that one feels like this — like an ordinary man or worse, altogether in the outer consciousness, the inner consciousness veiled, the action of Yoga power apparently suspended. This happens in the earlier stages also, but it is not quite complete usually then because something of the mind and vital is active in the physical still or, even if the interruption of sadhana is complete, it does not last long and so one does not so much notice it. But when from the mental and vital stage of the Yoga one comes down into the physical, this condition which is native to the physical consciousness fully manifests and is persistent for long periods. It happens because one has to come down and deal with this part directly by entering into it, — for if that is not done, there can be no complete change of the nature. What has to be done is to understand that it is a stage and to persist in the faith that it will be overcome. If this is done, then it will be easier for the Force, working behind the veil at first, then in front to bring out the Yoga consciousness into this outer physical shell and make it luminous and responsive. If one keeps steadily the faith and quietude, then this can be more quickly done — if the faith gets eclipsed or the quietude disturbed by the long difficulty, then it takes longer but even then it will be done; for, though not felt, the Force is there at

work. It can only be prevented if one breaks away or throws up the sadhana, because one becomes too impatient of the difficulty to go through with it. That is the one thing that should never be done.

*

After receiving your account of your present condition which I understand perfectly well, my advice to you remains the same, to stick on and still stick on persistently until the dawn comes, which it surely will if you resist the temptation to run away into some outer darkness which it would have much more difficulty in reaching. The details you give do not at all convince me that X was right in thinking that your sadhana was not at all in the line of my Yoga or that you are right in concluding that you are not meant for this line. On the contrary, these are things which come almost inevitably in one degree or another at a certain critical stage through which almost everyone has to pass and which usually lasts for an uncomfortably long time but which need not be at all conclusive or definitive. Usually, if one persists, it is the period of darkest night before the dawn which comes to every or almost every spiritual aspirant. It is due to a plunge one has to take into the sheer physical consciousness unsupported by any true mental light or by any vital joy in life, for these usually withdraw behind the veil, though they are not, as they seem to be, permanently lost. It is a period when doubt, denial, dryness, greyness and all kindred things come up with a great force and often reign completely for a time. It is after this stage has been successfully crossed that the true light begins to come, the light which is not of the mind but of the spirit. The spiritual light no doubt comes to some to a certain extent, and to a few to a considerable extent, in the earlier stages, though that is not the case with all — for some have to wait till they can clear out the obstructing stuff in the mind, vital and physical consciousness, and until then they get only a touch now and then. But even at the best this earlier spiritual light is never complete until the darkness of the physical consciousness has been faced and overcome. It is not by one's own fault that one falls into this

state, it can come when one is trying one's best to advance. It does not really indicate any radical disability in the nature but certainly it is a hard ordeal and one has to stick very firmly to pass through it. It is difficult to explain these things because the psychological necessity is difficult for the ordinary human reason to understand or to accept. I will try to have a shot at it, but it may take some days.¹ Meanwhile, as you have asked what is my advice I send you this brief answer.

*

The greater difficulty [*in freeing oneself from vital desire*] is because the sadhana is now taking place directly on the physical plane, where the force of a habit or habitual movement once formed is very great. When the sadhana is taking place on the mental or vital plane, it is more easy to control or change, because the mind and vital are more plastic than the physical. But on the other hand if something is definitely gained on the physical plane, there is a more lasting and complete fulfilment than when it is on the mental or vital alone.

*

The resistance is becoming more of a physical character. That is to be expected, for it is the ordinary course that it is pushed down from the vital into the physical — moreover in the general sadhana now it is in the material and subconscious that the struggle is mainly going on. The part above the neck, like the neck itself, belongs to the externalising mind or physical mental. Your difficulties are likely to cease only when you bring down the peace and wideness into the whole body or at any rate feel its effects there. If the whole mind admits the higher consciousness, that will be a definite step towards this.

*

In dealing with the physical and subconscious the working is always slower than when it acts on the mind and vital because

¹ No subsequent letter of explanation has been found. — Ed.

the resistance of physical stuff is always heavier and less intelligent and adaptable; but as a compensation the work done in the being by this slower movement is in the end more complete, solid and durable.

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You feel as you do only because you are largely identified with the part that has to undergo change and so you feel the difficulty, even the impossibility of changing. But although the difficulty is there, the impossibility does not exist. Even this identification may be helpful, for so the change can be radical by a direct action in the part itself, instead of an indirect influence upon it through the mind or higher vital. Rest and restore your physical forces, open so that the Mother's Force may fully work on you, the trouble pass away and a new and stronger movement commence.

The Bringing of Realisation into the Physical

Yes, certainly, that is what I am insisting on — the bringing of realisation into this inert physical part which has made itself prominent. When any part of the being becomes prominent like this showing all its defects and limitations — here inertia or incapacity (*apraṛṭti*), obscurity or forgetfulness (*apraḥāśa*), it is in order to get set right, — it has come up for a first or preliminary transformation. Peace and light in the mind, love and sympathy in the heart, calm and power in the vital, a settled receptivity and response (*praḥāśa*, *praṛṭti*) in the physical are the necessary change.

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When I explained [*in the preceding letter*] about the physical inertia, I meant that it was this which had been preventing the elimination of the old movements all along and enabled them to return when they had been pushed out — for it is in the material half-conscious or subconscious that there is the bedrock of the resistance. When this comes up and shows itself in its separate existence, not sustained by the mind and vital, acting by the power of its own inertia and not covered by the sanction of the

mind or the vital, only repeating the old movements by force of old habit — it is then possible to meet the resistance at its root instead of cutting off the flowers and fruits and branches when they appear.

It is precisely this lothness to do anything that must be got rid of — for it is simply an acquiescence in the force of the inertia. If you can do nothing else, the old methods of violence to yourself etc. will obviously be unfruitful — you should call on the Divine Peace and Force to descend and deal with it and open yourself to the action. If this obstructing physical is made to admit and respond to that, then the key of the solution will be there.

*

The realisation in the mind of the One brings or ought to bring a certain freedom in the mind, but it is possible for the vital and the body under its impulse to go on having the ordinary movements — for they depend only partially on the mind for their action. They can even carry it away, *haranti prasabham manah*, or they can act in spite of the mind's reasoning and disapprobation. "I see the better and approve it, I follow the worse" as the Roman poet puts it — in the language of the Gita, *anicchannapi balād iva niyojitaḥ*. It is necessary therefore that the realisation with its peace and force of purity should come down concretely into the vital and physical itself so that when the vital movements try to rise they are met by it and unable to remain because of its automatic pressure.

The Physical Sadhana

The physical sadhana is to bring down the higher light and power and peace and Ananda into the body consciousness, to get rid of the inertia of the physical, the doubts, limitations, external tendency of the physical mind, the defective energies of the vital physical (nerves) and bring in instead the true consciousness there so that the physical may be a perfect instrument for the Divine Will. The food and care for the body is only to get it into

good condition, afterwards it would not be necessary to attend to such things.

*

I understand that you have arrived at a prolonged lull or period of emptiness in your sadhana. This often happens especially when one is thrown out into the physical and external consciousness. The nervous and physical parts then become prominent and seem to become the standard of the being with that disappearance of the Yoga consciousness and the sensitiveness to small and outward things which you describe. A stage like this however may very well be an interval before a fresh progress. What you have to do is to insist on making time for meditation — at any time of the day when you are least likely to be disturbed — and through the meditation getting back the touch. There may be some difficulty because the physical consciousness is uppermost, but a persistent aspiration will bring it back. When once you again feel the connection reestablished between the inner being and the outer, call down the peace and light and power into the latter so as to build up a basis for a constant consciousness in the most external mind and being which will accompany you in work and action as much as in meditation and solitude.

*

Don't get disturbed. Remain quiet and let the Force work.

It is the most physical consciousness of which you have become aware; it is like that in almost everyone: when one gets fully or exclusively into it, one feels it to be like that of an animal, either obscure and restless or inert and stupid and in either condition not open to the Divine. It is only by bringing the Force and higher consciousness into it that it can fundamentally alter. When these things show themselves, do not be upset by their emergence, but understand that they are there to be changed.

Here as elsewhere, quiet is the first thing needed, to keep the consciousness quiet, not allow it to get agitated and in turmoil.

Then in the quiet to call for the Force to clear up all this obscurity and change it.

*

It is of course the physical consciousness that always came in with this ignorance, and the physical consciousness *is* stupid and obscure — even in men whose thinking minds are wise or at least intelligent. It is only by the Light from above that it can be illumined. It is always in the Peace and Power, which bring more and more that light, that you must take refuge.

*

“At the mercy of the external sounds and external bodily sensations”, “no control to drop the ordinary consciousness at will”, “the whole tendency of the being away from Yoga” — all that is unmistakably applicable to the physical mind and the physical consciousness when they isolate themselves, as it were, and take up the whole front, pushing the rest into the background. When a part of the being is brought forward to be worked upon for change, this kind of all-occupying emergence, the dominant activity of that part as if it alone existed, very usually happens — and unfortunately it is always what has to be changed, the undesirable conditions, the difficulties of that part which rise first and obstinately hold the field and recur. In the physical it is inertia, obscurity, inability that come up and the obstinacy of these things. The only thing to do in this unpleasant phase is to be more obstinate than the physical inertia and to persist in a fixed endeavour — steady persistency without any restless struggle — to get a wide and permanent opening made even in this solid rock of obstruction.

*

It is just in the physical consciousness that it is difficult to keep the fire burning — the physical can easily follow a constant routine, but not easily maintain a constant living endeavour. Nevertheless it can after a time be made ready to do so. All help will be given you.

*

You have entirely put yourself out in the external physical consciousness which is refusing to open itself on the plea of inability and by saying that all spiritual and inner things are unreal, only what is outward is real. That is what it always does, if you listen to it. But the plea of inability is untrue — and the other is also untrue. The inner, the spiritual, is perfectly true and real to you when you open yourself to it — as real as the physical or outward.

*

When you get the touch, concentrate on opening to it; do not accept the opposite suggestions of the physical consciousness. The whole difficulty comes from your identifying yourself with your external, physical consciousness which is only a small outward part of your self. You have to learn to live in the rest of your being, more real, more inward which is open to the Truth; you will then feel your physical consciousness as something external which can be worked upon through the true consciousness and changed by the Force.

*

It is very good that all should have gone like that and the true consciousness affirmed its control in the physical. These things are indeed attacks intended to prevent the control being established in the physical being as it was in the inner parts. Wherever the physical consciousness opens, the Force can sweep out all that could trouble. Sometimes it takes a little time to overcome the resistance, but finally all disappears before it.

*

Persevere quietly and let nothing discourage you. If the quietness and cheerfulness are not constant yet, that is to be expected; it is always like that at first when there is the working in the physical consciousness and its obstructions. If you persevere, they will become more and more frequent and last for a longer time, until you have a basis of peace and happiness and whatever disturbances come on the surface will no longer be able to penetrate

or shake this basis or even cover it over except perhaps for a moment.

The constant changing of the mood is also common enough because the physical vital is being worked upon at the same time and this changeability is a character of the physical-vital nature. Let not that discourage you, — as soon as the basis is more fixed this will diminish and the vital become more settled and even.

*

The physical consciousness has to become balanced, filled with the light and force from above, conscious and responsive. That cannot be done in a day — so go on steadily and dismiss both discouragement and impatience.

*

It [*the use of violence to change the physical*] was done by some people, but I don't believe in its usefulness. No doubt the physical is an obstinate obstacle, but it must be enlightened, persuaded, pressed even to change, but not oppressed or violently driven. People use violence with the mind, vital, body because they are in a hurry, but my own observation has always been that it leads to more reactions and hindrances and not to a genuinely sound advance.

Chapter Two

Levels of the Physical Being

The Physical Consciousness

A certain inertia, tendency to sleep, indolence, unwillingness or inability to be strong for work or spiritual effort for long at a time, is in the nature of the human physical consciousness. When one goes down into the physical for its change (that has been the general condition here for a long time), this tends to increase. Even sometimes when the pressure of the sadhana on the physical increases or when one has to go much inside, this temporarily increases—the body either needing more rest or turning the inward movement into a tendency to sleep or be at rest. You need not, however, be anxious about that. After a time this rights itself; the physical consciousness gets the true peace and calm in the cells and feels at rest even in full work or in the most concentrated condition and this tendency of inertia goes out of the nature.

*

There are many [*defects of the physical consciousness*]—but mainly obscurity, inertia, *tamas*, a passive acceptance of the play of wrong forces, inability to change, attachment to habits, lack of plasticity, forgetfulness, loss of experiences or realisations gained, unwillingness to accept the Light or to follow it, incapacity (through *tamas* or through attachment or through passive reaction to accustomed forces) to do what it admits to be the Right and the Best.

*

There is always some tendency to looseness, forgetfulness and inattention in the physical consciousness. One has to be very vigilant and careful to prevent this tendency having its way.

*

These are the usual suggestions of the Ignorance in the physical consciousness — everybody in that condition says the same thing, “All the rest are so nicely off, I only am not progressing and there is no hope for me” etc. These things should not be listened to at all.

*

It is an inertia of the physical consciousness which allows these desires to come and does not react against the suggestions; it is that also which responds to the pains and suggestion of illness. But you must not accept the suggestion that you *cannot* react and be free, — the physical consciousness itself cannot as yet, but the will can if it is called on to act and made accustomed to act always. Not the struggling will, but a quiet will insisting on the quietude of the mind and vital and insisting on the rejection of these adverse things. That would soon prove sufficient to hold the ground for the Peace and Force to act and they would do the rest.

*

It is no doubt as you say,¹ but that is always the difficulty of the physical consciousness until it has been enlightened from within. It is the peace you feel — the peace that is taking little by little hold of the inner being — that has to deepen and strengthen itself till it can take hold of the physical also. When it can do that, the externalised physical consciousness will feel it no longer alien to itself. The Peace will enable the Force and Light to enter also into the physical and the true understanding will come there too and remove the sense of distance and difference. That is how the Yoga force always works in principle — but the more the quietude, the more rapidly and surely it will work.

*

It is the last reaction of the physical consciousness [*feeling dull*,

¹ *The correspondent wrote that although she wanted to get rid of her desires, confusions and wrong movements, the outward, physical part of her being wanted to hold on to them. — Ed.*

weak, confused] that must be got rid of — in its place there must be at such times peace constant so that you do not get restless or feel troubled. It is not possible to be always in the best condition of consciousness or sadhana — there are times when the physical needs to be merely quiet, the aspiration becomes quiescent, there is no sense of the Divine, no forward movement. Properly taken, these periods become periods of rest and assimilation but for that the consciousness must learn to be quiet, not to be troubled or thrown back into a bad or uneasy condition — it must remain at repose until the movement is resumed in a quiet peace. Or at least the greater part of the consciousness must feel like that — not even in these periods dull, weak or confused. This feeling seems to be gaining on you, but the physical consciousness or at least a part of it is still uneasy during such intervals. It must go on receiving more of the light and peace till this can no longer happen.

*

There comes for many a stage in the opening of the consciousness when the entrance of any wrong thought or feeling or movement brings an ache or uneasiness or other sign in the body — this is because these movements are becoming foreign to the consciousness, even the physical, and so produce a discomfort.

*

Sometimes when these forces cannot have a success in attacking the vital directly because the psychic rejects the attack, they try to fall on the physical consciousness and the body (the emptiness, headache, disturbance in the chest were that) so as to weaken, if possible, the resistance to their pressure. At such times you must be as quiet as possible and call the Mother. After a time the attacks will not come or will not last.

*

The legs, knees, feet — these indicate the physical consciousness — it was therefore into the obscure layers of the physical consciousness that you went down.

The Mental Physical and the Vital Physical

And how is it possible to perfect the mind and vital unless the physical is prepared? — for there is such a thing as the mental and vital physical, and mind and vital cannot be said to be perfectly prepared until these are ready.

*

The small things go with difficulty because they belong to the vital physical and the things of the physical consciousness are obstinate owing to the great subjection of the physical to the force of habit. All the same the Will can act on them so as to dismiss them either rapidly or by a slow pressure.

*

There is always the conflict between the consciousness that is coming into you and the ignorant consciousness that was there before. The new consciousness is gaining ground always but still against much resistance especially in the vital physical (which is indicated in the stomach attacks). But there is only one way to go and that is to insist always on the Power and Peace which are more and more felt to be always there and more and more dissociate yourself from the other condition. It is on that basis that the right understanding can come.

*

It is something in the vital part of the physical consciousness which has not yet understood — it feels the pressure to change, yet it is drawn outward to people or things in the old way, but is dissatisfied because the growth of the new consciousness behind prevents it taking pleasure in them, so that it remains restless, not understanding anything. What it has got to learn is that it must fall quiet and open to a new consciousness from above and within. This part of the being is obscure, — not sufficiently mentalised to understand things, it acts from instinct, impulse and habit only. When its old instincts, impulses and habits are checked, it does not know what to do or what is demanded of

it. But after a certain amount of pressure from the mind and will it can be got to consent to a change of its ways.

The other thing, the habit of concentrating on one thing and forgetting everything else, is a turn of the vital—it is a faculty that has a value because it can give great intensity to the nature and to any endeavour made by the nature. Only it has to be turned in the right direction and used by the mind and the psychic being for a whole-hearted concentration and devotion to the Mother.

*

The attack comes evidently always on the vital physical and the physical—it is these parts that have to be cleared entirely—desires and dissatisfactions in the vital physical and the pain, unconsciousness and dullness in the physical. Do not yield to the idea of being helpless to repel or ignore when they come—even the pains can be rejected—you have to get the knack of bringing down the Force at once to drive them out.

*

The physical disturbance and weakness are simply the attack falling back on the physical system from the vital and producing there the corresponding movements—all of a nervous character—nervous restlessness, nervous pain and palpitation and trouble, nervous weakness of the body.

Take the lesson from what has happened, but now put away these thoughts and open yourself quietly to recover the true movement.

*

It [*the coming of disturbances*] is not the result of any pressure from above. If there were nothing coming from above, there would be no peace and clarity and the disturbances would still come and come more often.

The cravings once belonged to the vital physical, but when there is a sufficient force of peace in the being, then they go out and the vital physical is free and under the influence of the

quietude. The forces of disturbance do not belong any longer to the personality, but although they have gone out, they wait in the atmosphere and, if they get a chance, try to come back and resume hold of the exterior being so as either to break or, if they can no longer do that, cover up the inner peace. Because the physical vital has been accustomed to respond to them for a time willingly, now unwillingly, they are still able to make it answer to their vibrations. The peace and clarity must acquire such a force that they will remain even if these forces come back — then there will be the phenomenon of the inner peace remaining undisturbed in the inner being even while the outer is superficially disturbed. This is a well-marked stage in the progress. Afterwards a force can be brought down strong enough to fill the outer being also with so strong a peace and clarity that the disturbances can no longer enter there. One may feel them still sometimes in the atmosphere but is no longer touched by them at all.

*

As for the vital physical readmitting the forces of disturbance, it is not always because it wants; it may happen also because in spite of itself certain impacts or suggestions revive the old vibrations and the habit of responding has been so strong in it that it responds *in spite of itself*, and for a time it is unable to recover its balance. This happens in all parts of the being, but it is especially true of the physical parts — physical mind yielding to habitual thoughts, physical vital yielding to habitual desires and impulsions etc., body yielding to habitual sensations, illnesses etc. etc. Often sadhaks write, “But I don’t want these things, even my vital and body feel uncomfortable and wish them away, then why do they come?” It is because of this long established habit of response which is too strong for the yet too quiescent and passive will (if it can be called will) of rejection in the part affected. It is especially true of the physical parts because a passive quiescence, a habit of being driven by forces is their very nature, unless they are controlled from above or made to share in the idea and will of the higher parts.

The Material Consciousness

I do not see why you doubt the fulfilment in your material consciousness. If there is faith, quietude, openness in the rest of the being, the material is bound to open also. Tamas, inertia, ignorance, stupidity, littleness, obstruction to the true movement are universal characteristics of the material consciousness, so long as it is not enlightened, regenerated and transformed from above, — they are not peculiar to yours. Therefore, there is here no sufficient reason or justification for the doubt you describe.

When the Supramental comes down fully into the material consciousness, it will create the right conditions there. The oneness will be created, the constant presence and sense of contact will be felt in the material and there will be all the actual physical contact that is needed. The sadness you speak of is not psychic — for “painful longing” belongs to the vital, not to the psychic. The psychic never feels a sadness from disappointed desire, because that is not in its nature; the sorrow it sometimes feels is when it sees the Divine rejected or the mental, vital, physical in man or in nature turning away from the Truth to follow perversion, darkness or ignorance. However, with the reign of the Supramental even the vital external nature is bound to change and therefore there will be no chance of any feelings of this character.

*

You should not allow yourself to be discouraged by any persistence of the movements of the lower nature. There are some that tend always to persist and return until the whole physical nature is changed by the transformation of the most material consciousness; till then their pressure recurs — sometimes with a revival of their force, sometimes more dully — as a mechanical habit. Take from them all life-power by refusing any mental or vital assent; then the mechanical habit will become powerless to influence the thoughts and acts and will finally cease.

The Body Consciousness

The sense of being only the body belongs to the physical consciousness while the confusion came from the vital. The confusion must disappear because it makes a turmoil in the consciousness and stands in the way of the Force acting on the surface. The obstacle of the body consciousness is tedious, but it does not prevent the Force from growing and can be worn out by the action of the Force in time. It is a question of the Force, Peace, Light entering *into* the body and giving it the sense of not being only a body but the receptacle of a higher consciousness.

*

It is indeed the body consciousness that is still offering difficulties — but when the restlessness and confusion come, you must immediately offer it up and call for the opening of the part that resists. In this way it is possible to establish a condition in which as soon as the difficulty is there, the counteracting Force also comes. Then no long continued difficulty will be possible.

*

The flesh has a consciousness as well as the mind — all the consciousness is connected together so if the mind is freed, there is no reason why there should not be an effect on the physical also.

The Body

Man is not a body alone — the body is only a small part of his being.

*

One should not attach too much importance to the life of the body. The body is only an incident in the progress of the soul. Evolution of the soul is the objective of Karmic existence. When one has realised the soul, knowledge and enlightenment come and all the problems are solved. But before that, one should try to get peace, calm and light.

*

The body is always the most difficult part of the being because of its obscurity much more than of any bad will in it. But it could respond more and more as the Light grows.

*

The body itself must become more conscious so that it will make the right movements and avoid the wrong ones.

*

I mean [by “*the coming of consciousness into the body*”] the higher consciousness. The consciousness that is always there in the body is tamasic and obscure and the greater part of it is subconscious. If it opens then there will be an increasing union with the higher consciousness and it will be able to share the experiences and the developments in the mind and vital.

*

It depends on whether it [*the body*] is in tune with the vital or not. The nature of the body is tamasic — it is the vital which makes it move and uses it as an instrument: If the vital is enlightened then the Divine Force can act through it on the body.

*

It [*how the body receives the higher dynamism*] depends on the condition of the body or rather of the physical and the most material consciousness. In one condition it is tamasic, inert, unopen and cannot bear or cannot receive or cannot contain the force; in another rajas predominates and tries to seize on the dynamism, but wastes and spills and loses it; in another there is receptivity, harmony, balance and the result is a harmonious action without strain or effort.

*

I suppose the heat and thirst may be due to some struggle in the body, not altogether physical. I think it must be some contrary pressure on the body which the body is trying to throw off. I do not consider your condition of dissatisfaction and difficulties as

inner but as outer. It is an outer mass of old movements pressing on the physical consciousness and trying to keep its place by memory and recurrent habit. The physical consciousness has to push it out more and more till it is no longer felt as within it, but seen for what it really is, an outer Nature of the ignorance which had usurped the consciousness and prevented the psychic being from manifesting.

*

The physical troubles that belong to the constitution of the body are usually the last things to disappear. When the true consciousness fixes itself in the body as elsewhere, then they can be reduced and dispelled by the same process as that which removes the wrong habits of the mind and vital.

Care for the Body

No need to despise the physical being — it is part of the intended manifestation.

*

The body is meant to be an instrument of the Divine and a means of sadhana and a temple for the Mother's presence. It has to be purified, not despised and cast away — without it there can be no manifestation here.

*

To care too much for the body is bad in sadhana, but to neglect it or overstrain it is also bad — for it is a necessary instrument and must be kept in good condition.

Weakness of the Body

You must keep your body in good condition. It is the necessary instrument and channel and if it gets weak or unfit, that hampers the expression or dynamism of the mind and the spirit.

*

The weakness of the body has to be cured, not disregarded. It can only be cured by bringing in strength from above, not by *merely* forcing the body.

*

If your body is aching after the work, it may be that you are doing too much for your physical strength and straining the body. When you work, the Force comes down in you, takes the form of vital energy and supports your body so that it does not *at the time* feel the strain; but when you stop, the body goes back to its normal condition and feels the effects—it has not yet been sufficiently opened to keep the Force. You must see whether this effect (of pain) continues; if it passes away, it is all right; otherwise you must take care and not overstrain yourself by doing too much.

*

Overstraining [*in work*] only increases the inertia—the mental and vital will may force the body, but the body feels more and more strained and finally asserts itself. It is only if the body itself feels a will and force to work that one can do that.

*

The first rule [*for overcoming weakness of the body*] is—there must be sufficient sleep and rest, not in excess but not too little.

The body must be trained to work, but not strained beyond its utmost capacity.

The outer means without the inner is not effective. Up to a certain point by a *progressive* training the body may be made more capable of work. But the important thing is to bring down the force for work and the *rasa* of work in the body. The body will then do what is asked of it without grudging or feeling fatigue.

Even so, even when the force and *rasa* are there, one must keep one's sense of measure.

Work is a means of self-dedication to the Divine, but it must be done with the necessary inner consciousness in which

the lower vital and physical must also share.

A lazy body is certainly not a proper instrument for Yoga, it must stop being lazy. But a fatigued and unwilling body also cannot receive properly or be a good instrument. The proper thing is to avoid either extreme.

*

A strong mind and body and life-force are needed in the sadhana. Especially steps should be taken to throw out *tamas* and bring strength and force into the frame of the nature.

Forgetfulness of the Body

It [*living in the mind or the vital*] is more, I think, forgetting the body than non-identification with it. In an intense mentalisation or an intense vital activity the body takes a second place and becomes more outward and the same may happen to a certain extent more constantly to a man who lives in his mind or his vital and is identified more closely with that. But still it is the mental in the body, the vital in the body. There is no release, no getting entirely separate as in the spiritual liberation.

*

Yes, it is not possible for the human mind to live entirely in itself to such a degree as to ignore the body altogether — a real or complete liberation or non-identification is not possible without the spiritual release. All that is possible to the mind is a constant absorption in itself and an ignoring or forgetfulness as much as possible of the body. That one finds often in people who live a retired mental life (scholars, thinkers etc.) without the need to trouble themselves about their livelihood, family etc.

The Physical and the Mind

The physical consciousness has its own reactions — separate from those of the mind.

*

No, it is not necessary to lose the mental control; it is best to replace it gradually by the psychic or spiritual. But it happens to many that they lose it before the other is ready or while it is still imperfect and then the Nature-forces act in the physical consciousness which is sometimes held by the descending Peace or Power from above, sometimes by the ordinary Nature-forces. This alternation happens at one stage at least to almost everybody until the higher state prevails.

This over-sensitive brooding on past blows to the vital is an unhealthy sensitiveness. What is past ought not to have a hold like that but be allowed to fade out.

*

Probably in '33 you were doing more tapasya and putting a strong control on yourself? At any rate that was the state at one time. Afterwards when you came down from the mental-vital level, you let yourself go for a time, removing much of the control, hence now you find a difficulty in reestablishing it,— due to the habit of automatic repetition which is a characteristic of the physical nature. You have now to get the control in a different way by the reestablishment of the peace and building the higher consciousness upon it, the spiritual control replacing that of mental tapasya.

The Physical and the Vital

The physical depends on the vital at every step—it could not do anything without the help of the vital—so it is quite natural that it should receive its suggestions.

*

The physical world is only a last field in which not only the physical forces but those of other worlds also throw themselves for realisation. Whatever happens here has already been prepared or foreshadowed in the vital; it does not happen exactly as represented in the vital, but with a change suitable for the material world.

The Physical and the Psychic

All that is very good — it is the psychic condition that is increasing. The peace and spontaneous knowledge are in the psychic being and from there they spread to mind and vital and physical. It is in the outer physical consciousness that the difficulty still tries to persist and brings the restlessness sometimes into the physical mind, sometimes into the nerves, sometimes in the shape of bodily trouble into the body. But all these things can and must go. Even the illnesses can go entirely with the growth of peace and power in the nerves and physical cells — stomach pains, weakness of the eyes and everything else.

*

The narrowness etc. of which you complain are normal to the physical nature. It is the same thing acting in a different way which makes X rebellious to advice and full of irritation and bad temper when her mistakes are shown to her. The physical nature of almost everybody is like that, intolerant, easily irritated, lacking in patience when dealing with others. But this physical nature can be replaced and changed by the psychic nature and you have had the experience of what this psychic nature is and how it acts. You know therefore what change has to come in you and you know also that this new nature is already there in you preparing to come out. Have the faith therefore that it is sure to come — and when the physical comes and covers with the old movements try to remember that and remind the physical mind that it is only by this change in yourself and all that things can change. What is needed now is all should make this psychic change their main object, each for himself. If some develop it, then it will spread more rapidly among the rest. It is so only that the present state of the physical consciousness in the Asram full of ego and strife can become what it should be.

*

What has happened is that the psychic in you which had formerly been constantly in action in the mind and vital was for a

time clouded or covered over by the ignorance of the physical consciousness. It is the psychic that connected you with the Mother and turned all the movements of your being towards her or drew them from her or made them united with and dependent on her. It had so done with all your mental and vital being and its movements and it had guarded you against all wrong mental and vital suggestions and attacks, showing you what was true and what was false. Now it is this psychic being which has manifested again in your physical consciousness also. You have only to live in that and your whole being will be turned towards the Mother, remain in union with her and be protected from doubt and error and false suggestion — and you can once more progress as you did before towards the full realisation of the sadhana.

*

The habit of return of these feelings belongs to the physical consciousness and in his physical consciousness the human being is always weak and unable to get rid of or resist its habitual movements. There are three things that help him to do so (apart from his mental will which is not always strong enough to do it). There is first the psychic being; for a few days your psychic was extremely active and pushing these movements away whenever they tried to come or throwing them out soon when they got in. This activity of the psychic will return and eventually come down into the physical consciousness itself; then there will be very little difficulty. The second is the inner consciousness always awake. At present that is difficult, because to keep the inner consciousness awake at all times can only come by a deepening of yourself so that the veil between the outer and inner which lifts only in concentration may cease to exist even when one is in the ordinary unconcentrated condition. It is for this deepening that the strong tendency to go inside comes upon you. Lastly, the Mother's force always there and receiving also a response at once from the physical consciousness. These three things together can do anything. It takes time to make them all three constantly active together, but that is sure to come and

with them these inner difficulties will disappear.

*

You cannot so long as you have a body live without the physical consciousness, but you can live more centrally in the psychic and other parts and by them transform the physical.

The Ascent of the Being

The being is here on the physical plane although in touch with the mental and vital. The being that is the individual consciousness has to ascend and become conscious of all the planes (vital, mental and those above the mental) until it reaches the Divine Oneness which is above all the planes and from which they emerge.

Chapter Three

Difficulties of the Physical Nature

The Real Difficulty

It is no doubt quite true that if you could settle the true relation [*with the Mother*] in the psychic centre — the inner heart — and all the rest could be under its influence and take part in it, the fundamental difficulty would disappear; and that is what must happen. But the real difficulty is in the physical and external being — and it is this that the physical being is a creature of habit, of formed character, that is to say of a mass of accustomed movements. As your nature has been full of rajasic egoism, not only in this but in many past lives, it is the habit of this rajas and of the accustomed movements connected with it that the physical knows and to them it almost automatically responds; it is these movements that always easily took hold of you, mixed in the sadhana, even in the higher experience sometimes and cherished the revolt against the Mother because always her force was pressing for their removal; it was this pressure that they resented and felt as an absence of love. The mind in you is able to separate itself from these things and recognise (when not too much clouded) their true character, the higher vital also has another aim and aspiration; but the physical, especially the more material parts of it are still responding mechanically to the old movements which are wearing out indeed under the pressure, but are still strong enough to possess a great part of the consciousness when they come. One feels the power, the compulsory force of this mechanical physical response and gets the impression of their inevitability and the impossibility of ever getting free. This automatic compulsory character of the obstruction is the whole power of the difficulty in the material nature.

(1) The first thing is to reject the idea of helplessness, of impossibility of a successful reaction. The central will must

assert itself, not violently in a constant struggle, for that brings reaction, fatigue and inertia, but with a quiet pressure and insistence.

(2) The mind must learn (even the physical external mind) never to say yes to the suggestions and impulsions of the old movement or admit any justification for them however plausible or seemingly “true”. However violently they return and insist, they must feel that they will never get any essential assent or sanction. You have almost reached that point, but it must be made more entire.

(3) There must be something in the vital itself that insists on its true aspiration and refuses even the vital consent or any vital pleasure in the wrong movements. If they come, they must feel their own fallen, ignorant, merely material brute character. This point you seem to be reaching, but it must be absolute.

(4) Lastly the physical, the material itself—to insist on the Light, the true will there also. For that, do not indulge the desires, the wrong impulses, the wrong brute feelings that come. Do not admit the idea that you cannot refuse. Throw them out each time they come, out of the body into the environmental consciousness till they can finally be pushed away from there also. For it is these that now separate you in the physical consciousness from the Mother.

Obstruction and Obscuration

The difficulty of the physical nature comes inevitably in the course of the development of the sadhana. Its obstruction, its inertia, its absence of aspiration or movement have to show themselves before they can be got rid of—otherwise it will always remain undetected, hampering even the best sadhana and preventing its completeness. This coming up of the physical nature lasts longer or less according to the circumstances, but there is none who does not go through it. What is necessary is not to get troubled or anxious or impatient, for that only makes it last more, but to put entire confidence in the Mother and quietly persist in faith, patience and steady will for the complete

change. It is so that the Mother's force can best work in the being.

*

The sense of helplessness, of impossibility of removal [*of obscurity*] is like the obscurity itself a characteristic of the physical consciousness which is inert and mechanical and accustomed to be moved inertly by whatever forces take hold of it. But this sense of helplessness or impossibility is unreal and not to yield to it, not to accept it, to remove it is quite possible and very necessary for overcoming this physical obstacle which would otherwise greatly delay the progress.

*

It [*the nature of the obstruction of the physical consciousness*] depends on the weak points of the individual and the stage of his progress. In a general way, the obstruction creates an inertia which impedes the working of the higher Powers. In the early stage it can obstruct progress altogether. Afterwards it works to slow it down or else impede it by intervals of stationary inertia. The main difficulty of the physical consciousness is that it is incapable, before it is transformed, of maintaining any tension of tapasya — it wants periods of assimilation, sinking back into the ordinary consciousness to rest, — also there is a constant forgetfulness of what has been done etc.

*

What you felt in your chest was the attempt of the old ignorance to bring back the vital restlessness, depression, confusion, through the physical attack — for it is on the obscuration of the physical that they now depend for stopping the Light and Force from coming and for obscuring their working and creating disturbance and destroying the quietude. Reject it as you did this time — whenever it tries to come.

*

What you say — especially the idea of being only body — proves

that it is now really in the physical obscurity and obstruction that the difficulty lies and the vital resistance even if it recurs is no longer the central obstacle. Do not be discouraged by this physical unconsciousness — keep the quietude and it will be worked out of the system.

*

Do not be discouraged. To go on calling is always the right thing. The struggle to surmount the physical obscurity and inertia is sometimes very tedious and baffling, but if one persists the liberation from it comes — and it will surely come.

*

The physical obstruction is less boisterous [*than the vital resistance*], but I have not found it less obstinate or less troublesome.

Inertia

Inertia is a tremendous force — one of the biggest world-forces.

*

Inertia is the very character of the physical consciousness left to itself — it is accustomed to be passive to forces and to be their instrument or give a mechanical response to them.

*

Inertia is mental, vital, physical, subconscient. Physical inertia can produce mental inertia, mental inertia can produce physical inertia, vital inertia almost always makes the physical lifeless and lustreless and dull, and that is inertia. Vital inertia can also infect the mind, unless the mind is very strong and clear. I have always said that the physical consciousness is the main seat and source of inertia.

*

The hold of inertia always increases when the working comes down into the physical and subconscient. Before that the inertia is overpowered though not eradicated by the action in mind and

vital — afterwards it comes up in its natural force and has to be met in its own field.

*

The physical's tendency to inertia is very great; even after the habit of living in the higher consciousness is there, some part may feel the pressure of the inertia — generally the outermost or most material parts. The inertia usually rises up from the subconscious. It does not abolish the higher consciousness in the physical, but dulls its action or else brings it down from a higher to a lower level, e.g. from the intuition to the higher mind or from the higher to the lower ranges of overmind. For some time it resists the completeness of the siddhi. It is only when the most material and the subconscious and the environmental consciousness are quite liberated that this retarding or lowering effect of the primal Inertia is entirely overcome.

*

What you describe — dullness, uneasiness, weakness, feeling old and worn out or ill, are the reactions that come when the inertia of the physical Nature is resisting the Light — the others about sense of feeling, dignity, self-respect (of the ego) are the reactions of the vital. Both must be refused acceptance. There is only one aim to be followed, the increase of the Peace, Light, Power and the growth of a new consciousness in the being. With that new consciousness the true knowledge, understanding, strength, feeling will come, creating harmony instead of revolt and struggle and union with the Divine consciousness and will.

*

Dullness and dispersion are the two sides of the physical's resistance to the peace and concentrated power. They correspond to the inertia and the chaotic activity of physical Nature, that aspect of it which makes some scientists now say that all is brought about by chance and there is no certitude of things but only probability.

*

It [*weakness of will*] is a first result of coming down into the physical consciousness or of the physical consciousness coming up prominently — formerly you were much in the mind and vital. The physical consciousness is full of inertia — it wants not to move but to be moved by whatever forces and that is its habit. This inertia has to be cured by putting it into contact with the right forces from above. That is why I asked you to aspire for the higher wideness, purity and peace, so that that may occupy the physical and the true Force work instead of these invading ideas and impulses.

*

It [*weakness of will*] is due to the influence of the physical consciousness. The physical consciousness or at least the more material parts of it are, as I have told you, in their nature inert — obeying whatever force they are habituated to obey, but not acting on their own initiative. When there is a strong influence of the physical inertia or when one is down in this part of the consciousness the mind feels like the material Nature that action of will is impossible. Mind and vital nature are on the contrary all for will and initiative and so when one is in mind or vital or acting under their influence will feels itself always ready to be active.

*

When the mental will acquiesces in the inertia, becomes passive to it, as we say — then one remains in the passive condition and there is no push against it until it of itself passes away. If the mental will or even the vital will or some dynamic part of the nature remains untouched and can react, then there is the effort to throw it off which may shorten the interim period.

*

Passivity must not lead to inactivity — otherwise it will encourage inertia in the being. It is only an inner passivity to what comes from above that is needed — inert passivity is the wrong kind of passivity.

*

If it is an inert tamasic passivity subject to any influence and unable to react, then it is subjection to Nature. If it is a satwic passivity of the Witness observing and understanding the movements of Nature, then it is an intermediate condition, often necessary for knowledge. If it is a luminous passivity open to the Divine, shut to all other influences, then it is not subjection to Nature but surrender to the Divine.

*

It is the neutrality of the physical consciousness which says, “I move only when I am moved. Move me who can.”

*

The period of no-effort is usually when the physical consciousness is uppermost — for the nature of that is inertia, to be moved by the higher forces or to be moved by the lower forces or any forces, but not to move itself. One must still use one’s effort if one can, but the great thing is to be able to call down the Force from above into the physical — otherwise to remain perfectly quiet and, undisturbed, expect its coming.

*

Silence need not bring lassitude; there is all possible strength in silence. But it is possible that in your trend towards silence there is a tendency to draw back the energy from the body consciousness. That would bring physical inertia.

*

If the calm and silence are perfectly established in the physical, then if inertia comes it is itself something quiet and unaggressive, not bringing such disturbances. But to get rid of inertia altogether a strong dynamic calm is needed.

*

If the physical being has felt and assimilated the silence and peace, then inertia ought not to rise up.

*

There is always more chance of inertia at night because of the large part taken by the subconscious in sleep — but, apart from that, there should be a reaction (internal) against the rising of inertia. A quietness in the cells of the body, even a sense of immobility (so that the body seems to be moved rather than to move) is a different thing and easily distinguishable from the inertia. The downflow of peace usually brings much of the static Brahman into the consciousness down to the physical, so that one feels the Upanishadic “unmoving it moves”.

*

The inertia itself is not a dynamic principle. The nature of inertia is *apavr̥tti* — the action of the mechanical mind is a *pavr̥tti*, though a tamasic obscure *pavr̥tti*.

*

The rain has the effect of stressing the tamas of the vital physical consciousness and bringing out its greyer notes. Physical tamas by its laxity gives more opportunities for the play of sex etc.

*

Everything [*in the surrounding atmosphere*] can be responded to. Inertia also can spread waves of itself like other things.

Dealing with Inertia and Tamas

From what you describe it looks as if you had come down into the physical consciousness and were feeling the inertia that belongs to it. When that happens, the one way out is to open there so that the light and force may come down into the physical and replace the inertia. We shall try to get that done.

*

When one is covered by the physical inertia one may often feel as if the former experiences had never existed or were not real. But certainly your aspirations and experiences were real enough.

You have to fight out this difficulty until you have got through to the Light.

*

It is, I suppose, the full Inertia that has come upon you. Now you have to get the true Energy down into it.

*

It must be the *tamas* of the physical that has enveloped the inner consciousness. The one way to get out of it is to remain very quiet inwardly and call down persistently the Force from above.

*

It [*a condition of great inertia*] means that you are in full grips with the subconscious physical. However heavy and tedious the resistance you have to persevere till you have got the Peace, Knowledge, Force down there in place of the inertia.

*

I do not know that I can add anything more to what I have already written. It is only by a more constant dynamic force descending into an unalterable equality and peace that the physical nature's normal tendency can be eradicated.

The normal tendency of the physical nature is to be inert and in its inertia to respond only to the ordinary vital forces, not to the higher forces. If one has a perfect equality and peace then one can be unaffected by the spreading of the inertia and bring down into it gradually or quickly the same peace with a force of the higher consciousness which can alter it. When that is there there can be no longer the difficulty and fluctuations with a preponderance of inertia such as you are now having.

*

The first means [*of changing inertia into peace*] is not to get upset when it comes or when it stays. The second is to detach yourself, not only yourself above but yourself below and not identify. The third is to reject everything that is raised by the

inertia and not regard it as your own or accept it at all.

If you can do these things then there will be something in you that remains perfectly quiet even in the pits of inertia. Through that quiet part you can bring down peace, force, even light and knowledge into the inertia itself.

*

When the mind and the vital take hold of the physical and make it an instrument, then there is no inertia. But here the physical consciousness has been dealt with. If it could have received the peace of the self into itself without covering it over with inertia, then it would have been all right. But the vital has intervened somehow with its demand and dissatisfaction, so there has been this obstruction and inability to progress. This thing often happens in the sadhana and one must have the power either to reject it dynamically or else to remain detached until it has exhausted itself. Then the true movement begins again.

*

Inertia or anything else must be felt as separate, not part of one's real self which is one with the Divine.

The Difficulty of Eliminating Inertia and Tamas

You cannot expect a persistent inertia like that to disappear in three days because you make some kind of a beginning of effort to resist it.

*

The inertia of the physical consciousness is always a difficult thing to eliminate — it is that, more even than any vital resistance, which keeps all the movements of the ignorance recurring even when the knowledge is there and the will to change. But this difficulty has to be faced and overcome by an equal perseverance in the will of the sadhak. It is a steady flame that must burn, as steady as the obstruction is obstinate. Do not therefore be discouraged by the persistence of the obstruction of the ignorance.

The persistence of your own will to conquer with the Mother's force supporting it will come to the end of the resistance.

*

I don't know of any effective outward means of getting rid of it [*inertia*]. Some, in hours when they cannot do sadhana, spend the time in other occupations — reading, writing or working — and do not try at all to concentrate. But I suspect what you need is more strength in the body.

*

It is quite true that physical exercise is very necessary to keep off the *tamas*. I am glad you have begun it and I trust you will keep it up.

Physical *tamas* in its roots can be removed only by the descent and the transformation, but physical exercise and a regular activity of the body can always prevent a *tamasic* condition from prevailing in the body.

*

There should be no yielding to the *tamas*. In spite of it one should always go on quietly and persistently with the sadhana — otherwise one may be overweighed by the inertia of the physical consciousness from which the *tamas* comes.

*

The physical always is more *tamasic* than the rest of the being and does not respond easily. Moreover this is a time of struggle between the higher forces and the resisting forces on the material plane, it is therefore a time when intense attacks on that plane are possible. One has to be on one's guard and keep the true Force always round one as a protecting Power.

*

The adverse forces feel that there is something in you that is discountenanced and restive because of the continuance of the inertia and they hope that by pressing more and more they will

create a revolt. What is important for you in these circumstances is to make your faith, surrender and samata absolute. That is as great and essential a progress as to have high experiences, etc.

Physical Fatigue

Fatigue like this in the course of the sadhana may come from various reasons.

(1) It may come from receiving more than the physical is ready to assimilate. The cure is then a quiet rest in conscious immobility receiving the forces but not for any other purpose than the recuperation of the strength and energy.

(2) It may be due to the passivity taking the form of inertia — inertia brings the consciousness down towards the ordinary physical level which is soon fatigued and prone to *tamas*. The cure here is to get back into the true consciousness and rest there, not in inertia.

(3) It may be due to mere overstrain of the body — not giving it enough sleep or repose. The body is the support of the Yoga, but its energy is not inexhaustible and needs to be husbanded; it can be kept up by drawing on the universal vital Force but that reinforcement too has its limits. A certain moderation is needed even in the eagerness for progress — moderation, not indifference or indolence.

*

Exactly. “The body felt fatigue” — that is what I mean by the habit of *tamas*. The body cannot bear the continuous experience, it feels it as a strain. That is the case with most sadhaks. But in your case the obstacle seems to develop a great intensity when it comes. I have already told you the means of getting rid of it,¹ but it cannot be done in a day because it is a fixed habit of the nature and a fixed habit takes time to remove. But it can be done in not too long a time provided you don’t get disturbed when it comes and deal with it firmly and steadily.

¹ See the letter beginning “The first means” on page 396. — Ed.

Giddiness

For the giddiness, it may be that in concentration you go partly out of your body; then, if you get up and move before the whole consciousness has come back, there is just such a giddiness as you describe. You can observe in future and see whether it is not this that happens. One has to be careful not to move after deep concentration or trance, till there is the full consciousness in the body.

Restlessness

Yes, this is the time when you have to persist till you are quite settled in the inner consciousness and the persistence of the silence and peace is a sign that it is now possible. When one feels this kind of silence, peace and wideness, one may be sure that it is that of the true being, the real self, penetrating into the mind and vital and perhaps also the physical consciousness (if it is complete). The restlessness of the physical is probably due to the peace and silence having touched the physical but not yet penetrated the material or body consciousness. The old restlessness is there in the body struggling to remain, although it cannot invade either mind or vital or even in a general way the physical consciousness as a whole. If the peace descends there, this restlessness will disappear.

*

This is a form that the resistance in the physical easily and often takes — a restlessness of discomfort in the nervous system. When it is in the legs, it means that it is the most material part of the consciousness that is the seat of the trouble. Since it has come up, it ought to be thrown out for good. Probably this part has become sufficiently conscious to feel the greater pressure when Mother comes down, but not enough to be able to receive and assimilate it, hence the uneasiness and resistance. If so, it should go of itself with a little more opening there.

*

Insist always on the quietude, the peace, the consciousness of the force. Persistently reject the restlessness; it comes always because the physical has the habit of receiving it, accepting it as its own real nature. Always deny it, always reject the unrest; gradually if not immediately, the physical will follow your will and change its habit and its notions.

Habitual Movements and Old Habits

It is obviously because of the past impressions and the habitual movement of consciousness connected with them [*that the old reactions continue*]. In the physical being the power of past impressions is very great, because it is by the process of repeated impressions that consciousness was made to manifest in matter — and also by the habitual reactions of consciousness to these impressions, what the psychologists, I suppose, would call behaviour. According to one school consciousness consists only of these things — but that is the usual habit of stretching one detail of Nature to explain the whole of her.

*

It is really, I think, the physical consciousness that is responsible [*for the return of old movements*]. It is forgetful and obscure and repeats always the old habitual movements even when the mind has abandoned them and the vital is quite willing to abandon them. But when the physical receives the old vibration, the lower vital is affected and responds — otherwise it would be merely a vibration and there would be no danger of its being accepted or affecting the conduct.

*

There is nobody who is free from difficulties, even those who seem the most advanced have them, and all have this obstinacy of the habitual movements in the physical consciousness which recur always in spite of the mind's knowledge and do not want to cease or change. It is only by perseverance in aspiration or will that this difficulty can disappear.

*

The opening of the physical and subconscious always takes a long time as it is a thing of habits and constant repetitions of the old movements, obscure and stiff and not plastic, yielding only little by little. The physical mind can be more easily opened and converted than the rest, but the vital physical and material physical are obstinate. The old things are always recurring there without reason and by force of habit. Much of the vital physical and most of the material are in the subconscious or dependent on it. It needs a strong and sustained action to progress there.

*

It [*getting out of the physical rut*] can only be done by being very quiet and opening oneself continually to the force. The physical needs a very *quiet, persistent* and *patient* action, because it is a thing of inertia and habits. The vehemence of force and struggle which suits the vital, does not act so successfully here. It is a steady opening to the Force, a quiet but unwavering insistence on Faith and the Truth that is to be that is in the end effective.

*

It is not that something is always “wrong” within you but that there is still in the subconscious physical being a part that was accustomed to respond very strongly to the vibrations of these thoughts and feelings and can still respond. Usually you would not allow them to come up at all in thought or feeling form, — it would only manifest as a depression of the body or fatigue — or, if it came, you would get over it at once and the vibrations would sink down and disappear. But in the atmosphere heavily surcharged with this invasion of the ordinary consciousness there is a lessened elasticity in the physical consciousness and they were able to rise. This is an exceedingly common experience. One has to detach oneself from these still weak parts and regard them as if a detail in the machinery that has to be set right. In your case also your nervous (vital physical) being is exceedingly conscious and sensitive and anything wrong in the atmosphere affects it more than it would most of the others.

*

It was certainly not because the Mother was different to you from other days or pushed you to a distance, but because you came rather shut up in that part of your physical being which is still shrinking from the Light. It is this part which was always fundamentally responsible for all your bad passages and painful moments even when the direct difficulty was higher up. Its nature is to cling to the old habitual preyogic consciousness and to shut up doors and windows against the help that is offered and lament in the darkness when it has felt itself hurt. This is a thing that everybody must get rid of who wants to progress. Do not go on identifying yourself with this part and calling it yourself. Get back into your inner being and look at this only as a small though obstinate part of the nature that has to change. For apart from its insistence there is no reason why your way should enter into a desert. It should enter into a wideness of liberation — open to the calm and peace and power and light of a consciousness that is wider than the personal and into which the ego can happily disappear.

*

The physical changes slowly always — its nature is habit — so it is only by constant descents [*of calmness, purity, light and strength*] that gradually its substance gets changed and it becomes accustomed to the higher condition.

*

The obstacle or wall of bondage which you feel is simply that of the habits of the ordinary physical consciousness. It is so with all, — the ordinary vital nature with its ego, desire, passions, disturbances, and the ordinary physical nature with its strong habits and outwardness are the chief obstacles that have to be overcome in the nature. When they fall quiet, then it is easier to enter into the true consciousness and unite with the Mother. But they are not accustomed to quietness and as soon as it is felt they want to come out of it and resume their ordinary movements. But this will go when the inner has sufficiently gained on the outer to dominate it. The inner things will grow and come out

more and more as you feel the inner faith growing until they are strong enough to rule the outer conduct. The obstacles you feel, the surging up of old things and repetition of restlessness etc. are due to this strength of habit of the physical nature — it lives by repeating always the same things and the same movements to which it has been accustomed in the past. The inner influence as it comes out will more and more create for it new habits of thought and feeling and action and it will then dwell firmly in these and not in the things of the old nature.

*

The habit in the physical is obstinate and seems unchangeable because it always recurs — even when one thinks it is gone. But it is not really unchangeable; if the physical mind detaches itself, stands separate, refuses to accept it, then the habit in the physical begins to lose its force of repetition. Sometimes it goes slowly, sometimes (but this is less frequent) it stops suddenly and recurs no more.

*

Yes; that [*the idea that things cannot change*] also is the fault of the physical consciousness. It is obsessed by the idea that “what is” must be, — that the habit of things cannot be altered. This inevitability it extends not only to what is but to what it merely thinks of as a fact — it lays itself open inertly to every suggestion or possibility that seems to be justified by the habit of things. It is the main obstacle to the material change.

*

As I have said, the response of the physical mind or vital to these forces is a habit. You get upset as soon as they touch either and lose control over yourself. The concentration in the heart is the way to get rid of them, but there must also be a detachment of the consciousness so that it can stand back from the attack and feel separate from it.

*

The response-giving mechanism is like that [*fixed in its ways*] in everybody. It is not by something shocking but by something enlarging and uplifting that it can get out of its rut of habit.

*

Habits are difficult to overcome. If any have to be got rid of, one must be very persistent and vigilant and not yield or let them have their way. It is only when one does that for a very long time that they go.

*

The physical always finds it difficult to take up a new attitude. It is only by training and discipline that it can be made to do so.

*

I meant [*by “training and discipline” of the physical*] that instead of forgetting it must be trained to remember and fix the right movements of consciousness and right states — by repetition, by enforcing again and again, by teaching it to reject persistently and at once the wrong states and wrong movements.

*

In the purification of the physical nature, more even than in the rest, it is not safe to assume that there will be no more attacks of old forces or habits of the nature — till the thing is actually and unmistakably done. One must remain vigilant till there is the full siddhi. For in the physical, habit, memory, mechanical response have an immense power of survival — therefore a return of old vibrations or formations is always possible. Only when there is the full purification and transformation is there the perfect security.

Mechanical Movements

As for the feeling of being driven, compelled, that is quite usual when it is the physical nature that is being dealt with; there is no need to be upset or think it cannot be got over. The physical

is the slave of certain forces which create a habit and drive it through the mechanical force of the habit. So long as the mind gives consent, you do not notice the slavery; but if the mind withdraws its consent, then you feel the servitude, you feel a force pushing you in spite of the mind's will. It is very obstinate and repeats itself till the habit — the inner habit revealing itself in the outward act — is broken. It is like a machine which once set in motion repeats the same movement. You need not be alarmed or distressed; a quiet persistent aspiration will bring you to the point where the habit breaks and you are free.

*

What you describe is what the Gita means by the realisation that all action is done by the Prakriti. You feel it mechanical because you are in the physical consciousness where all is mechanism. On the mental and vital plane one can have the same experience, but of the actions as a play of forces. What is lacking at present to you is the other side of the experience, viz. that of the silent Atman or else of the witness Purusha calm, tranquil, free, pure and undisturbed by the play of the Prakriti. It tries to come and you are on the point of going into it, but the tendency of externalisation is still too strong. This tendency took you when you came down into the physical — for it is the nature of the ordinary physical consciousness to precipitate itself into the action of the external personality. You have to get back the power of the internal consciousness, above as Atman, below as Purusha first witness and then master of the nature.

Externalisation

It is inevitable that in the course of the sadhana all sorts of conditions should come through which one is led towards the fullness of the true consciousness. You are now, as are most, in the physical consciousness and its principal difficulty is externalisation and this covering up of the active experience so that one does not know what is going on inside or feels as if nothing were going on. When that happens, it means that

something has come up, some part or layer of the physical, which needs to be worked on and, when that has been done, — it may take longer or shorter, — the conscious active inner experience recommences. The muteness in the mind is not a bad thing in itself, it is a favourable condition for the working. Also what you describe as taking place in the head, must be the working of the Force there, — it sometimes gives the impression of a headache. There must be a working in the physical mind to get rid of some difficulty or else to prepare it better for the admission of what comes from above.

It is necessary to have a great patience — so as to go through these conditions and not get apprehensive or restless — and a confidence that all difficulties will be overcome.

*

The push to externalisation must be rejected always — it is a way the physical consciousness has of slipping out of the condition of concentrated sadhana. To keep in the inner consciousness and work from it on the external being till that also is ready is very necessary when the work of change is being specially directed towards the physical consciousness.

*

As for the going within, the pull of the physical consciousness is always outward and even when experiences are going on and the sadhana in full activity, it is the physical resistance that prevents the sadhak from being all the time in the inner consciousness. This resistance disappears altogether only when one reaches an advanced stage of the sadhana. This resistance is now specially active in the Asram because the force is working on the physical and all that is contrary there has to be met and eliminated. But you have before this several times gone inside and felt the touch of the psychic, so that is bound to resume as soon as the physical difficulty is sufficiently cleared away from the consciousness.

Feelings of Incapacity and Discouragement

The thoughts and feelings expressed in your letter are born of the depression and have no truth in themselves apart from it. Your being here does not in the least take up space that could be occupied by “better” sadhaks. For a good sadhak there will always be a place in one way or another. The incapacity which you discover in yourself is simply the resistance of the habitual external and physical nature, which everyone has and which none, however good a sadhak, has yet been able to transform radically, because it is the last thing to change, and its resistance is acute just now because it is against this that the power of the sadhana is now pressing so that the change may come. When this part presents itself it always tries to appear as something unalterable, incapable of change, impervious to the sadhana. But it is not really so and one must not be deceived by this appearance. As for the fear of madness, it is only a nervous impression which you should throw away. It is not vital weakness that leads to such upsettings — it is an obscurity and weakness in the physical mind accompanied by movements of an exaggerated vital nature (e.g. exaggerated spiritual ambition) which are too strong for the mind to bear. That is not your case. You have had long experience of inner peace, wideness, Ananda, an inner life turned towards the Divine and one who has had that ought not to speak of general incapacity, whatever the difficulties of the external nature, — difficulties common in one form or another to all.

*

I have not the slightest doubt that you can do the sadhana if you cleave to it — not certainly on your own unaided strength, for nobody can do that, but by the will of the psychic being in you aided by the Divine Grace. There is a part in the physical and vital consciousness of every human being that has not the will for it, does not feel the capacity for it, distrusts any hope or promise of a spiritual future and is inert and indifferent to any such thing. At one period in the course of the sadhana this rises up and one feels identified with it. That has happened in you now,

but along with an attack of ill health and nervous indisposition which has turned this passage through the obscure physical into a dark and intense trouble. With enough sleep and a quieting of the nerves and return of physical energy that ought to disappear and it would be possible to bring the Light and Consciousness down into this obscure part. An intense concentration bringing struggle is not what is needed, but a very quiet attitude of self-opening. Not any effort of sadhana just now, but the recovery of tranquillity and ease is what is wanted at present to restore the opening of the nature.

*

The feeling of inability is just the thing you have to reject. It is true only of the physical material consciousness and it is true of everybody in the physical consciousness, because that is something very inert and all that it can do is open itself, remain quiet and receive the Influence. But there is no inability in the rest of the being: it can will and reject. If confusion and obscurity come, it is not bound to accept them, — it can open to the true Force and throw them away; it can keep itself open even when the forces of confusion throw themselves upon it. Only the concentration also must be quiet and steady, — not struggling and restless.

*

It is not because you cannot recover the true attitude, but because you admit in part of your mind the false suggestion of your inability that this mixed condition lasts longer than it should. It is part of your physical consciousness that keeps the memory of the old movements and has the habit of admitting them and thinking them inevitable. You must insist with the clearer part of your consciousness on the true Truth, rejecting always these suggestions and feelings, till this obscure part also is open and admits the Light.

*

As to what has happened in your sadhana, it is that you have allowed yourself to fall into a groove of the physical mind and

of the external vital nature and got fixed in a persistent or constantly recurrent repetition of the ideas and feelings which they present to you — feelings of settled disappointment and discouragement and pessimism about yourself and your spiritual future, and ideas — or, if you will allow me to call them so, notions — which come to the support of these feelings and sustain them. The result of this is to shut you up against the contact and spiritual influence and help you were once feeling or beginning to feel from us. It also shuts you up against your own deeper self and sterilises your personal effort. An accident of this kind is common enough in the path of spiritual effort, and the first thing to be done to get rid of its effects is to throw away resolutely the persistent ideas and feelings which keep you in the groove. I do not know whether you can return to the former condition, for it is seldom that one can go back to a point in the past; but it is always possible for you to go forward, recovering the force for propulsion of what you then gained and have certainly still within you assimilated in your inner being. If you want to carry on some part of the Yoga by your active efforts and aspiration, there is no reason why you should not find back that capacity; but the first effort to be made is to reject persistently, fully and tenaciously — not for two or three days, but always, so long as they insist or return — these disabling thoughts and feelings which hamstring all hope and faith in you, not to accept them, not to justify them, not to give them by your acquiescence the right to go on harping on the same note always of discouragement, incapacity and failure. The ideas by which you justify them are, I repeat, notions only of the physical mind, not true things — e.g. the notion that you *cannot* understand a given idea (intellectually accepting or not accepting is another matter); for it is perfectly certain that your thinking intelligence is quite trained enough to understand anything that is put before it. It is only the physical mind that is limited even in the most intelligent and opens up pits of stupidity or at least larger or smaller spaces of blank non-understanding in the face of unaccustomed ideas or a new line of possible experience or anything else either alien to the mind's habits or unwelcome to

something in the vital parts. I suppose we have all had experience of this incapable element in our nature, and if one fixes oneself in it, it can make even things that would ordinarily be easy for us seem difficult things and things difficult seem impossible. But why should a mind trained to think allow this poorer part of itself to dominate it? So with the other notions. There is nothing anyone else can do in the way of Yoga that you cannot do if you have the fixed will to do it; some things may take a longer time because of past training, habits, mental associations but there is nothing impossible, too difficult, no inherently insuperable obstacle.

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It [*the thought of leaving the Ashram*] is one of the suggestions of the external physical consciousness that are filling the atmosphere just now. I explain that to you in the answers below.

You used to have dreams on the vital plane also long ago in which you passed through dangerous forests and wildernesses amid perils of land and water and wild beasts etc., but you reached safely under the Mother's protection where you were going. I remember your writing some to me. Also there have been dreams of difficult passages ending in the arrival on the true open way. Only these dreams you are having now indicate the difficulty of the passage through the physical (and no longer through the vital) consciousness — but the common element is that you are under the Mother's protection and reach the way at the end. This is quite natural because what everybody is passing through now are the difficulties of the physical and subconscious nature; but the Mother's protection is the same here as in the past stages of the sadhana.

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It is the doubt that most or many are raising now in the Asram. "Where am I? Where am I going? Am I really doing the Yoga? It seems to me I am getting nothing. There is no progress anywhere. All is dry and mechanical. What is the use of being here?" These are the thoughts that have been moving about in the atmosphere

of the Asram and when you get such thoughts, it means that they are coming to you as suggestions from the atmosphere. If they are in the minds of any of those you move with, it is natural they should try to enter you, but even otherwise they can come to you, just as people catch cold because the germs are in the atmosphere.

Your attitude is all right, but evidently you have allowed your mind to be clouded by the suggestions of which I have spoken above. The feeling of having lost all one had is one of them; the feeling that all is mechanical and uninteresting and it is no use being here is another. Of course they are all false. When one listens to the suggestions, then things begin to *appear* like that. These suggestions are natural to the ignorant physical or body consciousness in human nature, just as suggestions of vital passion and disturbance are natural to the ignorant vital consciousness in human nature. You had vital reactions but you did not allow them to overcome you or make you think yourself unfit for the Yoga, because you relied upon the Mother and did not yield to the contrary vital Force. Here also you will have to have constant reliance on the Mother and reject the suggestions of the physical consciousness in the atmosphere when they come.

Stupidity and Ignorance

Your suggestion that I am telling you things that are untrue in order to encourage you is the usual stupidity of the physical mind — if it were so, it is not you who would be unfit for the Yoga, but myself who would be unfit to be in the search for the Divine Truth anybody's guide. For one can lead through lesser to greater Truth, but not through falsehood to Truth. As for your fitness or unfitness for the Yoga, it is not a question on which your physical mind can be an unerring judge — it judges by the immediate appearance of things and has no knowledge of the laws that govern consciousness or the powers that act in Yoga. In fact the question is not of fitness or unfitness but of the acceptance of Grace. There is no human being whose physical

outer consciousness — the part of yourself in which you are now living — is fit for the Yoga. It is by grace and enlightenment from above that it can become capable and for that the necessity is to be persevering and open it to the Light. Everybody when he enters the physical consciousness has the same difficulty and feels as if he were unfit, obscure and nothing done, nothing changed in him since he began the Yoga; he is apt to forget then all that has happened before or to feel as if he had lost it or as if it had all been unreal or untrue.

I suppose that is why you object to my phrase about your having gone so far. I meant that you had had openings in your thinking mind and heart and higher vital and experiences also and had seen very lucidly the condition of your own being and nature and had by that got so far that these parts were ready for the spiritual change — what remains is the physical and outer consciousness which has to be compelled to accept the necessity of change. That is no doubt the most difficult part of the work to be done, but it is also the part which, if once done, makes possible the total change of the being and nature. I therefore said that having gone so far it would be absurd to turn back now and give up because this resists — it always resists in everybody and very obstinately too. That is no reason for giving up the endeavour.

It is this consciousness that has expressed itself in your letter — or the obscure part of it which clings to its old attitude. It does not want to fulfil the sadhana unless it can get by it the things it wanted. It wants the satisfaction of the ego, “self-fulfilment”, appreciation, the granting of its desires. It measures the Divine Love by the outward favours showered upon it and looks jealously to see who gets more of these favours than itself, then says that the Divine has no love for it and assigns reasons which are either derogatory to the Divine or, as in your letter, self-depreciatory and a cause for despair. It is not in you alone that this part feels and acts like that, it is in almost everybody. If that were the only thing in you or the others, then indeed there would be no possibility of Yoga. But though it is strong, it is not the whole — there is a psychic being and a mind and

heart influenced and enlightened by it which has other feelings and another vision of things and aim in sadhana. These are now covered in you by the upsurge of this part which has to change. It is tamasic and does not want to change, does not want to believe unless it can be done by reassuring the vital ego. But there is nothing new in all that — it is part of human nature and has always been there, hampering and limiting the sadhana. Its existence is no reason for despair — everyone has it and the sadhana has to be done in spite of it, in spite of the mixture it brings till the time comes when it has to be definitely converted or rejected. It is difficult to do it, but perfectly possible. These things I know and realise and it is therefore that I insist on your persevering and encourage you to go on; it is not my statement of the position that is untrue, it is the view of it taken by this obscure part of your being that is unsound and an error.

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It is the instinctive (not mental) will in the outer being that is blind — the inner mind knows and understands and when it comes out it enlightens the rest so that all is clear. But the outer being readmits the darkness and confusion through a wrong movement of the vital or through an inert acceptance of the obscurity of the ignorant physical consciousness and the knowledge gets darkened over. But it is there and has only to come out again. The physical consciousness is constitutionally ignorant — it may be made to understand, but it goes on forgetting and feeling as if it had never known — till the Force and Light finally get hold of it and then it forgets no more.

Agnosticism

These feelings are the usual attitude of the physical consciousness left to itself towards the Divine — a complete Agnosticism and inability to experience.²

² *The correspondent complained about the difficulty of knowing the Divine and said that he was on the verge of Agnosticism. His letter ends: "But even if I were to know Him, how would it affect the solid material facts of earth?" — Ed.*

The knowledge of the impersonal Divine by itself does not affect the material facts of earth or at least need not. It only produces a subjective change in the being itself and, if it is complete, a new vision and attitude towards all things immaterial or material. But the complete knowledge of the Divine can produce a change in material things, for it sets a Force working which ends by acting even upon these material things that seem to the physical consciousness so absolute, invincible and unchangeable.

Fear of Death

In a certain part of the physical consciousness and in the subconscious there is always the human and animal fear of death and of anything that has to do with death. It is from there that these dreams are rising along with the fear felt by those parts of the nature. These things rise up in order to be rejected and the mind is rejecting them; for all fear must go and there must be in the physical the full confidence in the Divine.

Section Two

Food, Sleep, Dreams and Sex

Chapter One

Food

The Yogic Attitude towards Food

If you want to do Yoga, you must take more and more in all matters, small or great, the Yogic attitude. In our path that attitude is not one of forceful suppression, but of detachment and equality with regard to the objects of desire. Forceful suppression (fasting comes under the head) stands on the same level as free indulgence; in both cases, the desire remains; in the one it is fed by indulgence, in the other it lies latent and exasperated by suppression. It is only when one stands back, separates oneself from the lower vital, refusing to regard its desires and clamours as one's own, and cultivates an entire equality and equanimity in the consciousness with respect to them that the lower vital itself becomes gradually purified and itself also calm and equal. Each wave of desire as it comes must be observed, as quietly and with as much unmoved detachment as you would observe something going on outside you, and must be allowed to pass, rejected from the consciousness, and the true movement, the true consciousness steadily put in its place.

*

About food, tea etc. the aim of Yoga is to have no hankerings, no slavery either to the stomach or the palate. How to get to that point is another matter — it depends often on the individual. With a thing like tea, the strongest and easiest way is to stop it. As to food the best way usually is to take the food given you, practise non-attachment and follow no fancies. That would mean giving up the Sunday indulgence. The rest must be done by an inner change of consciousness and not by external means.

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It is a mistake to neglect the body and let it waste away; the body

is the means of the sadhana and should be maintained in good order. There should be no attachment to it, but no contempt or neglect either of the material part of our nature.

In this Yoga the aim is not only the union with the higher consciousness but the transformation (by its power) of the lower including the physical nature.

It is not necessary to have desire or greed of food in order to eat. The Yogi eats not out of desire, but to maintain the body.

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That [*disgust for eating*] is rather an excessive feeling. One should eat for maintenance of the body without attaching any other importance, but without repulsion.

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The vital of most people is of this kind [*too weak to restrain its desires for pleasure*], except in a few who are indifferent to sex or to food desire or to both, by temperament and nature. There is always something in the lower vital which is recalcitrant and takes a pleasure in following its own way and disregarding the higher dictate, and there are always external forces hostile to the Yoga which try to take advantage of its obscurities, revolts and weaknesses. Neither neglect this turn of the nature (food desire) nor make too much of it; it has to be dealt with, purified and mastered but without giving it too much importance. There are two ways of conquering it — one of detachment, learning to regard food as only a physical necessity and the vital satisfaction of the stomach and the palate as a thing of little or no importance; the other is to be able to take without insistence or seeking any food given and to find in it (whether pronounced good or bad by others) the equal *rasa*, not of the food for its own sake, but of the universal Ananda. But the latter comes usually only when one can live in the cosmic consciousness or rise into the Overmind — and for this you are not yet ready. So the first way is the one you should keep in view.

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Do not trouble your mind about food. Take it in the right quantity (neither too much nor too little), without greed or repulsion, as the means given you by the Mother for the maintenance of the body, in the right spirit, offering it to the Divine in you; then it need not create *tamas*.

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It is much better to eat the meal in silence or at any rate in quietness.

Attachment to Food

It is the attachment to food, the greed and eagerness for it, making it an unduly important thing in the life, that is contrary to the spirit of Yoga. To be aware that something is pleasant to the palate is not wrong; only one must have no desire nor hankering for it, no exultation in getting it, no displeasure or regret at not getting it. One must be calm and equal, not getting upset or dissatisfied when the food is not tasty or not in abundance — eating the fixed amount that is necessary, not less or more. There should be neither eagerness nor repugnance.

To be always thinking about food and troubling the mind is quite the wrong way of getting rid of the food-desire. Put the food element in the right place in the life, in a small corner, and don't concentrate on it but on other things.

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The attachment to good food must be given up as also the personal attachment to position and service; but it is not indispensably necessary for that purpose to take to an ascetic diet or to give up all means of action such as money and service. The Yogin has to become *niḥśva* in this sense that he feels that nothing belongs to him but all to the Divine and he must be ready at any time to give up all to the Divine. But there is no meaning in throwing away everything in order to be externally *niḥśva* without any imperative cause.

Greed for Food

The first thing to be attained about eating, is to get rid of the greed of food, the attachment and desire, — to take it only as a need of the body, to think little of it and not to allow it to occupy a big place in the life; also to be satisfied with what you get, not to hanker. At the same time sufficient food should be taken, avoiding either deficiency or excess; an excessive coercion or *nigraha* in this respect (as opposed to reasonable control) often brings a reaction. One should go steadily, but not try to get too much done at once.

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As for Sannyasis and food, Sannyasis put a compulsion on their desires in this and other matters — they take ascetic food as a principle; but this does not necessarily kill the greed for food, it remains compressed and, if the compulsion or principle is removed, it can come up again stronger than before — for compression without removal often increases the force of these things instead of destroying them.

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Not to eat as the method of getting rid of the greed of food is the ascetic way. Ours is equanimity and non-attachment.

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These things [*persistent desires*] still rise in you because they have been for so long prominent difficulties and, as far as the first is concerned, because you gave it much justification from the mind at one time. But if the inner consciousness is growing like that they are sure to go. Only if they rise, don't give them harbourage. Perhaps with regard to the greed for food, your attitude has not been quite correct. Greed for food has to be overcome, but it has not to be given too much thought. The proper attitude to food is a certain equality. Food is for the maintenance of the body and one should take enough for that — what the body needs; if one gives less the body feels the need

and hankers; if you give more, then that is indulging the vital. As for particular foods the palate likes, the attitude of the mind and vital should be, "If I get, I take; if I don't get, I shall not mind." One should not think too much of food either to indulge or unduly to repress — that is the best.

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One does not need to get a hatred for food in order to get rid of the greed for food. On the other hand, to develop dislike for certain things may help to reject them — but that too is not always the cure, for they may remain in spite of the dislike.

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It is true that the greed of food, the desire of the palate are very strong in a great many if not most of the sadhaks; this is one of the things that they take as natural and seem not at all anxious to get it out of them. I do not think it is active in you; what you felt must have come in from the others, — for very often one feels the things that are in the atmosphere and one must be careful to distinguish that from one's own feeling.

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As to taking tea or food there [*at a friend's place*], you must always remember that to be governed by these desires is not at all an ideal condition. But if you have the impulse and are not able easily and naturally to reject it, you can take on condition you scrupulously inform the Mother both of the act and of the movement and state of mind accompanying it. Also often the desire may not be yours, but may come on you from outside, imposed on you silently or otherwise by suggestion by the others; you must learn to see when it is like that and then you must reject it. Your aspiration must be for an inner change so that there will be no longer any need to indulge the desires, because they will no longer have a hold on you.

You must learn to watch yourself and know what is the true nature and source of the movements in you and report them

carefully — as in fact you had begun to do when you first had the psychic opening and could see the movements in you or many of them at least very clearly.

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Of course — the vital is insatiable.¹ There are only two things that interfere with it [*greed for food*] — the limitations of the body and the disapprobation of the mind — but the latter is not always there. There is also of course the possibility of the psychic interfering, but to that the vital becomes pervious only at a certain stage. It is therefore the body that is the only check for most people.

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These complaints about food are of long standing with many — they come from the animal man and will go on so long as the sadhaks identify themselves with the physical animal in them.

Taste

As regards the progress you have made, I do not think you have given us an exaggerated impression of it; it seems to be quite real. It is no part of this Yoga to suppress taste, *rasa* altogether; so, if you found the ice-cream pleasant, that does not by itself invalidate the completeness of your progress. What is to be got rid of is vital desire and attachment, the greed of food, being overjoyed at getting the food you like, sorry and discontented when you do not have it, giving an undue importance to it, etc. If one wants to be a Yogin, it will not do to be like the ordinary man to whom food, sex and gain are nine-tenths of life or even to keep in any of these things the reactions to which vital human nature is prone. Equality is here the test as in so many other matters. If you can take the Ashram food with satisfaction or at least without dissatisfaction, that is already a sign that attachment

¹ *The correspondent wrote that the vital being never seems to tire of the enjoyment of food, even though it results in illness, pain and misery for the body. — Ed.*

and predilection are losing their old place in the nature.

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Taste is no more a guilty thing than sight or hearing. It is the desire that it awakens that has to be thrown away.

It is possible to get rid of taste like Chaitanya, for it is something that depends on the consciousness and so inhibition is possible. In hypnotic experiments it is found that suggestion can make sugar taste bitter or bitter things sweet. Berkeley and physiology are both right. There is a certain usually fixed relation between the consciousness in the palate and the *guṇa* of the food, but the consciousness can alter the relation if it wants or inhibit it altogether. There are Yogis who make themselves insensitive to pain also and that too can be done by hypnosis.

Another method is to find all things good to the taste without attachment to any.

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No — it [*taste*] is not a bondage, if there is no attachment. Taste is natural and quite permissible so long as one is not the slave of the palate. Certainly, the enjoyment of taste can be offered up. I don't know that there is any fruit of eating in the sense of the phrase in the Gita.

Sensitivity to Smell

This [*reaction of uneasiness after smelling food*] is due to an acute consciousness and sensitiveness of the physical being, especially the vital physical. The sense of being fed by smell has become thereby very acute—the feeding by smell is a well known thing, and there is the Sanskrit proverb, *ghrāṇam ardhabhōjanam*, “smell is a half eating”. But this by itself would not produce the uneasiness, which must be due to an acute physical sensitiveness to the mass of ordinary human reactions concentrated about the food, greed etc. which fill the atmosphere. It does not look as if more than a very few of the sadhaks were free (even they mainly, not wholly) from these

reactions; most seem to accept them as quite normal and proper in a life of Yoga!!

It is good for the physical to be more and more conscious, but it should not be overpowered by the things of which it becomes aware or badly affected or upset by them. A strong equality and mastery and detachment must come in the nerves and body as in the mind, which will enable the physical to know and contact these things without feeling any disturbance; it should know and be conscious and reject and throw away the pressure of the movements in the atmosphere, not merely feel them and suffer.

Hunger

I suppose you have become aware of the principle of hunger in the vital physical. It is not really either by satisfying it or forcibly denying it that it will go — it is by putting a will on it to change and bringing down a higher consciousness that it can change.

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To suppress hunger like that is not good, it very often creates disorders. I doubt whether fatness or thinness of a healthy kind depends on the amount of food taken — there are people who eat well and remain thin and others who take only one meal a day and remain fat. By underfeeding (taking less than the body really needs) one may get emaciated, but that is not a healthy state. The doctors say it depends mostly on the working of certain glands. Anyhow the important thing is now to get the nervous strength back.

As for the liver also eating little does not help, very often it makes the liver sluggish so that it works less well. What is recommended for liver trouble is to avoid greasy food and much eating of sweets and that is also one way of avoiding fat. But to eat too little is not good — it may be necessary in some stomach or intestinal illness, but not for the ordinary liver trouble.

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This feeling of not being able to eat and of eating being unnecessary is a sort of suggestion that is coming to several people. It should be rejected and cleared out of the system as it may lead to weakening of the body by taking insufficient food. Often one does not feel weak at first, a vital energy comes which supports the body, but later on the body weakens. This feeling may sometimes come when one is going much inside and there is no insistence on the bodily needs; but it should not be accepted. If it is rejected, it is likely to disappear.

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When I spoke about the inability to eat being a suggestion, I meant a suggestion to the body consciousness itself, not to your mind. When such suggestions come, they produce physical effects of this kind, instead of the idea of not eating there comes a sort of inability to eat.

*

The absence of hunger and thirst and the eating only for maintenance of the body without any feeling of having eaten is a state that sometimes comes when one is living more and more in the inner being and less in the body.

Quantity of Food

What is necessary is to take enough food and think no more about it, taking it as a means for the maintenance of the physical instrument only. But just as one should not overeat, so one should not diminish unduly — it produces a reaction which defeats the object — for the object is not to allow either the greed for food or the heavy *tamas* of the physical which is the result of excessive eating to interfere with the concentration on the spiritual experience and progress. If the body is left insufficiently nourished, it will think of food more than otherwise.

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Too much eating makes the body material and heavy, eating

too little makes it weak and nervous — one has to find the true harmony and balance between the body's need and the food taken.

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It depends on what you can digest. If you can digest, there is no harm in taking more since you feel hungry. All these things depend upon what is the true need of the body and that may differ in different cases according to the constitution of the body, the amount of work done or exercise taken. It is possible that you have reduced your food too much — so you can try taking more.

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But it is quite natural. Exercise is always supposed to increase the appetite as the body needs more food to restore the extra expense of energy put out. Normally the more physical work the body has to do the more food it needs. On the other hand mental work requires no increase of food — that has been ascertained scientifically by experiment. Hunger may increase by other causes, but when it coincides with the taking up of play or physical exercise of a strenuous character, that is sufficient to explain it.

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If the [*stomach*] pains are strong, you can abstain from work for a day or two till they have subsided. Of course if you feel that you suffer from anything else but liquid food, that settles the question — you can take liquid food only and if you take liquid food only then you will not be strong enough to work. But usually the thought takes a big part in determining these things — the mind has the impression that any solid food will hurt and the body follows — so naturally as a result any solid food does begin to hurt.

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The mental or vital vigour does not or need not depend on the

food — it is the physical that after a time begins to get strained if there is not sufficient nourishment.

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One can bring down the strength [*from above*], but it is also necessary to see that the body has sufficient food, sleep and rest — absence of these things strains the nerves and if the nerves are strained the body feels fatigue, becomes weakened.

*

It is possible there was a suppression or underfeeding — you were several times even proposing to eat still less and the Mother did not approve. When there is this suppression I have always noticed that there comes for a time a strong eagerness or necessity for eating largely as if the body were taking its compensation for the past want.

*

If these [*practices of self-control*] are done as moral virtues, they need not bring a spiritual state. It is only when they are observed as a spiritual discipline that they help — most of them, at least. A man may eat little and have no spirituality — but if he practises it as a means of self-mastery to get rid of the greed of food, then it helps.

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It is better to be careful in these matters of food etc., as in the stage through which your sadhana is passing there is a considerable sensitiveness in the vital physical part of the being and it may be easily disturbed by a wrong impact or a wrong movement like overfeeding.

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When the physical consciousness has been sensitivised, too rich or heavy food becomes offensive to it.

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It is true that as one reaches an advanced age a diminished diet may become desirable.

Fasting

I have myself fasted first for 10 days and then 23 days just to see what it was like and how far one could live without food, and certain things like that. I found that it was no good. To take with equanimity whatever comes (or does not come) seemed to me more the thing than any violent exercises like that.

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I think it is not safe to admit any suggestion of not eating—sometimes it opens the door for the non-eating force to take hold of the mind and there is trouble. That comes easily because the inner being of course does not need any food and this non-need is attempted to be thrown by some forces on the body also which is not under the same happy law. It is better to allow the condition [*of peaceful concentration*] to grow in intensity until it can last even through the meal and after. I suppose it is not really the meal that disturbs but the coming out into the outer consciousness which is a little difficult to avoid when one goes to eat; but that can be overcome in time.

*

You must not let that movement [*of reducing food*] go too far. It is one of the dangers of the sadhana, because of the ascetic turn of Yoga in the past that as experiences come the suggestion comes that food or sleep etc. are not necessary and also there may come an inclination in the body not to eat or not to sleep. But if that is accepted the results are often disastrous. It is no more to be accepted than the inertia itself.

*

To make your sadhana depend upon not eating is to make a great mistake. When people fast like that, they get into an abnormal condition and can easily mistake imaginations and delusions for

true experiences. Much fasting in the end weakens the nervous system. So you must drop this habit of not eating for days together. For Yoga it is a mistake to eat too much but a mistake also to eat nothing or too little. If you eat too much, you become heavy and tamasic; if you fast or eat too little, you excite the vital energies and finally overexcite them, but at the same time you weaken the body and the nerves; both are bad for sadhana. You should eat regularly a moderate but sufficient amount of food; it is only if there is illness or disturbance of digestion that a low diet or not eating sometimes becomes necessary, but fasting even for the purpose of resting the stomach should not last more than a day.

For your sadhana you have to use, not outward means like this, but quietness, sincere peaceful aspiration, openness to the Mother.

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It is a fact that by fasting, if the mind and the nerves are solid or the will force dynamic, one can get for a time into a state of inner energy and receptivity which is alluring to the mind and the usual reactions of hunger, weakness, intestinal disturbance, etc. can be wholly avoided. But the body suffers by diminution and there can easily develop in the vital a morbid overstrained condition due to the inrush of more vital energy than the nervous system can assimilate or coordinate. Nervous people should avoid the temptation to fast; it is often accompanied or followed by delusions and a loss of balance. Especially if there is a motive of hunger-strike or that element comes in, as it did in your case, fasting becomes perilous, for it is then an indulgence of a vital movement which may easily become a habit injurious and pernicious to the sadhana. Even if all these reactions are avoided, still there is no sufficient utility in fasting, since the higher energy and receptivity ought to come not by artificial or physical means but by intensity of the consciousness and strong will for the sadhana.

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I never heard of it [*fasting to get realisation*]; but it is just the way to get the wrong realisation. The nerves get into an excited tense condition (when they do not collapse) and invent realisations or open to a wrong Force. At least that often happens.

*

The idea of giving up food is a wrong inspiration. You can go on with a small quantity of food, but not without food altogether, except for a comparatively short time. Remember what the Gita says, “Yoga is not for one who eats in excess nor for one who abstains from eating altogether.” Vital energy is one thing — of that one can draw a great amount without food and often it increases with fasting; but physical substance, without which life loses its support, is of a different order. If at any time it became possible to renew the body without food and that proved necessary for the Yoga, the Mother and I would be the first to do it. So keep to your established diet and do not get impatient with Nature.

*

The transformation to which we aspire is too vast and complex to come at one stroke; it must be allowed to come by stages. The physical change is the last of these stages and is itself a progressive process.

The inner transformation cannot be brought about by physical means either of a positive or a negative nature. On the contrary, the physical change itself can only be brought about by a descent of the greater supramental consciousness into the cells of the body. Till then at least the body and its supporting energies have to be maintained in part by the ordinary means, food, sleep, etc. Food has to be taken in the right spirit, with the right consciousness; sleep has to be gradually transformed into the Yogic repose. A premature and excessive physical austerity (*tapasyā*) may endanger the process of the sadhana by establishing a disturbance and abnormality of the forces in the different parts of the system. A great energy may pour into the mental and vital parts, but the nerves and the body may be overstrained and

lose the strength to support the play of these higher energies. This is the reason why an extreme physical austerity is not included here as a substantive part of the sadhana.

There is no harm in fasting from time to time for a day or two or in reducing the food taken to a small but sufficient modicum; but entire abstinence for a long period is not advisable.

Types of Food

I think the importance of sattvic food from the spiritual point of view has been exaggerated. Food is rather a question of hygiene and many of the sanctions and prohibitions laid down in ancient religions had more a hygienic than a spiritual motive. The Gita's definitions seem to point in the same direction — tamasic food, it seems to say, is what is stale or rotten with the virtue gone out of it, rajasic food is that which is too acrid, pungent etc., heats the blood and spoils the health, sattvic food is what is pleasing, healthy etc. It may well be that different kinds of food nourish the action of the different gunas and so indirectly are helpful or harmful apart from their physical action. But that is as far as we can confidently go. What particular eatables are or are not sattvic is another question and more difficult to determine. Spiritually, I should say that the effect of food depends more on the occult atmosphere and influences that come with it than on anything in the food itself. Vegetarianism is another question altogether; it stands, as you say, on a will not to do harm to the more conscious forms of life for the satisfaction of the belly.

As to the question of practising to take all kinds of food with equal *rasa*, it is not necessary to practise nor does it really come by practice. One has to acquire equality within in the consciousness and as this equality grows one can extend it or apply it to the various fields of the activity of the consciousness.

*

Those who are ready to give up animal food, should certainly

do so. The others can do it when they are ready.²

*

It is rather certain kinds of food that are supposed to increase it [*sexual desire*]—e.g. meat, onions, chillis etc.

*

It [*the chilli*] is an aphrodisiac—has a strong effect on the sex centre.

*

If it [*taking chillis*] is once only in some months it can't be harmful for the body. For the sadhana what is harmful is taking to satisfy desire, fancy, impulse—it is not the thing in itself.

*

There is no sin at all in eating these things [*onions, potatoes, etc.*]. The only objection to eating much onions is that it is supposed to stimulate not tamoguna but rajas, but there are other foods not forbidden that do that.

*

I think onions can be described as rajaso-tamasic in their character. They are heavy and material and at the same time excitant of certain strong material-vital forces. It is obvious that if one wants to conquer the physical passions and is still very much subject to the body nature and the things that affect it, free indulgence in onions is not advisable. It is only for those who have risen above the body consciousness and mastered it and are not affected by these things that it does not at all matter; for them the use of this or that food or its disuse makes no difference. At the same time I must say that the abstinence from rajasic or tamasic foods does not of itself assure freedom from the things they help to stimulate. Vegetarians, for instance, can be as sensual and excitable as meat-eaters; a man may abstain

² This letter was written to someone living outside the Ashram.—Ed.

from onions and yet be in these respects no better than before. It is a change of consciousness that is effective and this kind of abstention helps that only in so far as it tends to create a less heavy and more refined and plastic physical consciousness for the higher will to act upon. That is something, but it is not all; the change of consciousness can come even in spite of non-abstinence.

Onions are allowed here because the palate of the sadhaks demands something to give a taste to the food. We do not insist on these details, or make an absolutely strict rule, as the stress here is more on the inward change, the outward coming as its result. Only so much is insisted on as is essential for organisation and inner and outer discipline and to point the way to an indispensable self-control. It is pressed on all that the greed of the palate has to be conquered, but it has to be done in the last resort from within, as also the other passions and desires of the lower nature.

*

Betel is anaesthetic, depressive and yet with a certain toxic effect — that is why it is prohibited.

Whatever is done without purpose is a useless and wrong movement.

Eating things from outside is not safe either from the physical or from the spiritual point of view.

Intoxicants

It is the habit in the subconscious material that feels an artificial need created by the past and does not care whether it is harmful or disturbing to the nerves or not. That is the nature of all intoxications (wine, tobacco, cocaine etc.), people go on even after the deleterious effects have shown themselves and even after all real pleasure in it has ceased because of this artificial need (it is not real). The will has to get hold of this subconscious persistence and dissolve it.

*

Smoking is only a morbid craving of physical desire — there is no other reason for people doing it. Smoking is tamasic and prevents control of mind.

*

These intoxicants [*such as bhang*] put one in relation with a vital world in which such things [*as music and song*] exist.

Chapter Two

Sleep

The Yogic Attitude towards Sleep and Food

This is not a Yoga in which physical austerities have to be done for their own sake. Sleep is necessary for the body just as food is. Sufficient sleep must be taken, but not excessive sleep. What sufficient sleep depends on the need of the body.

*

The loss of sleep must not be there. In this Yoga we insist on regular sleep, rest, food, because then the balance can be kept between the strength of the body and the force of all that comes into it from above. Otherwise the body is not able to keep and hold what comes—there is disturbance and loss of the right poise and balance.

*

The first thing I tell people when they want not to eat or sleep is that no Yoga can be done without sufficient food and sleep (see the Gita on this point). This is not Gandhi's asram or a miracle-shop. Fasting and sleeplessness make the nerves morbid and excited and weaken the brain and lead to delusions and fantasies. The Gita says Yoga is not for one who eats too much or sleeps too much, neither is it for one who does not eat or does not sleep, but if one eats and sleeps suitably — *yuktāhārī yuktanidrah* — then one can do it best. It is the same with everything else. How often have I said that excessive retirement was suspect to me and that to do nothing but meditate was a lopsided and therefore unsound sadhana.

*

I must ask you to remember what I told you about sadhana. If

you want to do the sadhana here, you must sleep well and eat well. If you try to stop sleeping or eating or unduly diminish sleep and food, you will weaken the body and excite the vital and wrong and excited and exaggerated movements will come into you. Remember this in future.

*

There are stories told of people living without sleep or food—living without sleep has happened, but it came by an abnormal condition in the person which cannot be brought at will. There is no instance of anyone living without food,—none that is to say which is beyond doubt—but that also may be possible—but here also it must depend on some abnormal condition which cannot be brought at will.

The Need of Sleep and Rest

It is not a right method to try to keep awake at night; the suppression of the needed sleep makes the body tamasic and unfit for the necessary concentration during the waking hours. The right way is to transform the sleep and not suppress it, and especially to learn how to become more and more conscious in sleep itself. If that is done, sleep changes into an inner mode of consciousness in which the sadhana can continue as much as in the waking state, and at the same time one is able to enter into other planes of consciousness than the physical and command an immense range of informative and utilisable experience.

*

By not sleeping enough you weaken the forces of the physical consciousness and so the physical basis of the sadhana is less strong than it should be. It gets more open to the forces of inertia.

*

Is that all your sleep [*three-and-a-half hours*]? If so, it is far too little. If you do not sleep enough, the body and the nervous

envelope will be weakened and the body and the nervous envelope are the basis of the sadhana.

*

I am glad the peace is coming back at last and I trust it will increase and push out these other things. But how is it, — you have not been taking proper rest? Rest is absolutely necessary for the body and still more for the nervous system; not only for working but for sadhana rest to the body and the nerves is essential. If you allow them to be strained and tired, they will not be able to adapt themselves readily for the required change, all sorts of things, confusion, suggestions etc. are likely to come into a tired nervous system. They too must be strong and at peace.

*

It is the want of sleep itself that brings the symptoms of uneasiness. The action of the Sadhana cannot of itself bring this kind of reaction, it is only if the body gets strained by want of sleep, insufficient food, overwork or nervous excitement that there are these things. It is probably because the nerves are strung in the daytime and you do not relax into ease that it is difficult to sleep.

*

One can assimilate [*spiritual experience*] in sleep also. Remaining awake like that is not good, as in the end it strains the nerves and the system receives wrongly in an excited way or else gets too tired to receive.

*

You should have continuous sleep at night and sufficient — otherwise you will feel sleepy in the day which will be a hindrance to work.

*

Sleep is necessary; this kind of broken rest is not good. It is the consciousness in sleep itself that has to change.

*

Such pressure [*to sleep*] only comes (1) when the body needs sleep, not having had enough or because enough rest is not given, (2) when it wants to recuperate after illness or strong fatigue, (3) when there is a pressure from above which the physical consciousness or part of it replies to by trying to go inside.

*

Take care to rest enough. You must guard against fatigue as it may bring relaxation and *tamas*. To rest well is not *tamas*, as some people suppose; it can be done in the right consciousness to maintain the bodily energy — like the *śavāsana* of the strenuous Hathayogin.

*

Both for fevers and for mental trouble sleep is a great help and its absence very undesirable — it is the loss of a curative agency.

The Amount of Sleep Needed

The ordinary period of sleep most people give themselves is 8 hours. In bad health (I am not speaking of acute illness) it can extend to 9. 12 hours is excessive unless one is seriously ill or recovering from illness or else has underslept for a long time and the body is making up arrears of needed sleep.

*

8 hours [*of sleep*] at night is all right, the additional 2 hours is probably necessitated by the bad sleep you were having before. The body recoups itself in this way. That is why it is a mistake to take too little sleep — the body gets strained and has to recoup itself by abnormal sleep afterwards.

*

The normal allowance of sleep is said to be 7 to 8 hours except in advanced age when it is said to be less. If one takes less (5 to 6 for instance) the body accommodates itself somehow, but if the control is taken off it immediately wants to make up for

its lost arrears of the normal 8 hours. So often when one has tried to live on too little food, if one relaxes, the body becomes enormously rapacious for food until it has set right the credit and loss account. At least it often happens like that.

*

It must be the want of sleep that keeps your nervous system exposed to weakness — it is a great mistake not to take sufficient sleep. 7 hours is the minimum needed. When one has a very strong nervous system, one can reduce it to 6, sometimes even 5 — but it is rare and ought not to be attempted without necessity.

*

The feeling that you have in the morning proves that you need more sleep, so it is not wise to cut it short to the minimum as that in the end tells on the body. It is better to continue the sleep when you feel sleepy. 7 hours is not too much for sleep.

*

5½ hours [*of sleep*] is quite insufficient. Six is the absolute minimum, it can go up to seven hours.

*

It is not possible to do at once what you like with the body. If the body is told to sleep only 2 or 3 hours, it may follow if the will is strong enough — but afterwards it may get exceedingly strained and even break down for want of needed rest. The Yogis who minimise their sleep, succeed only after a long tapasya in which they learn how to control the forces of Nature governing the body.

The Real Rest which Restores

In sleep one very commonly passes from consciousness to deeper consciousness in a long succession until one reaches the psychic and rests there or else from higher to higher consciousness until one reaches rest in some silence and peace. The few minutes one

passes in this rest are the real sleep which restores — if one does not get it, there is only a half rest. It is when you come near to either of these domains of rest, that you begin to see these higher kind of dreams.

*

A long unbroken sleep is necessary because there are just ten minutes of the whole into which one enters into a true rest — a sort of Sachchidananda immobility of the consciousness — and that it is which really restores the system. The rest of the time is spent first in travelling through various states of consciousness towards that and then coming out of it back towards the waking state. This fact of the ten minutes true rest has been noted by medical men, but of course they know nothing about Sachchidananda!

*

This feeling of having enough sleep [*when one wakes at night*] and after sleeping again of not having had enough is not unusual. It might be inferred that the first sleep is really enough and the second is a tamasic sleep which leaves the body unrested. Some doctors say that there are about ten minutes of rest which are the true sleep and all the rest is only a process of getting into the ten minutes and getting out again — for these ten minutes are difficult to arrive at. Perhaps you get your ten minutes before the first waking. The difficulty is that the length of sleep seems important and that by the habit of less the nerves continually seem to get strained — at least I have seen that with many. If that can be overcome then so much sleep might not be requisite.

*

According to a recent medical theory one passes in sleep through many phases until one arrives at a state in which there is absolute rest and silence — it lasts only for ten minutes, the rest of the time is taken up by travelling to that and travelling back again to the waking state. I suppose the ten minutes sleep can be called *susupti* in the Brahman or Brahmaloaka, the rest is *svapna*

or passage through other worlds (planes or states of conscious existence). It is these ten minutes that restore the energies of the being, and without it sleep is not refreshing.

According to the Mother's experience and knowledge one passes from waking through a succession of states of sleep consciousness which are in fact an entry and passage into so many worlds and arrives at a pure Sachchidananda state of complete rest, light and silence; afterwards one retraces one's way till one reaches the waking physical state. It is this Sachchidananda period that gives sleep all its restorative value. These two accounts, the scientific and the occult-spiritual, are practically identical with each other. But the former is only a recent discovery of what the occult-spiritual knowledge knew long ago.

People's ideas of sound sleep are absolutely erroneous. What they call sound sleep is merely a plunge of the outer consciousness into a complete subconsciousness. They call that a dreamless sleep; but it is only a state in which the surface sleep consciousness which is a subtle prolongation of the outer still left active in sleep itself is unable to record the dreams and transmit them to the physical mind. As a matter of fact the whole sleep is full of dreams. It is only during the brief time in which one is in the Brahmaloaka that the dreams cease.

Getting Good Sleep

The sleep before 12 is supposed to be the best.

*

To sleep without a burdened stomach is obviously more healthy, both psychologically and physically.

*

I don't think the lack of sleep when it comes is due to want of work; for even those who do no work at all, get good sleep. It is something else; but it must be got over.

*

It is restlessness in you which prevents you from keeping still inwardly or outwardly. To sleep well the vital and physical and mind also must learn how to relax themselves and be quiet.

*

Obviously — it [*reading a novel before going to bed*] threw you into a tamasic consciousness and consequently the sleep was heavy in a gross subconsciousness and the fatigue was the result.

*

You should not jump up from sleep. Rise quietly and take a little time. You must give time for the consciousness to come back fully into the body.

Sleep during the Day

Many people can't stand afternoon sleep. But when it is more refreshing, it is because it is lighter than the night sleep — one does not go so deep down to the subconscious.

*

According to the old Ayurvedic shastra “sleep by day impairs the vitality”; but there are conditions in which the rule may not apply. It is however true that these [*sexual*] dreams do easily occur during sleep by day and the dreams themselves come in a state of deep subconscious relaxation, tamasic inertia when the system can be touched by any subconscious suggestion or influence.

Sleep and Sadhana

Sadhana can go on in the dream or sleep state as well as in the waking.

*

Once one is in full sadhana, sleep becomes as much a part of it as waking.

*

If the sleep becomes conscious even for a time, then experience and sadhana of itself can go on in the sleep state and not only in the waking condition.

*

It is usually only if there is much activity of sadhana in the day that it extends also into the sleep state.

*

There is no reason at all why intensity of sadhana should bring insufficient sleep.

*

If you feel the need of sleep you ought to sleep. The pressure of sadhana should not be allowed to become excessive.

*

It [*sleepiness during the day*] may possibly be due to the attempt of the higher consciousness to descend then. It sometimes produces this effect of sleepiness on the body, for the physical attempts to go inside to meet the descending consciousness and if it is not accustomed to enter into one of the higher samadhis on such occasions, the going inside translates itself to the physical as sleep. The exercise may have contributed, of course, by its reaction on the body.

Loss of Consciousness during Sleep

In sleep one easily loses the consciousness of the day, because of the lapse of the physical being into the subconscious. You have to get the power to reestablish it when you wake.

*

Sleep, because of its subconscious basis, usually brings a falling down to a lower level, unless it is a conscious sleep; to make it more and more conscious is the one permanent remedy: but also until that is done, one should always react against this sinking

tendency when one wakes and not allow the effect of dull nights to accumulate. But these things need always a settled endeavour and discipline and must take time, sometimes a long time. It will not do to refrain from the effort because immediate results do not appear.

*

It often, even usually happens that after sleep — not the sleep of meditation, but the ordinary sleep — one finds one's consciousness has gone down. It is no use getting distressed by that; one has to remain quiet and call back the higher consciousness.

*

The consciousness in the night almost always descends below the level of what one has gained by sadhana in the waking consciousness — unless there are special experiences of an uplifting character in the time of sleep or unless the Yogic consciousness acquired is so strong in the physical itself as to counteract the pull of the subconscious inertia. In ordinary sleep the consciousness in the body is that of the subconscious physical, which is a diminished consciousness, not awake and alive like the rest of the being. The rest of the being stands back and part of its consciousness goes out into other planes and regions and has experiences which are recorded in dreams such as that you have related. You say you go to very bad places and have experiences like the one you narrate; but that is not a sign, necessarily, of anything wrong in you. It merely means that you go into the vital world, as everybody does, and the vital world is full of such places and such experiences. What you have to do is not so much to avoid at all going there, for it cannot be avoided altogether, but to go with full protection until you get mastery in these regions of supraphysical Nature. That is one reason why you should remember us and open to the Force before sleeping; for the more you get that habit and can do it successfully, the more the protection will be with you.

*

The difficulty of keeping the consciousness at night happens to

most—it is because the night is the time of sleep and relaxation and the subconscious comes up. The true consciousness comes at first in the waking state or in meditation, it takes possession of the mental, the vital, the conscious physical, but the subconscious vital and physical remain obscure and this obscurity comes up when there is sleep or an inert relaxation. When the subconscious is enlightened and penetrated by the true consciousness, this disparity disappears. The Pishachic woman that tried to enter [*in a dream*] is the false vital impure Shakti—and the voice that spoke was that of his psychic being. If he keeps his psychic being awake and in front, it will always protect him against these dark forces as it did this time.

*

The sleep you describe in which there is a luminous silence or else the sleep in which there is Ananda in the cells, these are obviously the best states. The other hours, those of which you are unconscious, may be spells of a deep slumber in which you have gone out of the physical into the mental, vital or other planes. You say you were unconscious, but it may simply be that you do not remember what happened; for in coming back there is a sort of turning over of the consciousness, a transition or reversal, in which everything experienced in sleep except perhaps the last happening of all or else one that was very impressive, recedes from the physical awareness and all becomes as if a blank. There is another blank state, a state of inertia, not truly blank, but heavy and unremembering; but that is when one goes deeply and crassly into the subconscious; this subterranean plunge is very undesirable, obscuring, lowering, often fatiguing rather than restful, the reverse of the luminous silence.

*

To get rid of the subconscious in sleep, the proper way is not to diminish sleep, for that only overstrains the body and helps the lower forces to trouble it. The right way is to change gradually (it cannot be done all of a sudden) the character of the sleep.

Conscious Sleep

At night when one sinks into the subconscious after being in a good state of consciousness, we find that state gone and we have to labour to get it back again. On the other hand, if the sleep is of the better kind, one may wake up in a good condition. Of course, it is better to be conscious in sleep, if one can.

*

It is better to go to sleep and make it a discipline to become conscious in your sleep. Sleep may be only a habit, but it is a necessary habit at present and the thing to do is not to suppress, but to transform it into a conscious inner state.

*

You must not try to avoid sleep at night—if you persist in doing that, the bad results may not appear immediately, but the body will get strained and there will be a breakdown which may destroy what you have gained in your sadhana.

If you want to remain conscious at night, train yourself to make your sleep conscious—not to eliminate sleep altogether, but to transform it.

*

Sleep cannot be replaced, but it can be changed; for you can become conscious in sleep. If you are thus conscious, then the night can be utilised for a higher working—provided the *body* gets its due rest; for the object of sleep is the body's rest and the renewal of the vital-physical force. It is a mistake to deny to the body food and sleep, as some from an ascetic idea or impulse want to do—that only wears out the physical support and, although either the Yogic or the vital energy can long keep at work an overstrained or declining physical system, a time comes when this drawing is no longer so easy nor perhaps possible. The body should be given what it needs for its own efficient working. Moderate but sufficient food (without greed or desire), sufficient sleep, but not of the heavy tamasic kind, this should be the rule.

*

To keep yourself awake is not permissible — it depresses the body in the end and excites the brain and leads to an unquiet and unbalanced consciousness. The body needs sufficient rest in order to be able to bear the pressure of sadhana.

You can pray or will before sleeping to be conscious in sleep, and you can get your waking mind full of the Mother. That is the best way. But you must not expect to be able to succeed all at once. First, the sleep-mind must become conscious of what it is doing in sleep; only afterwards can you determine what it is to do there.

*

In the sleep what holds the body is the subconscious — and the subconscious acts according to the already formed present habits or else the impressions left by past thoughts, feelings, memories, activities. If the thought of the Mother and her force and working are fixed in the conscious hours, then it will be easier to bring it into the subconscious.

*

As for asserting one's will in sleep it is simply a matter of accustoming the subconscious to obey the will laid upon it by the waking mind before sleeping. It very often happens for instance that if you fix upon the subconscious your will to wake up at a particular hour in the morning, the subconscious will obey and you wake up automatically at that hour. This can be extended to other matters. Many have found that by putting a will against sexual dreams or emission on the subconscious before sleeping, there comes after a time (it does not always succeed at the beginning) an automatic action causing one to awaken before the dream concludes or before it begins or in some way preventing the thing forbidden from happening. Also one can develop a more conscious sleep in which there is a sort of inner consciousness which can intervene.

*

This [*unconsciousness in sleep*] is quite usual. Consciousness in

sleep can only be gradually established with the growth of the true consciousness in the waking state.

*

You cannot expect to be conscious at once in sleep: it takes a long time. If you can be always conscious in waking, then it will be easier to be conscious in sleep.

*

The sleep consciousness can be effectively dealt with only when the waking mind has made a certain amount of progress.

*

All dream or sleep consciousness cannot be converted at once into conscious sadhana. That has to be done progressively. But your power of conscious samadhi must increase before this can be done.

*

That is all right [*if the activity of sadhana goes on at night*]. It shows that the sadhana is becoming continuous and that you are becoming conscious and using a conscious will in sleep as well as in waking. This is a very important step forward in the sadhana.

*

You are more conscious in your sleep than in your waking condition. This is because of the physical consciousness which is not yet sufficiently open; it is only just beginning to open. In your sleep the inner being is active and the psychic there can influence more actively the mind and vital. When the physical consciousness is spiritually awake, you will no longer feel the trouble and obstruction you now have and will be as open in the waking consciousness as in sleep.

Concentration before and after Sleep

The gap made by the night and waking with the ordinary con-

sciousness is the case with everybody almost (of course, the “ordinary” consciousness differs according to the progress); but it is no use waiting to be conscious in sleep; you have to get the habit of getting back the thread of the progress as soon as may be and for that there must be some concentration after rising.

At night, you have to pass into sleep in the concentration — you must be able to concentrate with the eyes closed, lying down and the concentration must deepen into sleep — that is to say, sleep must become a concentrated going inside away from the outer waking state. If you find it necessary to sit for a time you may do so, but afterwards lie down, keeping the concentration till this happens.

*

It [*meditation before sleep*] can certainly have an effect — though not perhaps through the whole sleep — for the sleep passes through many phases or planes and the effect is not likely to survive all these changes of consciousness and domain. It is possible however to get after a time a control and consciousness in the sleep itself. As for the subconscious, it can certainly have an effect, but most when there is a precise and positive will put upon the subconscious in the meditation.

*

You have to start [*becoming conscious in sleep*] by concentrating before you sleep always with a specific will or aspiration. The will or aspiration may take time to reach the subconscious, but if it is sincere, strong and steady, it does reach after a time — so that an automatic consciousness and will are established in the sleep itself which will do what is necessary.

*

You need not meditate at once [*after waking in the morning*] — but for a few minutes take a concentrated attitude calling the Mother’s presence for the day.

Hearing Music after Waking

The expression [*of sweet melodious music*] was of the psychic plane — and the music was of that domain. Very often coming out of a conscious sleep like that the inner consciousness (which heard the music) lasts for a few seconds even after waking, before it goes back and is entirely covered by the waking mind. In that case what was heard or seen in sleep would continue for those few seconds after waking.

The Waking Mind and Sleep

It is the waking mind which thinks and wills and controls more or less the life in the waking state. In the sleep that mind is not there and there is no control. It is not the thinking mind that sees dreams etc. and is conscious in a rather incoherent way in sleep. It is usually what is called the subconscious that comes up then. If the waking mind were active in the body, one would not be able to sleep.

*

You are mixing up different things altogether — that is why you cannot understand [*the previous reply*]. I was simply explaining the difference between the ordinary waking consciousness and the ordinary sleep consciousness as they work in men whether sadhaks or not sadhaks — and it has nothing to do with the true self or psychic being. Sleep and waking are determined not by the true self or psychic being, but by the mind's waking condition or activity or its cessation — when it ceases for a time, then it is the subconscious that is there on the surface and there is sleep.

Depression in Sleep

The depression coming on you in sleep must have been due to one of two causes. It might have been the trace left by an unpleasant experience in some disagreeable quarter of the vital world and there are places in plenty of that kind there. It can

hardly have been an attack, for that would surely have left a more distinct impression of something having happened, even if there was no actual memory of it; but merely to enter into certain places or meet their inhabitants or enter into contact with their atmosphere can have, unless one is a born fighter and takes an aggressive pleasure in facing and conquering these ordeals, a depressing and exhausting effect. If that is the cause, then it is a question of either avoiding these places, which can be done by an effort of will, once one knows that it is this which happens, or putting around you a special protection against the touch of that atmosphere. The other possible cause is a plunge into a too obscure and subconscious sleep — that has sometimes the effect you describe. In any case, do not allow yourself to be discouraged when these things happen; they are common phenomena one cannot fail to meet with as soon as one begins to penetrate behind the veil and touch the occult causes of the psychological happenings within us. One has to learn the causes, note and face the difficulty and always react — never accept the depression thrown on one, but react as you did the first time. If there are always forces around which are concerned to depress and discourage, there are always forces above and around us which we can draw upon, — draw into ourselves to restore, to fill up again with strength and faith and joy and the power that perseveres and conquers. It is really a habit that one has to get of opening to these helpful forces and either passively receiving them or actively drawing upon them — for one can do either. It is easier if you have the conception of them above and around you and the faith and the will to receive them — for that brings the experience and concrete sense of them and the capacity to receive at need or at will. It is a question of habituating your consciousness to get into touch and keep in touch with these helpful forces — and for that you must accustom yourself to reject the impressions forced on you by the others, depression, self-distrust, repining and all similar disturbance.

As for the actual mastery of a situation by occult powers, it can only come by use and experiment — as one develops strength by exercises or develops a process in the laboratory by finding

out through the actual use of a power how it can and ought to be applied to the field in which it operates. It is of no use waiting for the strength before one tries; the strength will come with repeated trials. Neither must you fear failure or be discouraged by failure — for these things do not always succeed at once. These are things one has to learn by personal experiences, how to get into touch with the cosmic forces, how to relate or equate our individual action with theirs, how to become an instrument of the Master Consciousness which we call the Divine.

There is something a little too personal in your attitude — I mean the insistence on personal strength or weakness as the determining factor. After all, for the greatest as for the smallest of us our strength is not our own but given to us for the game that has to be played, the work that we have to do. The strength may be formed in us, but its present formation is not final, — neither formation of power nor formation of weakness. At any moment the formation may change — at any moment one sees, especially under the pressure of Yoga, weakness changing into power, the incapable becoming capable, suddenly or slowly the instrumental consciousness rising to a new stature or developing its latent powers. Above us, within us, around us is the All-Strength and it is that that we have to rely on for our work, our development, our transforming change. If we proceed with the faith in the work, in our instrumentality for the work, in the Power that missions us, then in the very act of trial, of facing and surmounting difficulties and failures, the strength will come and we shall find our capacity to contain as much as we need of the All-Strength of which we grow more and more perfect vessels.

Chapter Three

Dreams

All Sleep Full of Dreams

Again, about the sleep, it is like that because the ordinary state of sleep is an unconscious condition. One has always dreams throughout the night, but the surface being is then unconscious and records only a few of them that come through and even these it records in an incoherent way. Really one is acting or working on one plane or another throughout sleep except for a few minutes. When the inner consciousness grows, then one becomes more and more aware of what is going on, what one is doing and sleep is no longer quite the same thing — for it is more conscious.

*

They [*people who speak of “sound and dreamless sleep”*] simply mean that when they come back, they are not conscious of having dreamed. In the sleep the consciousness goes into other planes and has experiences there and when these are translated perfectly or imperfectly by the physical mind, they are called dreams. All the time of sleep such dreams take place, but sometimes one remembers and at other times does not at all remember. Sometimes also one goes low down into the subconscious and the dreams are there, but so deep down that when one comes up there is not even the consciousness that one had dreamed.

*

All sleep is full of dreams. Why should night or day make any difference?

Different Kinds of Dreams

Everybody has dreams in sleep though all do not remember

them. In these dreams one goes to all kinds of places in all kinds of worlds and sees and does things there or has experience of what happens there. Some of these dreams have importance and a meaning for the sadhana — most have none or very little.

*

These dreams are not all mere dreams, all have not a casual, incoherent or subconscious building. Many are records or transcripts of experiences on the vital plane into which one enters in sleep, some are scenes or events of the subtle physical plane. There one often undergoes happenings or carries on actions that resemble those of the physical life with the same surroundings and the same people, though usually there is in arrangement and feature some or a considerable difference. But it may also be a contact with other surroundings and with other people, not known in the physical life or not belonging at all to the physical world.

In the waking state you are conscious only of a certain limited field and action of your nature. In sleep you can become vividly aware of things beyond this field — a larger mental or vital nature behind the waking state or else a subtler physical or a subconscious nature which contains much that is there in you but not distinguishably active in the waking state. All these obscure tracts have to be cleared or else there can be no change of the Prakriti. You should not allow yourself to be disturbed by the press of vital or subconscious dreams — for these two make up the larger part of dream-experience — but aspire to get rid of these things and of the activities they indicate, to be conscious and reject all but the divine Truth; the more you get that Truth and cling to it in the waking state, rejecting all else, the more all this inferior dream-stuff will get clear.

*

It is the subconscious that is active in ordinary dreams. But in the dreams in which one goes out into other planes of consciousness, mental, vital, subtle physical, it is part of the inner being, inner mental or vital or physical that is usually active.

*

A dream, when it is not from the subconscious, is either symbolic or else an experience of some supraphysical plane or a formation thrown in by some mental or vital or etheric force or in rare cases an indication of some event actual or probable in the past, present or future.

*

This is an instance of a dream of exact physical prevision. The power to have such dreams is comparatively rare, for ordinarily such previsions come in inner vision but not in sleep. In dreams vital or mental formations often take shape which sometimes fulfil themselves in essence, but not with this accuracy of detail.

It is only a particular class of dreams that do that. Most coherent dreams are either symbolic or indicate things that take place in the mental or vital planes rather than on the physical.

This indicates a power of conscious thought-formation. Thoughts have an effective power—usually by creating an atmosphere or tendencies—thus when one is ill, those around should not have thoughts of gloomy foreboding, grief or fear, for that works against cure. But the capacity of conscious thought-formation is a special power and uncommon. It can be acquired or come of itself by sadhana.

*

All dreams of this kind [*indicating future events*] are very obviously formations such as one often meets on the vital, more rarely on the mental plane. Sometimes they are the formations of your own mind or vital; sometimes they are the formations of other minds with an exact or a modified transcription in yours; sometimes formations come that are made by the non-human forces or beings of these other planes. These things are not true and need not become true in the physical world, but they may still have effects in the physical if they are framed with that purpose or that tendency and, if they are allowed, they may realise their events or their meaning—for they are most often symbolical or schematic—in the inner or the outer life. The proper course with them is simply to observe and understand

and, if they are from a hostile source, reject or destroy them.

There are other dreams that have not the same character but are a representation or transcription of things that actually happen on other planes, in other worlds under other conditions than ours. There are, again, some dreams that are purely symbolic and some that indicate existing movements and propensities in us, whether familiar or undetected by the waking mind, or exploit old memories or else raise up things either passively stored or still active in the subconscious, a mass of various stuff which has to be changed or got rid of as one rises into a higher consciousness. If one learns how to interpret, one can get from dreams much knowledge of the secrets of our nature and of other-nature.

*

Those [*dreams*] which are formed from subconscious impressions arranged at haphazard (subconscious mind, vital or physical) either have no significance or some meaning which is difficult to find and not very much worth knowing even if it is found. Other dreams are either simply happenings of the mental, vital or subtle physical worlds or else belong to the wider mental, vital or subtle physical plane and have a meaning which the figures of the dream are trying to communicate.

*

It often happens that when something is thrown out of the waking consciousness it still occurs in dream. This recurrence is of two kinds. One is when the thing is gone, but the memory and impression of it remains in the subconscious and comes up in dream-form in sleep. These subconscious dream-recurrences are of no importance; they are shadows rather than realities. The other is when dreams come in the vital to test or to show how far in some part of the inner being the old movement remains or is conquered. For in sleep the control of the waking consciousness and will is not there. If then even in spite of that one is conscious in sleep and either does not feel the old movement when the circumstances that formerly caused it are repeated in dream or else soon conquers and throws it out, then it must be understood

that there too the victory is won. Your dream which seems to have corresponded with realities was a true experience of this kind; the old movement did come from habit, but at once you became conscious and rejected it. This is an encouraging sign and promises complete removal in a very short time.

*

Subconscient dreams and lower vital dreams are usually incoherent. Higher vital dreams are usually and mental dreams are always coherent.

Subconscient Dreams

When one is in the physical consciousness, then the sleep is apt to be of the subconscious kind, often heavy and unrefreshing, the dreams also of the subconscious kind, incoherent and meaningless or if there is a meaning the dream symbols are so confused and obscure that it is not possible to follow it. It is by bringing the Mother's Light into the subconscious that this can be dispelled and the sleep becomes restful or luminous and conscious.

*

A dream from the subconscious plane has no meaning; it is simply a *khichudi* of impressions and memories left in the subconscious from the past.

*

Dreams of this kind [*in which old vital movements occur*] arise from the subconscious. It is one of the most embarrassing elements of Yogic experience to find how obstinately the subconscious retains what has been settled and done with in the upper layers of the consciousness. But just for that reason these dreams are often a useful indication as they enable us to pursue things to their obscure roots in this underworld and excise them. No, it does not indicate that you are taking in any part of your consciousness your present pursuit of Yoga as a stopgap, but merely that old vital tendencies and activities are still there in that mys-

terious and obscure subconscious limbo and that their ghosts can rise twittering to the surface when the conscious will is in abeyance. If the dream was trivial, it would seem to show that this ghost was not a strong demon like the militant Norwegian saga *revenants* but a phantom from an unsubstantial Hades.

*

Most people have that kind of dream at night. It is because the thoughts and memories that belong to the past are there always in some part of the being, even if they are not active in the waking state, and they become active at night. That is why one is constantly meeting the people once known, either one goes to the old places and meets them or they come.

*

You seem to be attaching too much importance to dreams. Keep your waking mind and vital free—you can deal afterwards with the dreams which will then be only memories from the subconscious.

Vital Dreams

Most among the sadhaks see many dreams of the vital plane when they sleep. In sleep the being goes out into other worlds and planes and it has to pass through the vital on the way—and as the vital is nearest to the waking consciousness, it is there it most vividly remembers. Probably you see better dreams but do not remember them.

*

In dreams on the vital plane there is always a deviation from the norm of the physical fact—sometimes this is because of the free play in the vital, but at others it is only a fantasy of formation either in the vital itself or in the subconscious mind which transcribes the incidents of the dream and sometimes alters them by contributions of its own.

*

These are dreams of the vital plane — they have probably some reference to something going on in your vital, but these dreams cannot be precisely interpreted unless there is either a clue that is clear on the surface or else you yourself can relate it to something in your experience of which you are aware. The images of the ascent and the coming down of water (consciousness or some other gift from above) are frequent and the general meaning is always the same — but the precise significance here is not clear.

*

Your dreams are of a very familiar kind, both coming often to sadhaks. The first is a sort of formation on the vital plane or a possibility for the future — whether or how it will come about in the physical is a different matter. The other is an excursion into the vital world where there are all the types and forms of things that happen here, each having its own region or province there. One is constantly going into these planes (and others also, mental and psychic and subtle physical as well as vital) and seeing and doing things there. Very often what one does and experiences there is a symbol of things in the nature, tendencies, achievements, difficulties, things hidden within or only half-seen on the surface. This one came clearly to show how far you have travelled from certain elements, tendencies or possibilities that were there in the past. The feeling in the dream was the sign of that progress.

*

A great many people have these dreams [*of flying*]. It is the vital being that goes out in sleep and moves about in the vital worlds and has this sense of floating in the air in its own (vital) body. The waves of a sea having the colour of lightning must have been the atmosphere of some vital province. I have known of some sadhaks, when they go at first out of the body in a more conscious way, thinking they have actually levitated, the vividness of the movement is so intense, but it is simply the vital body going out.

*

Flying during sleep over houses, streets, etc. simply means that the consciousness in the vital sheath has gone out and is moving over places in the vital or subtle physical world (even sometimes the material); it is always in the vital sheath that one flies like that.

The ascending movement is different — in that, it is the consciousness that goes high up to other planes or lands and comes down again to the body.

*

It is a dream of the vital plane. In these dreams the figures of the physical life take another form and meaning and the consciousness that lives and acts among them is not the outer physical consciousness but some inner vital part of the being. The insurrection of the French soldiers is a figure of some disturbance on the vital plane which wants to happen and affect the inner life. The import of the dream is the readiness of the vital inner consciousness to put its reliance on the Mother and take refuge in her against all possible disturbances or perils of the inner life.

*

These dreams are of the vital plane. Those about going home come from a part of the vital which still keeps the memory of the past relations and goes there during the sleep. The dreams about the Mother record meetings with her on the vital plane. For the first you should throw them away when you awake and not let your vital keep their impress. The experiences you had there (of the Mother coming in the heart and telling you) were psychic in character, not of the vital dream kind.

The difficulty you have in sadhana may come from the vital or physical mind becoming active. That often happens after the first experiences of calm and silence. One has to detach oneself from these activities in meditation as a witness and call down the original calm into these parts also. But this may take time. If one can in meditation sufficiently isolate oneself from the surroundings and go inside, the quietude comes more quickly.

*

The dream was of a kind one often has in the vital plane in which one gets into inextricable difficulties till suddenly one finds the way out. Gujerat in the dream was not Gujerat, but only a symbol of one part of the vital world which is opposed to the spiritual life and full of vital powers that come in the way either by fraud or by force. These dreams are indications of certain parts of vital nature (not one's own, but the general vital Nature) which stand in the way of spiritual fulfilment. When one goes there and masters them, then one is free from any intervention of these parts of Nature in the sadhana.

Symbolic Dreams on the Vital Plane

The dreams you describe are very clearly symbolic dreams on the vital plane. These dreams may symbolise anything, forces at play, the underlying structure and tissue of things done or experienced, actual or potential happenings, real or suggested movements or changes in the inner or outer nature.

The timidity of which the apprehension in the dream was an indication, was probably not anything in the conscious mind or higher vital, but something subconscious in the lower vital nature. This part always feels itself small and insignificant and has very easily a fear of being submerged by the greater consciousness — a fear which in some may amount at the first contact to something like a panic alarm or terror.

*

These dreams are quite symbolical of the vital forces that come and attack you. If you face them with courage they are reduced to helplessness. I don't think it is at all your father and brother that you meet — although something of their hostile feelings may be taken advantage of by those forces to take their forms — also they may do it in order to create sympathy in you and prevent you from acting against them. But apart from that the figures of the physical mother and father and relatives are very often symbolical of the physical or the hereditary nature or

generally of the ordinary nature in which we are born.

*

Your dream was evidently a symbolic representation of some part of the vital plane (corresponding to a part of human nature also) in which the Mother had made her house (established something of her consciousness). The village represented some formation of human life in which there is outward beauty and harmony as in certain parts of European life, but no touch of the Divine. The jungle represented the surroundings in which this formation has been made—it is made in the midst of a vital nature which is wild and savage and full of dangerous things—the village, the formation is therefore something quite insecure and artificial. That is indeed the nature of much of human civilisation, an artificial construction in the midst of a dangerously unregenerated vital nature, and it can collapse at any moment. The sea is the vital consciousness itself, for water is often a symbol of the vital. The footpath seems to indicate something the Mother wants the sadhaks to build, to form in that part of the vital, but which is not easy to make and only can be made by constant perseverance which will finally prevail against the instability of the vital. Vital dreams of this kind are often very interesting and instructive if one can get the clue to their symbols, but to get the clue is not always easy.

*

The dream you relate in your letter is not of the psychic but of the vital plane—it relates entirely to conflicting movements of the vital consciousness, representing on the one side the attachments of the vital nature, on the other the movement of the higher (inner) vital to get free from them. Dreams like this one on the vital plane have to be observed and understood as indications of what is going on within you, but must not be taken too literally, as they are often symbolic and figurative, and cannot be always accepted as decisive directions for action in the external life. Thus the figure of the Mother taking a meal of rice with rice-water and salt might be a valid symbol—in this case for the

Mother's freedom from all food desire and the necessity of your lower vital attaining to the same freedom; but if you gave it an external and physical application, e.g. that the Mother had actually taken to such a diet and you should do the same, the interpretation would be an obvious mistake. So also the part about the service can only have been enacted on the vital plane to test or to stimulate the vital being's readiness to give up the service, if and when the Mother might demand any such action from you. But to deduce from a vital experience of this kind, however useful for a vital change, that you ought actually to give up service, would be as much a mistake as to take up a diet of rice and salt and rice-water on the strength of that part of the dream.

*

Yes, your feeling about the protection is perfectly true.

The dream about X and going to the Mother was an experience of something that took place on the vital plane. Things happen there that have some connection with the nature and life here, but they happen differently because there it is not the physical beings that meet, but the vital beings of people. One can gather what is the nature of one's own inner vital being — which is often very different from the physical personality that acts in front in the body. By the acting of the consciousness in these dreams the inner parts of the being begin to be more active and have more influence on the outer nature. Your inner vital being seems from the dream experiences that you have related to be very strong, faithful, clear-minded, resolute, able to deal with the hostile forces and their activities in the right way and do the right thing.

The sensation of going somewhere means that part of the consciousness is going into some other plane than the physical. The men you saw and also the vision that came afterwards belonged to these supraphysical worlds. The vision seems to be symbolic of something from above, but of what is not quite clear from the details. Gold is the colour of the Truth that comes from above.

Formations in Vital Dreams

These are dreams of the vital planes. Sometimes they are actual appearances — things that happen on that plane. But sometimes they are merely formations, thoughts or feelings put into shape. Not necessarily your thoughts or feelings, but those of others also or things floating in the atmosphere — or else formations made by the beings of those planes.

*

I said this dream was an actual happening on the vital plane, not a formation. If somebody attacks you in the street, that is not a formation. But if somebody hypnotises you and suggests to you that you are ill — that suggestion is a formation put in by the hypnotiser.

*

Your dream was not a sign of the worldly desire in you, but only a test or ordeal dream such as you have had before. Your absence of response in the dream shows that you have no such inclination towards these things as many have. The whole was only a formation or suggestion of outer forces on the vital plane to see what kind of response, if any, your consciousness would make.

*

These are dreams of the vital plane in which the vital plane takes up the spiritual experience and tries to turn it into forms of ego with a suggestion afterwards of loss of power and of consciousness and a fall. You should attach no importance to these dreams except as an indication of mixture in the sleeping state.

*

It is singular that you should have accepted dreams of this kind as true or allowed them to determine or influence your conduct even in the slightest degree. These dreams are nothing but formations of the obscure lower-vital consciousness; they are made up of its desires, instincts and subconscious memories, all jumbled

together to weave an incoherent dream-scene and dream-story and, in this case, used by some vital Desire-Force of that plane to turn you into the instrument of its movement. They have no other value for the Sadhana than to show you vividly what is there in your lower vital nature, whether awake on the surface or lying in wait in the subconscious parts. The only thing to do with them is to turn the Light upon those parts and call on the Divine Power to expunge them from the nature. It is perfectly easy for this Desire-Force or for the subliminal part of the mind to create images of anyone it pleases or to reproduce the voice and make him or her speak or act in any way convenient to it.

*

These are experiences of the vital plane; they have a meaning if one knows how to interpret them. This one indicates the possibility of strong attacks on the vital plane, but at the same time promises protection. These are formations of the vital plane, sometimes things that try to happen but not necessarily effective. One can observe and understand, but not allow them to influence the mind; for often adverse forces try to influence the mind by suggestion through these dream experiences.

*

Your experience of the peace in the body was a very good one. As for the bad dream, it was a hostile formation from the vital world — a suggestion in a dream form intended to upset you. These things should be dismissed — you should say in yourself “It is false — no such thing can happen” and throw it away as you would a wrong suggestion in the waking state.

Unpleasant or Bad Vital Dreams

The experience of the hill and the rose and the sudden cold is one of those dream experiences that one gets on the vital plane, — for there things good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant are very close to each other.

*

Everybody has unpleasant or bad dreams and one can have them very frequently — they mean only that one gets into contact with or passes through the darker parts of the vital world. All of us do that in sleep, for we go out of the material plane and pass through many realms. But there is no reason to be afraid of these things. Have faith in the protection of the Mother and go to sleep with it around you — that is the best way of passing through these regions.

*

These are dreams sent from the vital world. There are three things she must develop with regard to them:

(1) to get the habit of calling the Mother at once in the dream itself;

(2) not to fear — if one does not fear, these other world forces become helpless;

(3) to put no belief in the reality of such formations and regard them only as suggestions put into form, just as one gets a frightful imagination of this or that happening but the reason knows it to be a mere work of imagination and is not moved by it.

*

In sleep one enters into places of the vital world in which there are such dangers [*as the threat of violence*]; but if one goes there in full reliance on the Mother's protection, all dangers either disappear or become ineffective.

*

These dreams come from the vital world, — there is nobody in the Asram who does not have them or else has not had them. You must not get afraid or upset at these things, but look at them with indifference, without fear and passion.

Do not always be thinking of the Hostile Force or believe that everything of this kind is an attack of the Hostile Force. It is simply that in dream you entered into one part of an obscure vital world and saw or heard things there. Even if you are attacked,

you have to remain quiet and firm and call in the Mother's Protection and Force.

*

It is evident that X's experience was only what is called a nightmare — an attack in sleep from some force of the vital world, to which he probably opened himself in some way, it may be by answering to the man from the street who carried the worst vital atmosphere around him. The figure of the woman was only a form given by his subconscious mind to this force. These forces are around everywhere, not only in one particular room or house, and if one opens the door to them, they come in wherever you are. It would have no importance but for the nervous reaction of irrational terror indulged in by X. One who wants to do sadhana has no business to indulge in such panics; it is a weakness incompatible with the demands of the Yoga and, if one cannot throw it aside, it is safer not to try the Yoga.

*

Don't allow these bad dreams to trouble you. They are formations meant to disturb the consciousness — if you are troubled and fear they succeed. If you refuse to accept them or, still better, dissolve them, in dream or when you wake, then they can do nothing.

Mental Dreams

There are many kinds of mental dreams, but the main difference [*between mental and vital dreams*] is that the mental are quite clear and coherent, their symbols are well-connected and easily intelligible and the forms also are clear cut and distinct in their significance. The vital are full of a pell mell of scenes, forms and incidents; the significance if any is fluid and depends upon a vital symbolism which it is not always easy for the mind to follow — everything is nearer to ordinary life and its confusions but still more chaotic.

People Seen in Dreams

The people of dream are very often different from the people of actuality. Sometimes it is the real man who comes on another plane — sometimes it is a thought, force etc. that puts on his appearance by some trick of association or other reason.

*

These figures and intimations in dream may be due to three different causes —

(1) Beings whom you meet in the supraphysical world and who interest themselves in you.

(2) Forces of Nature, mind nature or vital nature, that take these human appearances and in a symbolic dream convey to you some formation of the universal Mind or Life. These messages can take the form of intimations or warnings of what is going to happen. The woman must have been such a Force of Nature, for her child and box are evidently symbolic — the child of some creation or formation of hers which she wanted you to accept and keep in your consciousness, the box of some habitual movements which this force also wanted you to harbour. The offer to take care of you was only a way of saying that it wanted to control you. To dismiss all that was the right thing to do.

(3) Constructions of your own mind in the form of dreams so as to convey to you intimations it had received or perceptions of some force of nature which, as in the last dream, it wanted the inner being to reject.

The Waking and Dream States

There is no solid connection [*between the waking and dream states*], but there can be a subtle one. Events of the waking state often influence the dream world, provided they have a sufficient repercussion on the mind or the vital. Formations and activities of the dream planes can project something of themselves or of their influence into the waking physical state, though they seldom reproduce themselves with any exactness there. It is only

if the dream consciousness is very highly developed that one can usually see things there that are afterwards confirmed by thoughts, speech or actions of people or events in the physical world.

*

It is a very small number of dreams that can be so explained [*as arising from external causes*]¹ and in many cases the explanation is quite arbitrary or cannot be proved. A much larger number of dreams arise from subconscious impressions of the past without any stimulus from outside. These are the dreams from the subconscious which are the bulk of those remembered by people who live in the external mind mostly. There are also the dreams that are renderings of vital movements and tendencies habitual to the nature, personal formations of the vital plane. But when one begins to live within then the dreams are often transcriptions of one's experiences on the vital plane and beyond that there is a large field of symbolic and other dreams which have nothing to do with memory. Of course it has been proved that a very long and circumstantial dream can happen in a second or two, so that objection to Bergson's statement does not stand. But there are also prophetic dreams and many others. Memory holds together the experiences but it is absurd to identify consciousness (even in the restricted European idea of consciousness) with memory. This theory of memory is part of Bergson's fundamental idea that Time is everything. As for *spirituelle*, in Europe mostly no distinction is made between the spiritual and the mental or vital.

Dream-Experiences

Yes, certainly, dream-experiences can have a great value in them and convey truths that are not so easy to get in the waking state.

*

¹ *The correspondent, who had just read Henri Bergson's L'energie spirituelle, asked whether Bergson is right that many dreams are brought about by external causes. He also noted that Bergson seems to consider all consciousness as memory. Finally he wondered why Bergson used the word "spirituelle" in the title of the book since there was hardly anything about "spirit" in it. — Ed.*

When you practise Yoga, the consciousness opens and you become aware — especially in sleep — of things, scenes, beings, happenings of other (not physical) worlds and yourself in sleep go there and act there. Very often these things have an importance for the sadhana. So you need not regret seeing all this when you sleep or meditate.

But in no case should you fear. The fact that you were able to destroy the beings that fought with you (these were beings of a hostile vital world) is very good, for it shows that in your vital nature somewhere there is strength and courage. Moreover, using the Mother's name and having her protection, you should fear nothing.

*

They are dreams of the mental and higher vital planes in which things happen with another rhythm than here and freer forms, but some of them are formative of things and events here — not that they are fulfilled exactly like prophecies, but they create forces for fulfilment.

*

The dreams are experiences on the vital plane, actual contacts with myself and the Mother in your inner being, not symbolic though they may have symbolic elements, but expressing relations, influences or mutual workings of our consciousness with yours. The second dream has symbolic elements. The ladder is of course a symbol of an ascent from one stage to another. The snake indicates an energy, sometimes a good one, more often a bad one (vital or hostile). It may be that the energy was quiescent and therefore not alarming, but by touching it to see how it was it awoke and you found it was something not safe to handle. There is no clear indication what this energy was. These dream-experiences do not depend on the waking thoughts as do ordinary subconscious dreams which are dreams only and not experiences. They have a life, a structure, an arrangement and forms and meanings of their own; but they are often connected with the inner condition and experiences or movements of the

sadhana. It is not clear whether the flower incident was symbolic or only something that happened on the inner plane. It might have been possible to say if it had been indicated what flower it actually was that you had given.

*

These experiences are normal when the inner consciousness is growing and becoming more and more the natural seat of the being — it is the spontaneous intuitive knowledge of this inner consciousness which is becoming prominent in place of the ordinary reliance of the external mind on sense data and external happenings. It is indeed the being as a whole that becomes conscious — the substance of consciousness that becomes aware of things, not an outer instrumental part.

In the sleep part of the consciousness goes out to other planes of being and sees and experiences things there. It is quite possible for the witness consciousness to follow these happenings which usually transmit themselves in a coherent transcription to the sleeping part of the consciousness — the latter receives them and they appear as clear significant dreams as opposed to the incoherent dreams of the subconscious. Or else the witness consciousness may feel itself there watching the happenings as well as here. This will probably develop after a while.

*

It is the condition of your consciousness I spoke of — the more conscious you become, the more you will be able to have dreams worth having.

Remembering Dreams

Everybody spends the night dreaming — only most of the dreams and even the fact of having dreamed are forgotten. Also most dreams are incoherent. It is only when one becomes more conscious in sleep by sadhana, that the dreams become coherent.

*

When the sleep is more awake, so to say, then one has dreams of all kinds; when there is no such awareness of dreams, it is because the sleep of the body is more deep,—the dreams are there but the body consciousness does not note them or remember that it had them.

*

The consciousness goes into another plane of existence [*during sleep*] and, as the physical consciousness is not connected with or takes no part in the experience there, when it returns, nothing is remembered.

*

The subconscious remains in the body [*during sleep*]. The being really goes out into different planes of consciousness, but its experiences are not kept in the memory, because the recording consciousness is too submerged to carry the record to the waking mind.

*

On coming to the waking consciousness the night experiences are often lost or else fade from the physical memory in a short time, unless they are immediately fixed and recorded before rising.

*

Most people move most in the vital in sleep because it is the nearest to the physical and easiest to remain. One does enter the higher planes but either the transit there is brief or one does not remember. For in returning to the waking consciousness it is again through the lower vital and subtle physical that one passes and as these are the last dreams they are more easily remembered. The other dreams are remembered only if (1) they are strongly impressed on the recording consciousness, (2) one wakes immediately after one of them, (3) one has learned to be conscious in sleep, i.e. follows consciously the passage from plane to plane. Some train themselves to remember by remaining

without moving when they wake and following back the thread of the dreams.

*

It [*remembering one's dreams*] depends on the connection between the two states of consciousness at the time of waking. Usually there is a turnover of the consciousness in which the dream state disappears more or less abruptly, effacing the fugitive impression made by the dream events (or rather their transcription) on the physical sheath. If the waking is more composed (less abrupt) or, if the impression is very strong, then the memory remains at least of the last dream. In the last case one may remember the dream for a long time, but usually after getting up the dream memories fade away. Those who want to remember their dreams sometimes make a practice of lying quiet and tracing backwards, recovering the dreams one by one. When the dream state is very light, one can remember more dreams than when it is heavy.

*

There is a change or reversal of the consciousness that takes place [*on waking up*], and the dream-consciousness in disappearing takes away its scenes and experiences with it. This can sometimes be avoided by not coming out abruptly into the waking state or getting up quickly, but remaining quiet for a time to see if the memory remains or comes back. Otherwise the physical memory has to be taught to remember.

Understanding the Meaning of Dreams

Unless they are really significant dreams it is a waste of time [*to study them*].

*

Yes, these are symbolic dreams, but the exact meaning varies with the mind and condition of the one who sees them.

*

That [*dream*] is evidently unlike many others a symbol dream on the vital plane. But it is difficult to interpret these vital symbolic dreams unless they offer their own clue — they are a sort of hieroglyph in their forms. Once one gets the clue some of them can be very significant — others of course are rather trivial.

*

No; all dreams are not true. Even of those which have some truth in them, may have to be interpreted rightly before you can know what is true in them. There are others that are true — they are experiences that you have in other planes or worlds into which you go when you are asleep. As for the bad dreams, you should not allow them to upset you, but reject them as untrue.

*

How do you say that vital dreams have no link or reason? They have their own coherence, only the physical mind cannot always get at the clue by following which the coherence would unroll itself. For that matter the sequences of physical existence are coherent to us only because we are accustomed to it and our reason has made up a meaning out of it. But subject it to the view of a different consciousness and it becomes an incoherent phantasmagoria. That's how the Mayavadin or Schopenhauer would speak of it, the former say deliberately that dream-sequences and life-sequences stand on the same footing, only they have another structure. Each is real and consequent to itself — though neither, they would say, is real or consequent in very truth.

*

The physical mind (or else the subconscious) almost always interferes in dreams and gives its own version. It is only when there is a clear experience on the mental or vital plane that it does not try to intervene.

*

I am not sure that it is advisable to tell these dreams to others — as a rule, the movements of the sadhana should be kept to

oneself, because by speaking of them to others there is likely to be a dispersion of their force and perhaps a calling in of other atmospheres by the mental or vital reaction of the people to whom you tell them. It is only to very fit persons that one can safely speak about them. I don't think these dreams could be made into a book because they need a special knowledge to understand them and this knowledge is not common. For yourself you can do it, but perhaps it would be better to wait a little before you do it.

The Meaning of Some Dreams

It is a symbolic dream. The flower-rain is the descent of something from the supramental or else from the higher realms of consciousness — the lake is a formation of it in the consciousness, the steamer symbolises a new movement of the Yoga which Sri Aurobindo is bringing down. The Mother's descent with the diamond light is the sanction of the Supreme Power to the movement, the Peacock being the Bird of Victory.

*

The dreams are very significant and show a great progress in the inner being. The first dream means that to call the Mother is not enough; by that the immediate difficulty is dispelled, but the full victory which will prevent any return of the attack is not won; for that you must cease to be helpless before the attack, you must be able to fight and repel it (of course with the Mother's Force near whether manifest or veiled and supporting you). At present you have got so far that you can sometimes repel it with your safety pin, that is, by a small action supported by the peace behind; but the strength, confidence, courage to leap on the attacking force and drive it out (hands and feet) is not yet there.

In the second dream the servant is the outer physical consciousness while you are your own inner being. The inner being awakes in the darkness of the physical obscurity but is not troubled. It knows and writes the mantra of the Truth and Light and

that brings the beginning of the white Light, the highest True Light in the darkness which once begun is sure to increase.

*

The strings you saw me pulling down [*in a dream*] are the lines of consciousness which can connect the personal being with the Divine Truth; they are above out of reach, I am bringing them down into the human mind, life and body. You can see only a part of them because they reach into the heights far above the human mind, and you see only a little of what is brought down because they go into all parts of the Nature down to the subconscious of which the ordinary mind can see very little. That is the meaning of the dream.

*

The meaning of the dream is not very difficult to discover. Our house here represents the higher consciousness in which we live and from which its light must come to you. Between you and it there is what the old books call a lid—represented by the blinds of the windows—created by the mind and the ordinary consciousness. This lid is changed to glass which means that between you and the higher consciousness there is left only a transparent lid (probably the higher mind which is the first stage of the higher consciousness) and through that the light can come to you in your own Adhar. It is a kind of promise or prospect held out to you in answer to your prayer.

*

The three grey-white birds must be your mental, vital and physical consciousness, partly enlightened by the inner Peace etc., therefore white, but still not quite released from the old nature, so grey—the dull movement is due to the obscuration by the old nature. But still they fly towards the right which is the dynamic side in women, the side of action and effectuation and this movement releases into flight the psychic in all its luminousness and purity. That seems to be the significance.

*

The dreams of the lower regions of the consciousness—the lower vital, the physical consciousness or the sheer subconscious—have always or almost always a double character. For there are two parts of the consciousness concerned—one that remains attached to the body but in a passive unsupported subconscious condition not capable of coherent and ordered experience and another that goes out into various planes and worlds of consciousness, has experiences there, moves among their scenes and beings and events, sees symbolic figures, scenes, happenings etc. The experiences of the two mix together often and make a double texture.

The quiescent part is subject during sleep to impressions from outside which it distorts into dream-figures or else, more freely, to impressions arising from the subconscious—sometimes impressions of the day or from the waking environment, sometimes impressions from the past, sometimes things hereditary or even imprecise impressions left from past lives which come up under some obscure or secret impulsion. When one practises Yoga, the more superficial impressions, those which are in a sort accidental or occasional, outside touches, the day's memories etc., do not, after a time, play so active a part as in the sleep of ordinary people; but the others aggrandise their scope and increase. These subconscious emergences are by no means, however obscure or trivial they may seem, always without any use for Yoga. They can indicate things with which the subconscious is burdened and from which it has to be freed, binding memories of the vital and of the cells which have to be dismissed, forms, embedded notions, tendencies, habitual movements which it is no longer good to harbour, seeds of the past which have to be pulled out so that their undesirable fruit may no longer recur. For in the lower obscurer part of our being we are creatures of habit of nature and fixed past formations and complexes—as they are termed by a current Western psychology,—and these things have to be got rid of if we are not to be bound to our past selves, if there is to be a true and complete liberation and transformation of the external being. If one can learn to detect and understand the indications

of these dreams when they come up and act upon what they show us to be still there in the obscure bed of our nature, it can be a great help for the successful change of what seems to be the most obscure and trivial and yet the most sticky and intractable part of the nature.

The other, the active part of our consciousness does not remain in the inert and sleeping physical consciousness, but goes out into other planes of existence. For the most part with most people it is some part of the vital, lower or higher, that goes out into the corresponding vital planes, and the experiences it has there are transcribed in the physical consciousness or brought back to it and these transcriptions or these reports are what we call dreams or experiences on the vital plane. The reports, if one may so call them, are the memories of the outgoing part which it brings back to the physical — but it is not easy to retain them in the memory after waking. For there is a crossing of a border, a bridge or a gulf and the turning over of the consciousness, what was put behind by sleep coming in front, what was in front in sleep going behind and in this transition, in this reversing process, the report or memory which can by very vivid and complete is usually lost or only some last experience or a fragment of it lingers and even that is apt to fade away in a very short time. Especially if one wakes abruptly or under pressure or rises immediately without waiting to retain the dream-experience, it is apt to disappear at once and altogether. One can train oneself however to remember one's dreams so that the material is ready to hand for interpretation and use, if they are of a nature to demand interpretation or lend themselves to use. But also, apart from these reports, there is the transcription or translation into the terms of the physical consciousness. For there is a thread that connects the outgoing and the instaying consciousnesses and along this thread messages can be sent either from here to the wandering part, most often for calling it back, but also for other purposes or from the wanderer signalling or transmitting his experiences, as it were, to the body in the measure in which it can receive them. Unfortunately the terms of this transcription are usually supplied by the quiescent and very ill-ordered

consciousness that remains in the body, terms belonging to its own normal life and range, and therefore the transcription is often trivial, confused, perplexing, tiresomely null in its terms even when the experience itself is vivid, significant, coherent and full of interest. But as the dream consciousness in sleep develops, the outgoing part can increase its hold, and either manipulate the terms supplied to it from the physical being so as to express directly and vividly or else in significant symbols its own characteristic consciousness and experience or else it can impose its own terms, figures, scenes with more or less modification on the recipient consciousness in the body. In the end the consciousness can become so trained that even for dreams on the vital plane the difference between dreams and visions and experiences disappears or at most one can distinguish between dream-visions and dream-experiences and visions and experiences in a state of willed and perfectly self-conscious concentration. Even the dreams of the lower vital and the subtle physical become entirely vivid, real, coherent, significant and expressive of a truth that one can at once recognise. The dream-experiences of the highest vital, the psychic and the mental or still higher planes have always this character, because when they can get through they impose themselves more than those of the lower vital realms and are less subject to distortion or mixture by the physical subconsciousness.

In the lower vital dreams, before this development comes, there is usually a mixture or a double texture. This has two disadvantages, first that the scheme used, the terms, the figures are so trivial and uninteresting that one easily misses any significance there can be behind them and, secondly, that the interpretation also becomes often very doubtful or hard to seize. And when as often happens, there is a symbology of the lower vital using the terms of the normal external consciousness, its system which is quite clear and convincing to the lower vital itself, can seem very absurd, incoherent and unintelligible to the physical mind. For the lower vital uses the happenings, scenes, figures, persons of the physical life, but in defiance of the order and logic of the physical world and even without any reference to it, it fits

them into a quite different significance-scheme of its own for its own purpose. One has then to seek for a clue in some especially significant figure or detail, and if one cannot find it or cannot catch the clue when it is there, then one remains perplexed or doubtful or simply blank about the meaning of the dream; if it is found, it can often light up all the night and put them into a sufficient coherence.

The last three dreams described by you are of this character. The figures are supplied from the old social life in England, — though the place is not England; in the first, with some attempt at structure, in the others in a more haphazard inconsequent way; but so far as that goes, all seem trivial and unmeaning and, as one might say, not worth dreaming. The strong significant power and purposefulness and quite intelligible symbolism of the higher vital, the psychic or the mental dream-experiences is not there. But still there are in the first dream three *points de repère*, the railway-journey, the meeting with the father and mother, the communion, and these all are suggestive symbols. The railway-journey is *always* in vital dreams a symbol of a journey or progress of the inner being; here it is in the vital consciousness that some movement of progress is under way and it is in the course of it that you get down at a station, that is to say in some particular region of the lower vital where you meet your father and mother. A meeting of this kind by itself might simply be an actual encounter on the vital plane with some contact or interchange there — for in the vital one can meet thus both those who have passed beyond and those who are still in the body. But once the presence of a symbolism is established, it is probable that the father and mother are also part of the symbolism and, as they very often do, represent what might be called the Purusha and Prakriti of that particular kingdom. If it is an actual encounter, it must be with some part of their vital selves which is in sympathy with or representative of this domain, not with the actual persons, not with their whole selves. But the assistant here is clearly not any earthly person, but a being of this world who embodies one of its characteristic forces, the zeal of a dogmatic and ritual religious traditionalism without any deeper

spirit or experience behind it; it is with this external ritualism that you clash in the dream, he insisting on the form, you careless of the form and admitting it only as a means for contact with the original spiritual truth behind it. That would justify our taking the whole thing as symbolism, representing a special lower vital world — one which plays a large part in moulding this external human life as it is now. It is a world of social forms, social and domestic feelings, social intercourse; whatever appearance of spiritual life there is, is traditional and formal: this is what you felt in the blessing of your father. The last part of the dream is more obscure — there is evidently a meaning in the luggage and the lost trunk, but the clue is insufficient; if one could catch it, it would probably explain why you got down at all in this province of the lower vital world instead of continuing your journey.

This is a very good example of the nature of these dreams and their indications and that is why I have dealt with it at a greater length than its importance seems to warrant. The other two are of the same world, but the third is ambiguous and in the second the clue is missing. The second, if taken as only an encounter with ordinary beings of the human world met on the vital plane seems merely absurd and trivial; but if the people represent forces or movements of this particular vital province, then some meaning is there — for I have always found that there is something which even the most casual or insignificant dreams of this kind are trying to indicate. If we take the two dreams together, the elderly lady would represent the interest certain beings in this kind of world take in some kind of pseudo-spiritual stuff of the lower occultist kind, e.g. Steiner's anthroposophy — taken by her more as a fad than anything else, a fad which she imposes on her guests. That would explain her wanting to sit in the rain — for the rain is a symbol of a descent from some other consciousness, and it would explain also the remark of the guest who had been in India, that is to say in some hot-air province of this world where the contact with occultist spirituality or pseudo-spirituality could be had more abundantly than here! To the physical mind the working out of the imagery is absurd and

illogical, but this kind of dream cares only to get its symbols through and, not addressing itself to the mind, it disregards logical coherence. The whiskey would be the image of the dram drinking which this kind of occultism can be; along with the rain it would be the clue image.

This is how these dreams are built and the question at once arises, what is their utility and why should they with their triviality and incoherent symbolism and the obscurity and pettiness of the world to which they belong take so large a place. The answer is that it is here between the subconscious and the petty lower vital world that there is the hidden basis of a great part of man's ordinary movements, especially the things that are hereditary, customary, imposed by education and surrounding and left strongly entrenched in the subconscious obscurity, even when suppressed and rejected and entirely contradicted by the mind and will and the higher vital: it is the field of the suppressed complexes of the Freudians, it is the basis of the herd mind, it is the support of all that is petty and obscure in the being and of many other undesirable things. In your dreams—even in your lower vital—you are out of sympathy with this world, irritated and ill at ease and yet there is something in the subconscious nature that is tied and constantly going there as soon as the waking mind and will are quiescent. So it is with all, for one has to go there for two reasons, first either to become acquainted with its movements and work them out in the subtle experience till they go out of the system by rejection or to clear them out by a conscious action or else to work upon this world and bring into it a real consciousness and a true Light.

Chapter Four

Sex

The Role of Sex in Nature

Of course, it [*the sexual impulse*] is perfectly natural and all men have it. Nature has put it as part of her functioning for the purpose of procreation, so that the race may continue. In the animals it is used for that purpose, but men have departed from Nature and use it for pleasure mainly — so it has taken hold of them and harasses them at all times.

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Certainly, Nature gave it [*sexual pleasure*] to encourage her aim of procreation. The proof is that the animal does it only by season and as soon as the procreation is over, drops it. Man having a mind has discovered that he can do it even when there is not the need of Nature — but that is only a proof that Mind perverts the original intention of Nature. It does not prove that Nature created it only to give man a brief and destructive sensual pleasure.

*

The terrestrial sex-movement is a utilisation by Nature of the fundamental physical energy for purposes of procreation. The thrill of which the poets speak, which is accompanied by a very gross excitement, is the lure by which she makes the vital consent to this otherwise unpleasing process — whatever X or others may feel, there are numbers who experience a recoil of disgust after the act and repulsion from the partner in it because of the disgust, though they return to it when the disgust has worn off for the sake of this lure.

*

Conversion [*of the sexual movement*] is one thing and acceptance of the present forms in ordinary human nature is another.

The reason given for indulging the sex-action is not at all imperative. It is only a minority that is called to the strict Yogic life and there will be always plenty of people who will continue the race. Certainly, the Yogi has no contempt or aversion for human nature; he understands it and the place given to each of its activities with a clear and calm regard. Also, if an action can be done with self-control without desire under the direction of a higher consciousness, that is the better way and it can sometimes be followed for the fulfilment of the divine will in things that would not otherwise be undertaken by the Yogi, such as war and the destruction which accompanies war. But a too light resort to such a rule might easily be converted into a pretext for indulging the ordinary human nature.

Sex a Movement of General Nature

All movements are in the mass movements of Nature's cosmic forces — they are movements of universal Nature. The individual receives something of them, a wave or pressure of some cosmic force, and is driven by it; he thinks it is his own, generated in himself separately, but it is not so, it is part of a general movement which works just in the same way in others. Sex, for instance, is a movement of general Nature seeking for its play and it uses this or that one — a man vitally or physically "in love" as it is called with a woman is simply repeating and satisfying the world-movement of sex, if it had not been that woman, it would have been another; he is simply an instrument in Nature's machinery, it is not an independent movement. So it is with anger and other Nature-motives.

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There is no how to these things — the sex-impulse exists for its own sake and it uses the person as an instrument and hooks him on to another — whenever it can throw the hook, it throws it and once the connection is there holds on for some time at least. This is the physical vital and subtle physical action — for if it is the gross physical that dominates, there is no choice — any

woman will serve the fun. The sensation you feel is physical vital + subtle physical, that is why it is so concrete. Naturally these sensations do not stop by enjoyment — they are recurrent and so long as the pressure lasts they continue. It is only by rejection or by the domination of a contrary force that they cease.

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Naturally, the sex-movement is a force in itself, impersonal and not dependent on any particular object. It fastens on one or another only to give itself body and a field of enjoyment. When it is checked in the vital interchange, it tends to lose its vital character and attacks through its most physical and elemental movement. It is only when it is thrown out from the vital physical and most physical that it is conquered.

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The sexual sensations do not “become” a principle of the physical consciousness — they are there in the physical nature already — wherever there is conscious life, the sex-force is there. It is physical Nature’s main means of reproduction and it is there for that purpose.

*

The sexual impulse is its own reason to itself — it acts for its own satisfaction and does not ask for any reason, for it is instinctive and irrational.

*

The sex exists for its own satisfaction and this or that person is only an excuse or occasion for its action or a channel for awakening its activity. It is from within, by the peace and purity from above coming into that part and holding it, that it must disappear.

*

The sex exists in itself — put a number of sexual men together debarred from all possibility of feminine society — after a time

they will begin to satisfy themselves homosexually.

*

Sex-sensation may begin anywhere. As vital love it begins in the vital centre, heart or navel — many romantic boys have this and it starts a love affair (often at the age of 10 or even 8) before they know anything about sex-connection. With others it begins with the nerves or with that and the sex-organ itself. There are others who do not have it. Many girls would not have it at all throughout life if they were not taught and excited by men. Some even then hate it and tolerate only under a sort of social compulsion or for the sake of having children.

*

There is no “delight” in the sex-affair, it is necessarily and can only be a passing excitement and pleasure which finally wears itself out with the wearing out of the body.

*

Yes, it [*the sex-pull*] has become rampant everywhere, especially as men no longer believe in the old moral restraints and nothing else has been substituted.

Sex and Ananda

Sex is a degradation or distortion of the Ananda Force.

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It is true that the sex-centre and its reactions can be transformed and that an Ananda from above can come down to replace the animal sex-reaction. The sex-impulse is a degradation of this Ananda. But to receive this Ananda before the physical (including the physical vital) consciousness is transformed, can be dangerous; for other and lower things can take advantage and mix in it and that would disturb the whole being and might lead into a wrong road by the impression that these lower things are part of the sadhana and sanctioned from above or simply by

the lower elements overpowering the true experience. In the last case the Ananda would cease and the sex-centre be possessed by the lower reactions.

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The sadhak has to turn away entirely from the invasion of the vital and the physical by the sex-impulse — for, if he does not conquer the sex-impulse, there can be no settling in the body of the divine consciousness and the divine Ananda.

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The *hlādikā śakti* is the Shakti of the Divine Ananda and Love taking possession of the whole being down to the vital and physical. But it is the Ananda and love of the Divine — the spiritual, it cannot be turned to a human love and vital pleasure. It can have nothing to do with marriage. In your dream it was neither the divine nor the human that came, but a supernatural and supraphysical vital *kāma* and joy — a being from that world intervening in the sleep and trying to take possession of what should be given only to the Divine. That is a particularly dangerous kind of intervention, so I had immediately to put you on your guard against it. It was of the nature of a supraphysical temptation such as the appearance of the Apsaras to the Tapaswis in the stories of the epics and Puranas. The other dreams were dreams of success and fame and were also of the vital plane. You need not be depressed by these ordeals in the subtle worlds; they come to all in one form or another; only you have to learn vigilance and find your way through these lesser planes to the highest, so that it may be the highest that will come down into you. When these trials come, it is a sign that you are advancing, for otherwise the Powers of these worlds, whether lesser gods or Daityas, would not take the trouble to test you.

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The only truth in that [*the saying that “sexual pleasure and Brahmananda are brothers”*] is that all intense pleasure goes back at its root to Ananda — the pleasure of poetry, music,

production of all kinds, battle, victory, adventure too — in that sense only all are brothers of Brahmananda. But the phrase is absolutely inaccurate. We can say that there is a physical Ananda born of Brahmananda which is far higher, finer and more intense than the sexual, but of which the sexual is a coarse and excited degradation — that is all.

Sex and Love

Nature in the material world started with the physical sex-pull for her purpose of procreation and brought in the love on the basis of the sex-pull, so the one has a tendency to wake the other. It is only by a strong discipline or a strong will or a change of consciousness that one can eliminate the pull.

*

It is not that it is not possible to keep the love pure, but the two things [*love and sex-desire*] are so near each other and have been so much twined together in the animal beginnings of the race that it is not easy to keep them altogether separate. In the pure psychic love there is no trace of the sex-desire, but usually the vital affection gets very strongly associated with the psychic which is then mixed though still not sexual; but the vital affection and the vital physical sex-emotion are entirely close to each other, so that at any moment or in any given case one may awake the other. This becomes very strong when the sex-force is strong in an individual as it is in most vitally energetic people. To increase always the force of the psychic, to control the sex-impulse and turn it into the *ojas*, to turn the love towards the Divine are the true remedies for this difficulty. Seminal force not sexually spent can always be turned into *ojas*.

*

When the psychic puts its influence on the vital, the first thing you must be careful to avoid is any least mixture of a wrong vital movement with the psychic movement. Lust is the perversion or degradation which prevents love from establishing its reign; so

when there is the movement of psychic love in the heart, lust or vital desire is the one thing that must not be allowed to come in — just as when strength comes down from above, personal ambition and pride have to be kept far away from it; for any mixture of the perversion will corrupt the psychic or spiritual action and prevent a true fulfilment.

*

The movement of self-existent psychic or spiritual love general and without a special object can come, but it must be kept free from all taint of sex — otherwise it cannot endure.

*

What is real love? Get clear of all the sentimental sexual turmoil and go back to the soul, — then there is real love. It is then also you would be able to receive the overwhelming love without getting the lower being into an excitement which might be disastrous.

*

What is this idea that this desire of the heart hungering to love women is not sex-desire? That and the physical lust are both forms of sex-desire.

*

Why hanker [*to meet and talk with women*] when it is a vital desire? It is a form of sex and usually calls up the more physical desire.

*

Oneness with all [*expressed through embracing and kissing*]¹ would then mean satisfying the sex-instinct with all — that would be a rather startling *siddhānta*, though there is something like it in the practice of Tantra of the left hand. But the left-hand Tantriks are more logical than you — for why should oneness,

¹ *The correspondent suggested that the “lighter movements” of sex, such as embracing and kissing, seem justified as expressions of one’s love for all. — Ed.*

if it is to justify sex-expression, support only the lighter and not the cruder forms of love-expression? But is sex really based on love or sex-love based on sex-instinct? and is sex-instinct an expression of the spiritual feeling of the One in all? Is it not really based on duality, except when it simply seeks satisfaction and pleasure where there is no question of love at all? Is one attracted to a woman by the sense that she is oneself or by the fact that she is somebody else attracting one by some charm or beauty which one wants to enjoy or possess or simply by the fact of the difference from oneself, the fact of her being a female and not a male so that the sex-instinct can find a full field there?

*

Abnormal is a word which you can stick on anything that is not quite common, cheap and ordinary. In that way genius is abnormal, so is spirituality, so is the attempt to live by high ideals. The tendency to physical chastity in women is not abnormal, it is fairly common and includes a very high feminine type.

The mind is the seat of thought and perception, the heart is the seat of love, the vital of desire — but how does that prevent the existence of mental love? As the mind can be invaded by the feelings of the emotional or the vital, so the heart too can be dominated by the mind and moved by mental forces.

There is a vital love, a physical love. It is possible for the vital to desire a woman for various vital reasons without love — in order to satisfy the instinct of domination or possession, in order to draw in the vital forces of a woman so as to feed one's own vital or for the exchange of vital forces, to satisfy vanity, the hunter's instinct of the chase etc. etc.² This is often called love, but it is only vital desire, a kind of lust. If however the emotions of the heart are awakened, then it becomes vital love, a mixed affair with any or all of these vital motives strong, but still vital love.

There may too be a physical love, the attraction of beauty,

² This is from the man's viewpoint — but the woman also has her vital motives.

the physical sex-appeal or anything else of the kind awakening the emotions of the heart. If that does not happen, then the physical need is all and that is sheer lust, nothing more. But physical love is possible.

In the same way there can be a mental love. It arises from the attempt to find one's ideal in another or from some strong mental passion of admiration and wonder or from the mind's seeking for a comrade, a complement and fulfiller of one's nature, a *sahadharmi*, a guide and helper, a leader and master or from a hundred other mental motives. By itself that does not amount to love, though often it is so ardent as to be hardly distinguishable from it and may even push to sacrifice of life, entire self-giving etc. etc. But when it awakes the emotions of the heart, then it may lead to a very powerful love which is yet mental in its root and dominant character. Ordinarily, however, it is the mind and vital together which combine; but this combination can exist along with a disinclination or positive dislike for the physical act and its accompaniments. No doubt if the man presses, the woman is likely to yield, but it is *à contre-coeur*, as they say, against her feelings and her deepest instincts.

It is an ignorant psychology that reduces everything to the sex-motive and the sex-impulse.

*

There are a number of women who can love with the mind, the psychic, the vital (the heart), but they shrink from a touch on the body and even when that goes, the physical act remains abhorrent to them. They may yield, under pressure, but it does not reconcile them to the act which always seems to them animal and degrading. Women know this, but men seem to find it hard to believe it; but it is perfectly true.

Sex and the New European Mystics

The idea of the new European mystics like Lawrence and Middleton Murry etc. is that the indulgence of sex is the appointed way to find the Overself or the Under Self, for that is what it

really seems to be! Brunton of course knows better. But if the personal Overself is all that is wanted and not the Divine, then sex and many other things are permissible. One has only to realise that one is not the body, not the life, not the mind, but the Overself and then do whatever the Overself tells you to do.

*

I spoke of the *personal* Overself—meaning the realisation of something in us (the Purusha) that is not the Prakriti, not the movements of mind, vital or physical, but something that is the Thinker, etc. This Purusha can give assent to any movement of nature or withhold it or it can direct the Prakriti what to do or not to do. It can allow it to indulge sex or withhold indulgence. It is usually the mental Purusha (Manomaya Purusha) that one thus realises, but there is also the Pranamaya or vital Purusha. By the word Overself they probably mean this Purusha—they take it as a sort of personal Atman.

Sex-Indulgence and the Integral Yoga

What has this Yoga got to do with sex and sex-contact? I have told you repeatedly that sex has to be got rid of and overcome before there can be siddhi in this Yoga.

*

Any suggestion about Tantric practices must certainly be a trick of the vital. The sex-impulsions can be got rid of without them. They persist only because something still wants to reserve a place for them. So the best answer to the question about the sadhana (What is the place of sex in our sadhana?) is “No place”. One must give up the sex-satisfaction and be satisfied with the Divine Love and Ananda.

*

The whole mistake is not to have a clear and unmistakable direction that sex (whether open or masquerading as deep romantic affection) and this Yoga cannot go together. This notion

of making sex help the sadhana is one that has been taken hold of by many under one form or another and it has always proved an immense stumbling block to all who indulged it. It ties the being down to the vital and prevents the spiritual liberation which is essential as the basis of the transformation of the nature. Even the higher experiences begin to get coloured with the sexual tinge and falsified in their substance.

*

There is one simple answer to X's falsehood and perversions. In this way of Yoga an absolute mastery of the sex-movements and an entire abstention from the physical (animal) indulgence are first conditions, because this way aims not only at a mental and vital but a physical transformation. A psychic purity is demanded in all the consciousness and there is needed a transformation of all the vital and physical energies which in the absence of these conditions is impossible.

*

The Mother has already told you the truth about this idea. The idea that by fully indulging the sex-hunger it will be finished and disappear for ever is a deceptive pretence held out by the vital to the mind in order to get a sanction for its desire — it has no other *raison d'être* or truth or justification. If an occasional indulgence keeps the sex-desire simmering, a full indulgence would only sink you in its mire. This hunger like other hungers does not cease by temporary satiation; it renews itself after a temporary abeyance and wants again indulgence. Neither sops nor gorgings are the right treatment for it. It can only go by a radical psychic rejection or a full spiritual opening with the increasing descent of a consciousness that does not want it and has a truer Ananda.

*

I do not know what you mean by harm, but the harm of sex to a sadhak is that it stands as a strong barrier to the realisation and spiritual progress and in that way it harms not only oneself

but the person on whom one imposes the sex-touch.

*

It is not a question of fear³ — it is a question of choosing between the Divine Peace and Ananda and the degraded pleasure of sex, between the Divine and the attraction of women. Food has to be taken to support the body but sex-satisfaction is not a necessity. Even for the rasa of food it can only be harmonised with the spiritual condition if all greed of food and desire of the palate disappears. Intellectual or aesthetic delight can also be an obstacle to the spiritual perfection if there is attachment to it, although it is much nearer to the spiritual than a gross untransformed bodily appetite; in fact in order to become part of the spiritual consciousness the intellectual and aesthetic delight has also to change and become something higher. But all things that have a rasa cannot be kept. There is a rasa in hurting and killing others, the sadistic delight, there is a rasa in torturing oneself, the masochistic delight — modern psychology is full of these two. Merely having a rasa is not a sufficient reason for keeping things as part of the spiritual life.

*

It is possible for anger to be felt as pleasant — there are many people who dislike sweet things — so also there are many, especially women, who dislike the sex-sensation, even hate it.⁴

For the taste, when it exists — some eliminate it by rejection and the calling down of peace and purity into the cells, others by substituting for the lower rasa the higher Ananda — some like the Vaishnavas try to sublimate it by the *madhura bhāva* taking up the sexual rasa from the sex-centre into the heart and turning it there towards the Divine, but the last is a rather risky method.

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³ Fear of harm to one's sadhana through indulgence in sex. The correspondent said that he did not wish to live in fear of harm from sex. In all enjoyment, he said, there is some risk of harm, even in eating tasty food. — Ed.

⁴ The correspondent wrote that the feeling of anger is not pleasant, whereas the taste of sugar and the sex-sensation are pleasant. Is it possible, he asked, to eliminate the liking for sugar or for sex? — Ed.

It is one of the aims of the Yoga to centralise and harmonise all the parts of the being — not around the ego as is done in ordinary life, but around first the psychic being and then the central being in its station above the head — or else round a nexus of the two. It is the thing that was preparing in you. The consciousness was moving to take its station above the head. But in the meanwhile it has gone down into the physical and the first result has been a relaxation and diffusion which has given an opening to the old movements to recur. When a movement like that happens [*an attraction to women*], there is generally a good reason for it, something that has to be dealt with in the physical consciousness. Instead of getting upset or discouraged, one has to observe from this point of view and see what has to be done.

There is no sense in getting discouraged like this because things recur. They always do. In a transformation such as we have undertaken, movements are not got rid of once for all. They go down from one level of the nature to the other and it is only when one has got them out of the physical and subconscious that one can say “Now that is done.” If these recurrences were to be taken as a proof of failure, there are few in the Asram who should not be pronounced as failures. I don’t think more than 2 or 3 have got over some sex-trouble; it lasts in one form or another even when people are “advanced” — as they say here. It is because sex is one of the strongest things in man’s nature and cannot be overcome till one has got the sex out of the subconscious. Why then consider your case as if it were unique or build on it the idea of personal impossibility or unfitness? It is no use indulging the idea of giving up. You can’t give up. So the only thing to do is to recover yourself, look at these things with detachment and push forward to the realisation of the self that was coming.

*

Sex is not a rational force; it is purely irrational, a power of the inferior, animal nature; you cannot therefore be rightly astonished if it acts irrationally without any justification or reason

and without any other cause than its own habit and instinct. Moreover, this force as it is now acting in you with regard to X seems to be purely vital physical and physical in its character. It is not supported by your thinking mind or your rational will, these are opposed to its continuance; it has no emotional support, for you are no longer attracted by her or in love with her; the higher vital does not seem to be concerned, for neither beauty nor passion draws or drives you. But at this level of sex none of these things are necessary. The vital physical and physical urge of sex does not ask for beauty or love or emotional gratification or anything else; desire, repetition of vital-physical habit and bodily gratification (most usually, but not necessarily by the sex-act) are its motive forces. To set it in action nothing more is needed. Moreover, by mental and other rejections it has plunged down in the subconscious and is hidden there and rises suddenly from there. It is itself born from the Inconscient as a blind push of its dark force of Nature. It owes no allegiance. It can only be got rid of by a firm and persistent rejection, separation, detachment, not yielding to it by any act, refusing to take joy in it in any part of the being, until it is a dead thing and has no longer any motive or power of existence.

*

It is not meant by “the sacrifice of works” that there should be no choice between different acts, no control over impulse and desire. To regard the sex-act as an offering might easily lead to the sanctification of desire.

*

A married man can get experiences, especially if he is not gross or over-sexy by nature. But if he follows this Yoga, he will have to drop copulation or he will get upsettings.

*

What are these strange ideas? Do you imagine that after the transformation, copulation between man and woman and the desire to copulate will continue as the normal functionings of

the life and the body? If so, why should it be forbidden in the sadhana? The injunction would then be not to stop sex-intercourse, but to copulate freely and sublimely and divinely.

Subtle Forms of Sex-Indulgence

Sex (occult) stands on a fair level of equality with ambition etc. from the point of view of danger, only its action is usually less ostensible — i.e. the Hostiles don't put it forward so openly as a thing to be followed after in the spiritual life.

*

This movement [*of vital interchange*] is a wrong and a dangerous one. It is not so much repeating the old game under the garb of Yoga, but, what is worse, turning the Yoga-power itself into the instrument of satisfaction of a vital force. There must be absolute abstention from all vital interchange with others. The warning has often been given that no special or personal relation, even under the colour of a psychic connection or otherwise, must be formed with the women sadhakas. The whole principle of this Yoga is to give oneself entirely to the Divine alone and to nobody and to nothing else, and to bring down into ourselves by union with the Divine Mother Power all the transcendent light, force, wideness, peace, purity, truth-consciousness and Ananda of the supramental Divine. In this Yoga, therefore, there can be no place for vital relations or interchanges with others; any such relation or interchange immediately ties down the soul to the lower consciousness and its lower nature, prevents the true and full union with the Divine and hampers both the ascent to the supramental Truth consciousness and the descent of the supramental Ishwari Shakti. Still worse would it be if this interchange took the form of a sexual relation or a sexual enjoyment, even if kept free from any outward act; therefore these things are absolutely forbidden in the sadhana. It goes without saying that any physical act of the kind is not allowed, but also any subtler form is ruled out. It is only after becoming one with the supramental Divine that we can find our true spiritual relations

with others in the Divine; in that higher unity this kind of gross lower vital movement can have no place.

To master the sex-impulse, — to become so much master of the sex-centre that the sexual energy would be drawn upwards, not thrown outwards and wasted — it is so indeed that the force in the seed can be turned into a primal physical energy supporting all the others, *retas* into *ojas*. But no error can be more perilous than to accept the immixture of the sexual desire and some kind of subtle satisfaction of it and look on this as a part of the sadhana. It would be the most effective way to head straight towards spiritual downfall and throw into the atmosphere forces that would block the supramental descent, bringing instead the descent of adverse vital powers to disseminate disturbance and disaster. This deviation must be absolutely thrown away, should it try to occur and expunged from the consciousness, if the Truth is to be brought down and the work is to be done.

It is an error too to imagine that, although the physical sexual action is to be abandoned, yet some inward reproduction of it is part of the transformation of the sex-centre. The action of the animal sex-energy in Nature is a device for a particular purpose in the economy of the material creation in the Ignorance. But the vital excitement that accompanies it makes the most favourable opportunity and vibration in the atmosphere for the inrush of those very vital forces and beings whose whole business is to prevent the descent of the supramental Light. The pleasure attached to it is a degradation and not a true form of the divine Ananda. The true divine Ananda in the physical has a different quality and movement and substance; self-existent in its essence, its manifestation is dependent only on an inner union with the Divine. You have spoken of Divine Love; but Divine Love, when it touches the physical, does not awaken the gross lower vital propensities; indulgence of them would only repel it and make it withdraw again to the heights from which it is already difficult enough to draw it down into the coarseness of the material creation which it alone can transform. Seek the Divine Love through the only gate through which it will consent to enter, the gate of the psychic being, and cast away the lower vital error.

The transformation of the sex-centre and its energy is needed for the physical siddhi; for this energy is the support in the body of all the mental, vital and physical forces of the nature. It has to be changed into a mass and a movement of intimate Light, creative Power, pure Divine Ananda. It is only the bringing down of the supramental Light, Power and Bliss into the centre that can so change it. As to the working afterwards, it is the supramental Truth and the creative vision and will of the Divine Mother that will determine it. But it will be a working of the conscious Truth, not of the Darkness and Ignorance to which sexual desire and enjoyment belong; it will be a power of preservation and free desireless radiation of the life-forces and not of their throwing out and waste. Avoid the imagination that the supramental life will be only a heightened satisfaction of the desires of the vital and the body; nothing can be a greater obstacle to the Truth in its descent than this hope of a glorification of the animal in human nature. Mind wants the supramental state to be a confirmation of its own cherished ideas and preconceptions; the vital wants it to be a glorification of its own desires; the physical wants it to be a rich prolongation of its own comforts and pleasures and habits. If it were to be that, it would be only an exaggerated and highly magnified consummation of the animal and the human nature, not a transition from the human into the Divine.

It is dangerous to think of giving up “all barrier of discrimination and defence against what is trying to descend” upon you. Have you thought what this would mean if what is descending is something not in consonance with the divine Truth, perhaps even adverse? An adverse Power could ask no better condition for getting control over the seeker. It is only the Mother’s Force and the divine Truth that one should admit without barriers. And even there one must keep the power of discernment in order to detect anything false that comes masquerading as the Mother’s Force and the divine Truth, and keep too the power of rejection that will throw away all mixture.

Keep faith in your spiritual destiny, draw back from error and open more the psychic being to the direct guidance of the

Mother's light and power. If the central will is sincere, each recognition of a mistake can become a stepping stone to a truer movement and a higher progress.

*

I have stated very briefly in my previous letter my position with regard to the sex-impulse and Yoga. I may add here that my conclusion is not founded on any mental opinion or preconceived moral idea, but on probative facts and on observation and experience. I do not deny that so long as one allows a sort of separation between inner experience and outer consciousness, the latter being left as an inferior activity controlled but not transformed, it is quite possible to have spiritual experiences and make progress without any entire cessation of the sex-activity. The mind separates itself from the outer vital (life-parts) and the physical consciousness and lives its own inner life. But only a few can really do this with any completeness and the moment one's experiences extend to the life-plane and the physical, sex can no longer be treated in this way. It can become at any moment a disturbing, upsetting and deforming force. I have observed that to an equal extent with ego (pride, vanity, ambition) and rajasic greeds and desires it is one of the main causes of the spiritual casualties that have taken place in sadhana. The attempt to treat it by detachment without complete excision breaks down; the attempt to sublimate it, favoured by many modern mystics in Europe, is a most rash and perilous experiment. For it is when one mixes up sex and spirituality that there is the greatest havoc. Even the attempt to sublimate it by turning it towards the Divine as in the Vaishnava *madhura bhāva* carries in it a serious danger, as the results of a wrong turn or use in this method so often show. At any rate in this Yoga which seeks not only the essential experience of the Divine but a transformation of the whole being and nature, I have found it an absolute necessity of the sadhana to aim at a complete mastery over the sex-force; otherwise the vital consciousness remains a turbid mixture, the turbidity affecting the purity of the spiritualised mind and seriously hindering the upward turn of the forces of the body. This Yoga demands a full

ascension of the whole lower or ordinary consciousness to join the spiritual above it and a full descent of the spiritual (eventually of the supramental) into the mind, life and body to transform it. The total ascent is impossible so long as sex-desire blocks the way; the descent is dangerous so long as sex-desire is powerful in the vital. For at any moment an unexcised or latent sex-desire may be the cause of a mixture which throws back the true descent and uses the energy acquired for other purposes or turns all the action of the consciousness towards wrong experience, turbid and delusive. One must therefore clear this obstacle out of the way; otherwise there is either no safety or no free movement towards finality in the sadhana.

The contrary opinion of which you speak may be due to the idea that sex is a natural part of the human vital-physical whole, a necessity like food and sleep, and that its total inhibition may lead to unbalancing and to serious disorders. It is a fact that sex suppressed in outward action but indulged in other ways may lead to disorders of the system and brain troubles. That is the root of the medical theory which discourages sexual abstinence. But I have observed that these things happen only when there is either secret indulgence of a perverse kind replacing the normal sexual activity or else an indulgence of it in a kind of subtle vital way by imagination or by an invisible vital interchange of an occult kind, — I do not think harm ever occurs when there is a true spiritual effort at mastery and abstinence. It is now held by many medical men in Europe that sexual abstinence, *if it is genuine*, is beneficial; for the element in the *retas* which serves the sexual act is then changed into its other element which feeds the energies of the system, mental, vital and physical — and that justifies the Indian idea of Brahmacharya, the transformation of *retas* into *ojas* and the raising of its energies upward so that they change into a spiritual force.

As for the method of mastery, it cannot be done by physical abstinence alone — it proceeds by a process of combined detachment and rejection. The consciousness stands back from the sex-impulse, feels it as not its own, as something alien thrown on it by Nature-force to which it refuses assent or identification

—each time a certain movement of rejection throws it more and more outward. The mind remains unaffected; after a time the vital being which is the chief support withdraws from it in the same way, finally the physical consciousness no longer supports it. This process continues until even the subconscious can no longer rouse it up in dream and no farther movement comes from the outer Nature-force to rekindle this lower fire. This is the course when the sex-propensity sticks obstinately; but there are some who can eliminate it decisively by a swift radical dropping away from the nature. That however is more rare.

It has to be said that the total elimination of the sex-impulse is one of the most difficult things in sadhana and one must be prepared for it to take time. But its total disappearance has been achieved and a practical liberation crossed only by occasional dream-movements from the subconscious is fairly common.

*

I have not said [*in the preceding letter*] that the sex-impulse has not been mastered in other Yogas. I have said that it is difficult to be free from it entirely and that the attempt at sublimation as in the Vaishnava sadhana has its dangers. That is evidenced by all one knows of what has frequently and even largely happened among the Vaishnavas. Transcendence and transformation are different matters. There are three kinds or stages of transformation contemplated in this sadhana, the psychic transformation, the spiritual and the supramental. The first two have been done in their own way in other Yogas; the last is a new endeavour. A transformation sufficient for spiritual realisation is attainable by the two former; a transformation sufficient for the divinisation of human life is, in my view, not possible except by a supramental change.

Transformation of the Sex-Energy: The Theory of Brahmacharya

The sex-energy utilised by Nature for the purpose of reproduction is in its real nature a fundamental energy of life. It can

be used not for the heightening but for a certain intensification of the vital emotional life; it can be controlled and diverted from the sex-purpose and used for aesthetic and artistic or other creation and productiveness, or preserved for heightening of the intellectual or other energies. Entirely controlled it can be turned into a force of spiritual energy also. This was well known in ancient India and was described as the conversion of *retas* into *ojas* by Brahmacharya. Sex-energy misused turns to disorder and disintegration of the life-energy and its powers.

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That is correct.⁵ The whole theory of Brahmacharya is based upon that by the Yogis. If it were not so, there would be no need of Brahmacharya for producing *tejas* and *ojas*.

It is not a question of vigour and energy *per se*, but of the physical support — in that physical support the *ojas* produced by Brahmacharya counts greatly. The transformation of *retas* into *ojas* is a transformation of physical substance into a physical (necessarily producing also a vital-physical) energy. The spiritual energy by itself can only drive the body, like the vital and mental, but in driving it it would exhaust it if it has not a physical support. (I speak of course of the ordinary spiritual energy, not of the supramental to be which will have not only to transmute *retas* into *ojas* but *ojas* into something still more sublimated.)

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The sex-impulse is certainly the greatest force in the vital plane; if it can be sublimated and turned upwards *ojas* is created which is a great help to the attainment of higher consciousness. But mere restraint is not sufficient.

*

Doctors advise marriage because they think satisfaction of the sexual instinct is necessary for the health and repression causes

⁵ *The correspondent wrote: "Is it not said that the sexual fluid, if prevented from being spent away, becomes transformed into tejas and ojas?" — Ed.*

disturbances in the system. This is true only when there is no true giving up of the sexual indulgence, but only a change in the way of indulging it. Nowadays a new theory has come up which confirms the Indian theory of Brahmacharya, viz. that by continence *retas* can be changed into *ojas* and the vigour and power of the being enormously increase.

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It [*inhibition of the sex-impulse*] would not be permanently effective in itself, because the seed would always be there unless removed by a transformation of the sex-impulse; but the inhibition can help towards this transformation. It is now being recognised in Europe by the doctors — who used formerly to say that sex was to be inhibited at the risk of complications in the body, that on the contrary there is part of the seminal force that is used for health, strength, youth etc. (turned into *ojas*, as the Yogins say), another that serves for sex purposes; if a man is perfectly chaste, the latter turns more and more into the former. Only of course the external inhibition does not help this change, if the mind indulges in sex-thought or the vital or body in the unsatisfied sex-desire or sex-sensation. But if all these are stopped then the inhibition is useful.

*

You mean the doctors.⁶ But even all doctors do not agree on that; there are many (I have read their opinions) who say that sex-satisfaction is not an absolute necessity and sex-abstinence can be physically very beneficial and is so — of course under proper conditions. As for scientists the product of the sex glands is considered by them (at least so I have read) as a great support and feeder of the general energies. It has even been considered that sex force has a great part to play in the production of poetry, art etc. and in the action of genius generally. Finally, it is a doctor who has discovered that the sex-fluid consists of two parts, one meant for sex-purposes, the other as a basis of general energy,

⁶ *The correspondent wrote, "Some scientists say that sex is an absolute physiological necessity." — Ed.*

and if the sex-action is not indulged, the first element tends to be turned into the second (*retas* into *ojas*, as the Yogis had already discovered). Theories? So are the statements or inferences of the opposite side — one theory is as good as another. Anyhow I don't think that the atrophy of the sex-glands by abstinence can be supported by general experience. X's contention [*that the sex-glands of those who practise Brahmacharya may atrophy*] is however logical if we take not individual results but the course of evolution and suppose that this evolution will follow the line of the old one, for the useless organs are supposed to disappear or deteriorate. But will the supramental evolution follow the same course as the old one or develop new adaptations of its own making? — that is the uncertain element.

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You have not understood [*what was said in the preceding letter*]. I was answering the statement that scientists don't attach any value to sex-gland product and think it is only of use for an external purpose. Many scientists on the contrary consider it a base of productive energy; among other things it plays a part in artistic and poetic production. Not that artists and poets are anchorites and Brahmacharis but that they have a powerful sex-gland activity, part of which goes to creative and part to (effectual or ineffectual) procreative action. On the latest theory + Yoga theory, the procreative part would be *retas*, the creative part the basis of *ojas*. Now supposing the artist or poet to conserve his *retas* and turn it into *ojas*, the result would be an increased power of creative productivity. Q.E.D., sir! Logic, sir!

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The most recent discovery about the sex is that the liquid is composed of two elements — one is used for sexual purposes, the other supplies all kinds of higher energies, vital, mental and, I would add, spiritual. It was formerly supposed by the doctors that the sex-liquid had to be spent in order to relieve its excess from time to time, otherwise there would be bad results. It is now found that that is not necessary — if the sex is controlled both in

act and thought, there is an automatic *diminution* of the amount of liquid used for sex and a corresponding increase of the other element available for higher energies. In other words, the old knowledge of the Vedic and Vedantic Yogis and Rishis about becoming *urdhwaretah*, viz. that by control one can turn *retas* into *ojas* and use it for higher energies vital, mental and spiritual is amply justified by this discovery. The use made naturally depends upon a man's occupations and interests. The athlete etc. would use it for physical strength and its work, the poet and artist for creation, others for study or mental work of different kinds, the Yogi for the increase and use of spiritual energy.

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If it [*turning the seminal energy into ojas*] is to be done by a process, it will have to be by Tapasya (self-control of mind, speech, act) and a drawing upward of the seminal energy through the Will. But it can be better done by the descent of the Force and its working on the sex-centre and consequent transformation, as with all other things in this Yoga.

Mastery of the Sex-Impulse through Detachment

As to the sexual impulse. Regard it not as something sinful and horrible and attractive at the same time, but as a mistake and wrong movement of the lower nature. Reject it entirely, not by struggling with it, but by drawing back from it, detaching yourself and refusing your consent; look at it as something not your own, but imposed on you by a force of Nature outside you. Refuse all consent to the imposition. If anything in your vital consents, insist on that part of you withdrawing its consent. Call in the Divine Force to help you in your withdrawal and refusal. If you can do this quietly and resolutely and patiently, in the end your inner will will prevail against the habit of the outer Nature.

*

To be conscious [*of the sexual movement*] is the first step, but by itself it is not enough; there must come an automatic force

of rejection which the moment desire and passion arise throws it off so that it ebbs back from the mind or vital or wherever it touches. This comes either by a strong will of rejection becoming habitual in its action on the consciousness, or by the detached inner being developing an automatic dynamic strength in itself so that it is not only not touched, but refuses these things by an active purifying power or, finally, by the full emergence of the psychic and its government of the mind, vital and body. The last is the most rapid and easy way. Till then these things recur. But probably in yourself there is still some sense of the old idea of sin or fault which makes you feel troubled. You must take it as an adjustment of the nature that is going on in which old movements which you no longer accept as yours return from force of habit and get a habitual response from some part of the being. But if that part of the being can be made to reject it, then the response begins to fade away. You must not allow yourself or your mind to feel troubled by the returns; for that only weakens the power of resistance. There should be calm dissociation of yourself from these things; then the detached inner being will become more easily dynamic and able to reject them from the vital nature.

*

The trouble of the sex-impulse is bound to dwindle away if you are in earnest about getting rid of it. The difficulty is that part of your nature (especially, the lower vital and the subconscious which is active in sleep) keeps the memory and attachment to these movements, and you do not open these parts and make them accept the Mother's Light and Force to purify them. If you did that and, instead of lamenting and getting troubled and clinging to the idea that you cannot get rid of these things, insisted quietly with a calm faith and patient resolution on their disappearance, separating yourself from them, refusing to accept them or at all regard them as part of yourself, they would after a time lose their force and dwindle.

*

The small tendencies, rajasic vital, which you enumerate are of minor importance. They have to be removed in this sense that attachment to these things has to be given up; the vital part of the being must be prepared to consent to their absence with quietude and indifference, taking them only if they are given freely by the Divine without demand or claim or clinging, but there is nothing very grave about them otherwise.

The one serious matter is the sex-tendency. That must be overcome. But it will be more easily overcome if instead of being upset by its presence you detach the inner being from it, rise up above it and view it as a weakness of the lower nature. If you can detach yourself from it with a complete indifference in the inner being, it will seem more and more something alien to yourself, put upon you by the outer forces of Nature. Then it will be easier to remove.

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There is something in that. Too much importance given [*to sex troubles*], too much tension does sometimes make the struggle worse. To dissociate quietly and to reject steadily without being moved by the recurrence is the best way — if one knows how to do the trick.

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As for the other point, the right attitude is neither to worry always about the sex-weakness and be obsessed by its importance so as to be in constant struggle and depression over it, nor to be too careless so as to allow it to grow. It is perhaps the most difficult of all to get rid of entirely; one has to recognise quietly its importance and its difficulty and go quietly and steadily about the control of it. If some reactions of a slight character remain, it is not a thing to get disturbed about — only it must not be permitted to increase so as to disturb the sadhana or get too strong for the restraining will of the mental and higher vital being.

*

It is best not to pay too much attention to this [*sex-*]movement,

but to let it drop off quietly by lack of support and assent from the mind and the higher vital.

*

To think too much of sex, even for suppressing it, makes it worse.

You have to open more to positive experience. To spend all the time struggling with the lower vital is a very slow method.

*

Detachment is the first step. If you can detach yourself from the sex suggestions even when having them as you say, then they do not matter so much as the *tamas*, inertia etc. which interfere with your *sadhana*. They can wait for their final removal hereafter.

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It is true that the removal of the sex-impulse in all its forms and, generally, of the vital woman-complex is a great liberation which opens up to the Divine considerable regions of the being which otherwise tend to remain shut up. These things are a degradation of the source in the being from which *bhakti*, divine love and adoration arise. But the complex has deep roots in human nature and one must not be disappointed if it takes time to pull them up. A resolute detachment rejecting them as foreign elements, refusing to accept any inner association with them as well as outer indulgence even of the slightest kind is the best way to wear out their hold upon the nature.

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Pranayama and other physical practices like *asana* do not necessarily root out sexual desire — sometimes by increasing enormously the vital force in the body they can even exaggerate in a rather startling way the force too of the sexual tendency, which, being at the base of the physical life, is always difficult to conquer. The one thing to do is to separate oneself from these movements, to find one's inner self and live in it; these movements will not then any longer appear as belonging to

oneself but as surface impositions of the outer Prakriti upon the inner self or Purusha. They can then be more easily discarded or brought to nothing.

Mastery through a Change in the Consciousness

Hurting the flesh is no remedy for the sex-impulse, though it may be a temporary diversion. It is the vital and mostly the vital-physical that takes the sense-perception as pleasant or otherwise. If by the real Being you mean the silent Atman, that does not identify itself [*with the sex-sensation*], but is felt as standing aloof. If you mean the Purusha, the sensation is a movement of Prakriti and the Purusha can stand back from it and reject it or identify and accept it.

Reduction of diet has not usually a permanent effect; it may give a greater sense of physical or vital-physical purity, lighten the system and reduce certain kinds of *tamas*. But the sex-impulse can very well accommodate itself to a reduced diet. It is not by physical means but by a change in the consciousness that these things can be surmounted.

*

It is only if the whole consciousness is awake and aware of its concealed movements that such [*sexual*] reactions can be avoided. It does not mean that you are worse than others, but that in all men the sexual element is there, active or dormant, indulged or suppressed. It can only be overcome by a spiritual awakening in *all* parts of the nature.

Mastery through the Force of Purity

There is a force of purity, not the purity of the moralist, but an essential purity of spirit, in the very substance of the being. When that comes, then sex-waves either cannot approach or they pass without imparting any impulse, without touching anywhere.

*

The desires of the heart and the body which stand in the way of Brahmacharya give a glow to the vital and emotive nature and prevent it from being dry and shut to feeling. To keep the heart warm and open, not dried up or closed, and at the same time attain to spiritual purity the best way is to turn it towards that which is eternal, pure and ever true, behind and beyond these earthly emotions — the ever-living Love, Bliss and Beauty.

*

If it [*peace*] is established *all through*, then it brings purity and the purity throws off the sexual suggestions.

Mastery through the Working of the Higher Consciousness and Force

It is always difficult to get rid of sex when it has had a strong hold on the system. It needs probably more than a mental will, — a stronger Force from above, to get rid of it altogether.

*

X seems in his letter to want only a liberation from sexual thoughts and desires by an intervention of another's will; but this is not how it should be done. Those who practise this Yoga can escape from it by a rejection of sexual suggestions aided by the influence of the Divine Power which acts through the Mother, but it is not instantaneous, except in the case of those who have a complete receptivity and an absolute faith. Usually it takes a steady tapasya to get rid of a lifelong habit.

*

What seems to be best is that the movement of rising above should be completed and if you can feel there the wideness, peace, calm, silence of the Self and that can come down into the body through all the centres and there can be the working of the Force in that condition of the physical being, then the vital-physical difficulty can be faced. The effort to do it by personal tapasya can carry one to a certain point, it can throw out sex etc.,

but for most it does not prevent all coming back by attack — unless the force of tapasya is so great and continuous that these forces get no chance. But the elimination of these things can only come, I think, by the descent of the higher consciousness — bringing with it the self-existent calm and wideness, the higher force and the Ananda occupying all down to the cells of the body. It is quite certain that these three together in the body can leave no room for sex — even if sex came, it would at once get so transmuted that it would be sex no longer.

*

It is the physical centre — sex is only one of its movements. Naturally, if the sex is active (instead of giving place to Beauty and Ananda) and if the lower movements are active, it forms an obstacle to the establishment of the higher consciousness. But the higher can descend, if there is at all an opening, even before the lower movements have definitely gone — it has then to complete the work of displacing them.

*

It [*the sex-impulse*] can be got rid of only when a higher consciousness comes down permanently into the vital.

*

I don't think it [*sex*] is *always* feeble in its going, sometimes it gets a singular intensity just before it goes — but it exhausts itself, tires and sinks, pressed out by the pressure from above. It depends of course on the nature. Sometimes it goes out like a snuffed candle, sometimes dwindles away, sometimes expires in a last flame. There is no rule applicable to everybody.

Rejection of the Sex-Impulse from the Various Parts of the Being

The sex-impulse is the chief difficulty in your way and, if that were got rid of, it would make the ground clear for the sadhana in you to take a much fuller course. If it persists, it is because

some part of your being still clings to it and your mind and will have remained divided and found some kind of half-justification for the continuance. The first thing is for the mind and also the higher vital to withdraw their consent altogether; if that is done, it becomes only a mechanical return from outside on the physical and finally only an active memory which will disappear when it is able to find no welcome in any part of the nature.

*

The sex-trouble is serious only so long as it can get the consent of the mind and the vital will. If it is driven from the mind, that is, if the mind refuses its consent, but the vital part responds to it, it comes as a large wave of vital desire and tries to sweep the mind away by force along with it. If it is driven also from the higher vital, from the heart and the dynamic possessive life force, it takes refuge in the lower vital and comes in the shape of smaller suggestions and urges there. Driven from the lower vital level, it goes down into the obscure inertly repetitive physical and comes as sensations in the sex-centre and a mechanical response to suggestion. Driven from there too, it goes down into the subconscious and comes up as dreams or night-emissions even without dreams. But to wherever it recedes, it tries still for a time from that base or refuge to trouble and recapture the assent of the higher parts — until the victory is complete and it is driven even out of the surrounding or environmental consciousness which is the extension of ourselves into the general or universal Nature.

*

Is it that the body does not accept the sex-thoughts and desires? If so, you are entitled to reject it as something external to you or at most existing only in the subconscious. For it is only what something in us accepts, supports, takes pleasure in, or still mechanically responds to, that can still be called ours. If there is nothing of that, it belongs to general Nature but not to us. Of course it returns and tries to take possession of its lost territory, but that is a foreign invasion. The rule of these

things is that they have to be extruded outside the individual consciousness. Rejected by the mind and higher vital, they still try to hold on to the lower vital and physical. Rejected from the lower vital, they still hold the body by a physical desire. Rejected from the body, they retire into the environmental consciousness (sometimes the subconscious also, rising in dreams) — I mean by the environmental a sort of surrounding atmosphere which we carry about with us and by which we communicate with the universal forces — and try to invade from there. Rejected from there, they become in the end too weak to be more than external suggestions till that too ends — and they are finished and non-existent.

*

There are two places into which it [*the suggestion of sex*] can retire — the subconscious vital below or the environmental consciousness around. When it returns it surges up from below, if it is the former, or approaches and invades from outside, if it is the latter.

*

It [*the pleasure of sex*] is the reason why the vital sex-difficulty is the hardest to get rid of — even those who have sincerely given up the more physical form are liable to the vital form of the impulse. But it is harmful because it allows a subtle infiltration of the forces that stand in the way of the sadhana. One must get rid of them if the vital is to become entirely pure and able to contain the divine love and Ananda.

*

Of course [*the vital is connected with the play of sex*]. It is the vital that gives it its intensity and power to hold the consciousness.

*

It is the entire inner rejection of the sex-pulls and vital pulls that is necessary, a rejection by the whole lower vital itself — the

outer rejection can only be effective if this inner rejection comes to reinforce it. Usually people adopt the outer rejection because otherwise (if these things are indulged) the inner rejection is not likely to come since the vital trend is always being confirmed by the outer action — but if the outer is rejected, then the conflict is confined to the internal desire and fought out there. Naturally an outer renunciation by itself does not liberate.

*

There are people outside the Asram even who have got free from the sex without seclusion — even sleeping in the same bed with the wife. I know one at least who did it without any higher experience. The work of these people is ordinary service or professional work, but that did not prevent their having the sex-struggle nor did it help them to get rid of it. The thing came after a prolonged struggle because they were determined to be rid of it and at a certain stage they got a touch which made the determination absolutely effective. Possibly they were sattwic, but that did not prevent their having strong sex-impulses and a hard and prolonged struggle.

I meant by cutting off [*the sex-impulse*] a determined rejection of the inward as well as the outward movement whenever it comes. Something in the nature accepts and lets itself go helplessly and something in the mind allows it to do so. The mind does not seem to believe in its power to say No definitely to inward movements as it would to an outer contact — and yet the Purusha is there and can put its definite No, maintaining it till the Prakriti has to submit — or else till the confirming touch from above makes its determination perfectly effective.

*

Sex is your main difficulty — it is in fact the only very serious one and it is so because it is always behind and you have sometimes pushed it back, but never cut with it entirely. It is the physical vital that is weak and when the thing comes, becomes pliant to it in spite of the mental will's resistance. But even so; if the mental will made itself real and strong, these crises would be met and

overcome, or at least pass without leading to indulgence in one form or another. The other possibility is the settled descent of the higher consciousness into the physical being. It is in these two ways that liberation from sex is possible.

*

The sexual urge is something that tries to take complete hold and leave no room for inhibition or control. It has a power of temporary possession which no other passion or life-impulse has to the same degree, more even than anger which comes second to it. That is why it is so difficult to get rid of it — because even when the mind or higher vital refuses, the vital physical feels this possessive force and has an ingrained tendency to be passive to its urge.

*

In the vital physical the “[sex-]response” lingers long after the mind and higher vital have turned from it. I have seen that in men who were mentally and emotionally quite sincere. A few get rid of it easily, but these are a small minority. But there must be no justification on the “what harm” basis — that is an attempt of the lower vital to get the mind and higher vital to adhere. There is always room for harm so long as the sex-response is not eliminated in *both*, not in you only.

*

It is the crude vital-physical that returns upon you in this way [*sexual suggestions*] — and these returns must be the cause of all the feeling of illness, weakness, *tamas* that you get. A purification of this part by the descent of the higher consciousness into it is a very great necessity for your *sadhana*.

*

Sex is strongly connected with the physical centre, but also with the lower vital — it is the lower vital that gives it most of its intensity and excitement. It can be disconnected from the lower vital and then it becomes a purely physical movement

of a mechanical kind which has no great force except for the more animal natures. If the physical centre also is freed, then the sex-impulse ceases.

*

It [*sexual desire*] is the habitual mechanical response to the sex-force in the physical nature. It gets this intensity in spite of the mind's rejection because something in the vital physical (nervous) being still remembers and responds to the suggestion of the craving and the pleasure. If the nervous being can be got to reject it then it becomes a purely physical wave without mental assent or vital desire — that is the last stage after which it can be thrown out of even the environmental Nature through which the suggestion or denial of the general sex-force comes to the individual being.

*

These difficulties [*of human relationship*] in one form or another are felt by all — but they take a stronger form when the root is sexual. The obstinacy with which they return is due to the obscurity of the physical which always responds to an old habit of the nature (even when the mind has rejected it) and it is this obscurity and subjection to habit that the adverse vital forces take advantage of to repeat the trouble.

*

It is of course the physical that is at once responsive in the most material way to sex-suggestion. What you are doing [*rejecting the sex-movement*] is right. As you are controlling it in the waking state, it comes out at night. That too has to be got rid of.

*

That is usual — the subconscious acts of itself on its own store of impressions or habitual past movements. When one drives sex from the mind and conscious vital and physical it remains in the subconscious and rises from there in sleep.

Sex and the Subconscious

The sex-sensation came from the subconscious. When it is unable to manifest in the waking consciousness, it comes up from the subconscious in sleep. The mind must not allow itself to be disturbed — it will go out with the rest.

*

There is no reason for you to be depressed or discouraged. The defects of the nature of which you speak are habits of the lower vital and the external being; if you recognise them fully and frankly and detect them and reject whenever they act or try to act upon you, they will in time disappear. The sexual desires show that the subconscious still retains the old impressions, movements and impulses; make the conscious parts of the being entirely free and aspire and will for the higher consciousness to come fully into the subconscious so that even in sleep and dream something in you may be aware and on guard and reject these things when they try to take form at that time.

*

I do not suppose the sex-touch came at all from them personally; at most some contact with the outside world and its consciousness might have touched the subconscious. But the real reason for these upsurgings of old movements is the subconscious itself where the old things remain in seed and can sprout up after long cessation or interruption. To be completely secure against all possibility of their return one must have established the higher consciousness in all the being down to the subconscious. But meanwhile these returns can be used as a test of the progress made. If for instance the sex-thought rises into the mind, but cannot remain there, that means the mind is substantially free; if the sex-desire comes into the vital and falls away without taking a hold, it is the same for the vital. The last question is for the body where it can come as a physical urge or sensation. If it can hold none of these there is no refuge left for it except the subconscious from which it can try to rise, especially in dreams,

or the environmental consciousness from which it can try to come as a wave invading the being.

*

If you can exclude sex from the waking thought and consciousness, the survival in sleep will not be so important. It will mean that the sex has sunk down from the conscious mind, vital, physical being into the subconscious; from there it comes up in sleep. But if it has no support from the conscious being, it may be active for a time but its activity will afterwards diminish, become more and more rare till it is eliminated. This may take time, shorter or longer, but in the end the elimination is bound to come.

*

If the waking state is freed from indulgence whether mental or physical in sex-thoughts, sex-impulses, sex-action, then the subconscious can be better dealt with; till then what is indulged by the mind in the waking state or else is suppressed but not yet entirely rejected can always lurk in the subconscious and rise from it in sleep. Turn away the conscious mind and vital from the sex-impulse *entirely*, that is the first step.

*

Naturally, if you read about these [*sexual*] things [*in novels*] they enter the mind and pass into the subconscious where they leave their impression. If the consciousness is not free from the sexual impulse, this impression can rise up from the subconscious and work in the mind.

*

The sex-impulse is deeply rooted in the subconscious and it is difficult to get rid of it. Only the full transformation of the physical consciousness can do that — except for a few who are not strongly bound by it.

Tamasic Inertia and the Sex-Impulse

When there is the dullness — tamas of any kind — it is much easier for the sex-force to act.

*

Inactivity is an atmosphere in which sex easily rises.

*

A state of tamasic inertia of the mind and body is always favourable to the sex-urge by the sex-impulse. What I meant was that there is something (not the whole) of your lower vital and physical that can respond to the sex-impulse. There may be another part that has already the aspiration — but when the condition favourable to the sex-invasion comes, then the aspiration is quiescent or not strong enough and the other elements allow the sex-force to come in.

*

The exercise has probably helped [*the body*] both by engaging the vital energies of the body and by giving it strength and tone. Sex always increases when the vital physical is indolent, unoccupied or without tone.

*

It is the most dangerous moment for sex things when just after waking one remains lying in bed; one should either go to sleep again, if there is time, or else fix the mind on wholesome things.

*

There is no condition more dangerous for the sex-imagination to come than this lying in bed in a half-awake or else a relaxed inert condition unoccupied by any activity or any experience.

Sex-Thoughts and Imaginations

That [*indulgence in sex-thoughts*] is just the thing that ought

not to be done. It would be merely a gratuitous increasing of the difficulties. For the spiritual endeavour is part of your nature and, if it is difficult to get rid of the sex-impulse, you would find it still more difficult to do without the spiritual life in you. Sex is the one difficulty in its way that is hardest to get rid of, because it sticks and returns, but one has to be more persistent than the difficulty — there is no other way.

*

By giving up contact [*with women*] it [*sexual desire*] can be reduced to two forms — dream and imagination. Dream is not of much importance unless it affects the waking mind which it need not at all do; it can besides be discouraged and, if not fed, fades out in the end. Imaginations can only be got rid of by a tapasya of the will not allowing them to run their course, but breaking them off as soon as they begin. They come most easily when lying in bed after waking from sleep in a tamasic condition. One has to break them off either by shaking off the *tamas* or by emptying the mind and going to sleep again. At other times one ought to be able to stop it by turning the mind elsewhere.

*

To let the memory or imagination dwell on things that excite the sex-desire is unhealthy for the *sadhana* and an obstacle to the development of the Yogic consciousness. Discourage these imaginations and memories when they come.

*

That [*support of the sex-sensation by the imagination*] is the difficulty. The imagination means a consent of the physical or else the vital mind. Otherwise the [*sex-*]sensation is often only due to physical causes and, if not supported by this automatic assent of a part of the mind, would before long diminish in its habit of recurrence.

*

Care must be taken that the sexual or erotic imagination does

not take hold of the consciousness representing itself as spiritual truth.

Sexual Difficulties among Men

In most men the sexual is the strongest of all the impulses of Nature.

*

The vital needs something to hook itself on to, but for a sadhak women are obviously the wrong things for it to hook itself on to — it must get hold of the right peg.

*

If it [*the vital*] admires all beautiful things, not women only, without desire — then there would be no harm [*in admiring women*]. But specially applied to women, it is a relic of the “sex-appeal”.

*

It [*the sense of one's own vital charm and power of attraction*] is the usual vanity of the lower vital — it is very common. Any man can have an attraction for any woman, and vice versa, when the sex-forces are active, but that attraction is not his, it is the pull of the sex-force.

Sex-Dreams and Emissions

There are two kinds of these [*sex-*]dreams, one kind which are things happening on the vital plane, another kind which is made up of impressions and impulses coming up from the subconscious, not actual happenings. Dreams in which emission takes place are usually of the second kind — but not always; for sometimes they come through the touch of vital beings or forces in the vital plane or through a meeting of one's own sexual thought-forms with those of another there.

*

Apart from the total rejection of sex-thoughts and imaginations and actions, which ends by acting in the subconscious also, I don't know any remedy for sex-dreams except the putting of a force as concrete as possible on the sex-centre and organ prohibiting this urge and its result, put when about to sleep and renewed each time one wakes and goes to sleep again. But this all cannot manage to use, for they employ a mental will instead of a concrete force (the mental will can be effective, but is not always so). This method, besides, only acts for the time, it inhibits but except in rare cases does not permanently cure; it does not get rid of the sex-impressions in the subconscious, and of course it means thinking of the sex-affair though only negatively.

I have heard it said that even very advanced Yogis get the dreams at least once in six months, — I don't know how far it is true or what the Yogis themselves say about it. But the sex-impressions in the heart can be got rid of long before the end of life, and even the seed state in the subconscious which comes up in dreams, though sticky enough, is not quite so irremovable as all that.

Anyway, the dream kind is not so much to trouble about, unless it is frequent — it is the waking state that must be rigorously cleared out. Sometimes, if that is done, there is automatic extension of the habit of rejection to the subconscious, so that when the dream is coming there is an automatic prohibition that stops it. Under a regime like that I think the sex-pressure would become, if not non-existent, yet permanently quiescent in its seed state and so practically *non est*.

*

Night-dreams are involuntary upsurgings of the sex-impressions from the subconscious; most men when they are not indulging in the sex-act have it from time to time though it varies in period from a week, a fortnight, a month to three or four months or even less. To have it more frequently indicates either indulgence in sex-imaginings which stimulate the sex-centre or else a nervous weakness in that part due to past indulgence. Some have

benefited by putting a will on the body before going to sleep at night that these dreams should not happen — though it may not succeed at the beginning, it tells in most cases after a time by fixing a certain inhibitory force on the subconscious from which these dreams arise. As to children indulging, that is not hereditary, but a thing taught by bad company and these children are sometimes spoiled in this way at a very early age.

*

When the waking consciousness has renounced the indulgence of the sexual desires and impulses, these take refuge in the subconscious as impressions, memories, suppressed desires and come up in sleep as dreams and involuntary sleep emissions. If the waking consciousness is not itself clear, if, that is to say, though there is no physical indulgence, yet there are imaginations in the mind or desires in the vital or the body, then these dreams and emissions can be frequent. Even if the waking consciousness is clear, the subconscious emergences can still come for a time, but in time they diminish. Some are able to get rid of this by putting a strong prohibiting will or force on the subconscious or on the sex-centre before going to sleep, but this does not succeed with everyone. The main thing is to get the increasing force of brahmacharya in the waking consciousness, complete expulsion of sex-thoughts, speech, physical craving or impulse — the subconscious remnants will either die out or be cleared out afterwards when one is able to bring the higher consciousness down here.

*

In order that the dream emissions may diminish or cease, it is necessary first to have complete brahmacharya, *kāyamano-vākyena* — not only to banish sexuality from the bodily action, but also sexual impulses from the vital and body consciousness and sexual thoughts and imaginations from the mind and speech — and not talk or like to talk about sexual things. The dreams arise from the subconscious where all impressions and instincts are stored up and any of these things stimulates the subconscious and increases its store which can well up in dreams. If one makes

the waking consciousness entirely pure, then by putting a will or force on the subconscious (especially before going to sleep) one can after a time eliminate the sex-dreams and emissions.

*

It is obviously an attack which falls upon your nervous system through the subconscious. It comes in sleep because in the waking consciousness you are more on your guard and able to react against attacks. Usually this kind of dream and discharge come when the physical consciousness is in a tamasic condition through fatigue or strain or any other cause, in a heavy sleep or under a stress of inertia.

The first thing to do is to reject the after consequences as you have done this time—for you say you do not feel any weakness, but rather as if nothing had happened. It is not at all inevitable that one should feel weakness after a dream of this kind and a discharge; it is only by a habitual association in the physical mind that these forces can bring these reactions of nervous weakness.

As for preventing the discharge, it can be done by becoming more conscious in sleep. You were conscious of all that happened, but you must besides develop the power of a conscious will which sees what is going to happen and interferes to prevent it, either by waking in time or by stopping the dream or prohibiting the discharge. All this is perfectly possible, it is a matter of habit and a little persistence.

It is also often found very effective to put a will or force upon the body consciousness before going to sleep that it should not happen—especially when you feel the predisposing condition of heaviness or inertia, it should be done. This will is not always immediately successful, but after a time the subconscious gets the habit of responding to the will or force thus laid upon it and the trouble dwindles and finally disappears altogether.

*

As for the discharges, that is less dangerous; most who live unmarried have them from time to time. Only, if they occur too

often, they are depressing to the vital force. Certainly, they must be stopped; but do not have exaggerated ideas on the matter. To stop them, the first necessity is to discourage sexual imaginations in the waking state. Even if that is totally done, the discharge may still continue at night, because the subconscious keeps the memory and the habit. To stop it, you have to have a strong will before sleeping that it should not happen; also, if you can learn how to do it, direct a strong force on the sexual centre before going to sleep to inhibit this kind of accident. After a time this method usually succeeds.

Physical Causes of Sex-Dreams and Emissions

This [*problem of emission*] is a quite usual phenomenon when one stops sexual activity and rejects it in the conscious mind and vital. It takes refuge in the subconscious where the mind has no direct control and comes up in the form of dreams causing emission. That lasts so long as the subconscious itself is not cleared. This can sometimes be done by putting a strong will or, if possible, a concrete current of Force on the sex-centre before sleeping against this thing happening. The success is not always immediate, but if effectively done it tends first to reduce frequency and finally stop it.

These things (accumulation of urine, hot stimulating food etc.) are all predisposing or auxiliary causes or can be so. There is often as described a rhythm in this subconscious urge—it happens at a particular time in the month or else after a fixed period of time (week, fortnight, month, six months).

*

The first thing necessary in such matters [*sex-dreams and emissions*] is to be perfectly calm and refuse to be upset by these difficulties. If they rise one must take it that they do so in order to be worked out. If there is nothing in the waking consciousness to encourage the sex-difficulty, then these dreams or discharges without dream can only be a rising up of old dormant impressions in the subconscious. Such risings often take place when the

Force is working in the subconscious to clear it. It is also just possible that the discharges may be due, especially where there are no dreams, to purely material causes, e.g. the pressure of undischarged urine or faecal matter on the bladder. But in any case the thing is not to be disturbed and to put a force or will on the sex-centre or sex-organ for these things to cease. This can be done just before sleeping — usually after a time if done regularly, it has an effect. A calm general pressure of Will or Force on the physical subconscious is to be put. The subconscious may be often obstinate in its continual persistence, but it can and does accommodate itself quickly or slowly to the will of the conscious being.

*

The pressure from the kidneys or the intestines causing dream of sex-tendency or imagination is the last and most physical form — it often remains when the others have gone. The body dull and the mind half awake is indeed what gives it its opportunity. But if it is only for a few minutes and leaves no after effect, then the tendency ought to disappear after a time.

*

Your dreams were mostly on the vital physical plane. There if there is any physical contact of a sexual or other kind that acts strongly on the sexual centre or on a sensory contact, it may even without raising any lust produce an emission by a mechanical blind and inconscient action of a purely physical (not even vital physical) kind. It is only when the sex-centre has become very strong that this becomes impossible.

Worry, Depression and Sex-Dreams and Emissions

People get too much worried about these [*sex*-]dreams which are only mechanical movements of the subconscious physical. If the conscious vital is cleared, they will after some time, with a little concentration, dwindle away.

*

It is a mistake to make so much of emissions — everybody has them. The subconscious has its own movement and the want of control there is a thing one can get rid of only when there is the full light down there. At most one can deal with this special factor by putting a will into the subconscious (in the sex-centre or the organ itself) for prohibition, so that even in the subconscious during sleep there may be something that reacts. Many have been able to diminish and almost get rid of the recurrence by this means, but others have succeeded less well. In one case there was a recurrence every fortnight and that stood in spite of the will. As for the waking difficulty do not make too much of it. Press on with the positive side of the sadhana towards realisation — these things will fade and disappear when the higher consciousness is down in the sex-centre. Meanwhile it has first to be controlled and got rid of as much as possible.

*

There is no reason to be depressed to this extent or to have these imaginations about failure in the Yoga. It is not at all a sign that you are unfit for the Yoga. It simply means that the sexual impulse rejected by the conscious parts has taken refuge in the subconscious, somewhere probably in the lower vital physical and the most physical consciousness where there are some regions not yet open to the aspiration and the light. The persistence in sleep of things rejected in the waking consciousness is a quite common occurrence in the course of the sadhana.

The remedy is (1) to get the higher consciousness, its light and the workings of its power down into the obscurer parts of the nature, (2) to become progressively more conscious in sleep, with an inner consciousness which is aware of the working of the sadhana in sleep as in waking, (3) to bring to bear the waking will and aspiration on the body in sleep.

One way to do the last is to make a strong and conscious suggestion to the body, before sleeping, that the thing should not happen; the more concrete and physical the suggestion can be made and the more directly on the sexual centre, the better. The effect may not be quite immediate at first or invariable; but

usually this kind of suggestion, if you know how to make it, prevails in the end; even when it does not prevent the dream, it very often awakes the consciousness within in time to prevent untoward consequences.

It is a mistake to allow yourself to be depressed in the sadhana even by repeated failures. One must be calm, persistent and more obstinate than the resistance.

*

It is all nervous. If you did not get depressed and despondent and create a weakness by the depression, the discharges would do no harm. All get them except those who indulge and so get out the sex-fluid or those who have a strong Yogic or other control over their sleep. That control has to be got, but the first thing is to get rid of this reaction of despondency and weakness which is quite unnecessary.

*

There is no inevitable necessity for a dream emission making the body weak — it is probably the past sanskar that makes it have such strong results.

Masturbation

The theory of masturbation as a physiological necessity is a most extraordinary idea. It weakens the nervous force and nervous balance, — as is natural since it is an artificial and wholly uncompensated waste of the energy — and it disorganises the sex-centre. Those who indulge in it inordinately may even upset their nervous balance altogether and bring about neurasthenia or worse. It is not by disorganisation of the sex-centre and sex-functioning that one should avoid the consequences of the sex-action, but by control of the sex itself so that it may be turned into higher forms of Energy.

It is perfectly possible to check the habit. There are any number of people who have had it for years and yet been able to stop it.

*

The habit you speak of is exceedingly harmful and dangerous; it wastes the energy that should be preserved for the sadhana; it tends to weaken the mind, dislocate the consciousness, exhaust the nervous power, diminish the life-force, create inertia and impotence in the body. The excitations etc. that accompany it build up nothing; their tendency is to disintegrate. Often the result of this habit is to destroy the health and bring in undermining illnesses — it always does so when there is unrestrained indulgence.

There is only one thing to do for those on whom it comes — to break off the habit entirely, uncompromisingly and for ever and *never to touch the sex-centre*.

*

Necessarily, you must give up the perverse habit which is one of the main causes of your despondency, vital weakness etc. There is nothing that has more power to derange and weaken the system. If not only in your mind but in your vital also you had made the resolution to give it up, it would have disappeared long ago.

*

There is one way by which it is possible for you to get rid of the perverse habit: to establish a strong mental control and so get rid of the wrong movement. It is not true that it is unconquerable; on the contrary, the fact that you were able to interrupt it for some time shows that you can conquer it. It returned because these things are a movement of certain universal life-forces that, once allowed a habitual wrong response in the individual system, tend to continue in that form and, even if evicted, try always to recur. Your mind has rejected them, but something in your vital nature — the part that responds directly to the universal life-forces — still takes pleasure and has preserved the capacity and desire of the wrong response. A resolute and persistent effort of will can enforce in the end the rejection of the desire and finally even of any mechanical habit of the movement upon this part of the nature also. Only you must not be discouraged by relapses;

your will must be more persevering than the habit and persist till there is a complete conquest.

*

It is of course true that the nerves get upset by the habit of masturbation (frequently done daily or continued for a long time) apart from other untoward results. In Hathayoga and Rajayoga to carry on sex along with the Yoga is extremely dangerous. But it is not safe (physically) with any Yoga, unless the practice of Yoga is only nominal or unless the mind and nerves are made of iron. The spiritual unsafeness is of course always there.

*

Any intervention, however imperative, cannot be effective without the cooperation and assent of the being. If you continue to entertain and justify with your mind such [*sexual*] movements as you described and gave expression to, if you go on doing physical violence to yourself and adopting it as a means of sadhana or admitting as a part of sadhana the method of revolt or other Asuric errors, how do you expect to have the will and needed discrimination? You have first to throw out these things which have been shown to you to be false and from a hostile source. It is because the mind justified or excused them, that the will became weak to dismiss them. You have to dismiss these errors altogether, if you want to do this Yoga in which they have no place at all.

On the other hand, if you are unable to control these movements and dismiss them in spite of your mind refusing them, that means a weak condition of the nerves in which the remedy I proposed is the only one. I meant by change of air not only a change of climate, but of place, surroundings and atmosphere — to remain for a time where there will not be any pressure. You speak of the danger of not being able to come back or of losing the sadhana, but to allow these things to go farther is much more dangerous to the sadhana and, if they increase or continue, you will not be able to remain here.

As for the secretiveness you spoke of, it is one main reason

of your going astray — for it has made you shut yourself up in your own wrong movement. If you have got yourself into an imprisoning circle, the first thing you have to do is to get out of it — secretiveness must be renounced altogether.

*

If you cannot stop the masturbation, I think you are right in going [*from the Ashram*], as to continue might have serious consequences for the nervous system. It is better in that case to live the ordinary life and let the sex-instinct have its natural outlet so long as it is so irresistible. It is not necessary to wait for training somebody to do the work. Mother appreciates very much all the work you have done and we had hoped the earnest spiritual effort you have made would prevail over this tendency. But it would not be wise to insist too much against the obstinately strong indication that the vital nature needs a relief. Wherever you are, the Mother's blessings and mine will be with you and you will receive from us all the inner help we can give you.

Sexual Difficulties among Women

There is no universal rule. Women can be as sexual as men or more. But there are numbers of women who dislike sex and there are very few men. One Sukhdev in a million, but many Dianas and Pallas Athenes. The virgin is really a feminine conception; men are repelled by the idea of eternal virginity. Many women would remain without any wakening of the sexual instinct if men did not thrust it on them and that cannot be said of many, perhaps of any man! But there is another side to the picture. Women are perhaps less physically sexual than men on the whole, — but what about vital sexuality? the instinct of possessing and being possessed etc. etc.?

*

If there were not the sex-push in her, how could that [*feeling of unpleasant warmth*] be? The sex-push is not merely the impulse to the act, as she perhaps thinks, as the push to envelop and

occupy the man and to possess and be possessed. That is so especially with women, the sex-act being very often less attractive to them than to men; but of course always, if the vital physical reaches a certain point, the physical sex-movement tends to follow.

*

She may not have the sex-feeling towards you, but there is a certain kind of vital push, throwing out of tentacles — I don't know exactly how to express it — the secret object of which in Nature is to attract the man, to draw his attention and fix it on the woman, hook and draw him in a less or greater degree. The intention may not be at all conscious in the woman's mind, that is to say, it may not be clear or even present to her mind, — it may be merely instinctive or subconscious. There need be no physical sexual intention, only the vital in spontaneous movement. All women of a strongly vital temperament (and X is that) have it — some more, some less. There may be no specific sex-impulse in it, but it will still raise the sex-idea in the man. X naturally has no psychological knowledge and these things are too subtle for her to perceive or realise. She may easily think she is acting in a perfectly innocent and natural way and not at all know this activity of the Nature push in her.

*

A smile or any movement, appearance or action of the woman can be the starting point for these vibrations. I don't suppose it is anything inherent in the smile itself, but all these things have been the habitual means by which sex has been excited in man (*hāvabhāva*) and the woman uses them, often unconsciously and by mere habit when coming into contact with man, whether she has or has not any intention of pleasing or moving the man, it still comes up as an instinctive movement. X is of the type of woman who has this instinctive movement to please the male. But even when the woman smiles quite casually and without even the habitual instinctive movement, still there may be the vibration on the man's side owing to the habit of response in

him to feminine attractions. These things are almost mechanical in their starting. As I wrote before it is the automatic answer of the physical or vital mind (imagination etc.) that prolongs it and makes it effective. Otherwise the vibrations would die away after a time.

*

Dress has always been used by woman as an aid to her “sex-appeal” as it is now called and man has always been susceptible to it; women also often find dress in man a cause of attraction (e.g. soldier’s uniform). There are also particular tastes in dress — that a sari of a particular colour should attract is quite normal. The attraction works on the sense and the vital, while it is the mind that dislikes the psychological defects and gets cooled down by their exposure; but this repulsion of the mind cannot last as against the stronger vital attraction.

*

It is of course the universal sex-force that acts, but certain people are more full of it than others, have the sex-appeal as they now say in Europe. This sex-appeal is exercised especially by women even without any conscious intention of putting it on a particular person. Consciously they may turn it on a particular person, but it may exercise itself on many others whom they do not wish particularly to capture. All women have not the sex-appeal, but some force of sex-pull there is in most. There is of course a similar pull in men for women.

*

The sex-pull is that of a general force, which uses the individual for its purpose and it takes advantage of any proximity of the other sex to work in. The remedy lies in oneself — in immediate detachment (standing apart, not accepting as one’s own) and rejecting it.

*

It is certainly naive to think that because a girl is simple, i.e. instinctive and impulsive and non-mental in her movements, she

can be relied upon to be an asexual friend. Some women can be, but it is usually those who have a clear mental consciousness and strong will of self-control or else those who are incapable of a passion for more than one person in their life and you are lucky enough not to be that person.

*

Tell X on behalf of myself and the Mother that she must not allow herself to be crushed by the burden of the past. All she has to do is to turn her back on this past of sexual weakness, for which she was not herself primarily responsible, and to consecrate herself entirely to the Divine. If she so consecrates herself, the past will be wiped out and a new life begin for her. This is the true atonement and the only one asked from her.

*

Write to X that this case of Y and Z is perfectly clear. The girl [Z] is moved by sexual desire and its impulse of vital interchange; not being satisfied in her married life, she seeks the satisfaction from others. All these pleas about affection etc. are the usual tricks with which women (and men too) cover their approach to the vital and sexual interchange. Sometimes they use the trick knowingly, sometimes they try to deceive themselves also with it — or in some cases they actually believe in it, the vital covering up the mind and deluding it. It does not matter which it is, — the actual fact behind the cover and the final outcome are the same. Even sadhaks when moved by the sexual force are deceived by their vital or try to deceive themselves, alleging spiritual affinities, psychic ties or anything else that can justify their lapse; if they yield they can go far out of the way.

For Y it is a test, — difficult for him because he is at an age when the sexual element is awake but there is not sufficient experience for a true understanding of its workings and not sufficient maturity of mind to make up for want of experience. If he yields to the girl's pressure, he is likely to lose his sadhana, perhaps for a long time — if he is led too far it might even be

a decisive fall. If he wants the spiritual life, he must be on his guard and draw back entirely from this movement.

Social Contact and Sex

In an Asram or other religious institution men and women are not usually allowed to live together. Where they do, as among the Vaishnavas, these difficulties [*of sex*] invariably arise. The difficulty lies in the enormous place given to sex in the lower Nature. But there is no reason if one fixes oneself firmly in the spiritual consciousness why one should not speak and act between men and women without the least reference to sex.

*

You can have right relations with women only when you can forget that they are women and meet them as human beings — when you can forget sex in your feeling and action towards them.

*

All that [*mental excitement when a man meets a woman*] happens because the vital is conscious of sex in the approach and immediately assumes the “man to woman” attitude. To get rid of that, one must be able to look on the woman and feel to her as to a human being only. That is difficult and needs a certain training; for even if the mind is able to take the position, the vital is unreliable and one has to be on guard that it does not suddenly or surreptitiously get in into the relation with its partiality for the sex-interchange.

*

Of course one must be able to come in contact with women without feeling or thinking about sex; but to seek contact and test is not the way, it can too easily turn the other side when the mastery is not complete. The facing and conquering must be an inner process — the Tantrik outer method is not indicated.

*

It [*renunciation of contact with women*] has been prescribed not only in your case, but to all who drag the sex-idea into their relations with women in the Yoga. External as well as internal renunciation of the sex-relation vital or physical has been made the rule. The idea of internal detachment and external indulgence has been found always to be a cover under which the vital continues its operations. For you the continuance would be dangerous both spiritually and for the body.

*

It usually happens that when actual indulgence of the vital is given up (external exchange, touch or contact), imagination still goes on. But if this can be overcome, then the whole thing is overcome. External indulgence on the other hand keeps the activity alive. This is the *raison d'être* of the external avoidance. If anything can be got rid of without the necessity of avoidance, so much the better.

*

Both methods [*giving up contact with women and keeping it*] have their disadvantage. If one allows the opportunities, the sex-movement continues — if one suppresses only, then the movement goes back into imaginations. If it is only imaginations then there is less harm, for in the end the imaginations can be got rid of, but if the imaginations precipitate into some material act, then nothing is gained.

*

The mental acceptance of X's philosophy about sex was the mistake. It may be true that ordinarily mixing with women removes shyness etc., — though it is not always so, for many people are sex-timid by nature — but that is a means for ordinary life, not Yoga, and in ordinary life marriage is the direct means for getting rid of sex-uneasiness; marriage or else having love affairs with women and satisfying the sex. But that is not the proper means for an Asram and Yoga. In Yoga the proper means is to train the mind and vital to meet women without thought of sex, to

look on them as sadhaks and human beings only, not as objects of sexual possession and enjoyment.

*

Strength and purity in the lower vital and wideness in the heart are the best condition for meeting others, especially women, and if that could always be there sex could hardly have a look in.

Touch and Sex

The association [*of touch*] with sex is vital-physical — otherwise there need be no connection between the expression of affection by touch and the sex-feeling. Except in unusual cases, when the mother and son or brother and sister embrace, they do not have the sex-feeling. It is a sort of habitual conversion operated in the passage from the emotional to the physical and, being a habit only, though a strong one, can be changed.

*

It [*touch*] is vital-physical. All sex movement has a vital element in it, but the mere vital movement is not directly interested in touching or the sex act. It is interested more in the play of the emotions, domination and subjection, quarrels, reconciliations, the interchange of vital forces etc. It is the vital-physical consciousness that gives so much importance to the touch, embrace, sex act etc.

*

In ordinary society people touch each other more or less freely according to the manners of the society. That is quite a different matter because there the sex-impulse is allowed within certain more or less wide or narrow limits and even the secret indulgence is common, although people try to avoid discovery. In Bengal when there is purdah, touching between men and women is confined to the family, in Europe there is not much restriction so long as there is no excessive familiarity or indecency; but in Europe sex is now practically free. Here all sex-indulgence

inner or outer is considered undesirable as an obstacle to the sadhana — as it very evidently is. For that reason any excessive familiarity of touch between men and women has to be avoided, anything also in the nature of caressing, as it creates or tends to create sex-tendency or even the strong sex-impulse. Casual touching has to be avoided also if it actually creates the sex-impulse. These are commonsense rules if the premiss is granted that sex has not to have any indulgence.

*

It is surprising you should not see that these things [*kisses and caresses*] belong to the vital sex-movement, even if there is no physical sex-act. If one wants to live in the unreformed vital plane, one can indulge them — but it is certainly unyogic.

*

The difficulty about the kisses and embraces is that they are the expression of a vital love which is not based on the psychic or spiritual or at least does not keep to that basis, so that when it touches the body, it awakens the reactions of the ordinary body love. The ordinary vital and the ordinary body love are intimately connected with sex — and for sex procreative intention is not at all necessary.

*

Avoidance of touch is best so long as there is the sex-response to touch on either side. At a higher stage, it is indifferent to touch or not to touch. What it will be in the supramental culmination, let the supramental decide.

Touch may be neutral or it may imply interchange of forces. When the interchange is that of spiritual or spiritualised forces, then it has its meaning and it is that that will justify it in the supramental realisation. But till then, it is better to be circumspect.

Celibacy

Celibacy means first “not marrying” — it can be extended to not having sexual (physical) relations with any woman, though that is not its proper meaning. It is not equivalent to Brahmacharya. Brahmacharya is not binding in *bhaktimārga* or *karmayoga*, but it is necessary for ascetic *jñānayoga* as well as for Raja and Hatha yogas. It is also not demanded from Grihastha yogis. In this Yoga the position is that one must overcome sex, otherwise there can be no transformation of the lower vital and physical nature; all physical sexual connection should cease, otherwise one exposes oneself to serious dangers. The sex-push must also be overcome but it is not a fact that there can be no sadhana or no experience before it is entirely overcome, only without that conquest one cannot go to the end and it must be clearly recognised as one of the more serious obstacles and indulgence of it as a cause of considerable disturbance.

*

Celibacy is one thing and freedom from sex-pushes is another. These have to be conquered and got rid of, but if freedom from them were made a test of fitness to go on, I wonder how many could be declared fit for my Yoga. The will to conquer must be there, but the elimination of the sex-impulse is one of the most difficult things for human nature and, if it takes time, that is only natural.

*

If it is like that [*a natural control of sexual excitement*] then it is the power of self-control, automatic and therefore belonging to the inner being that is coming — the genuine thing. Of course to be complete the sexual passion and the thoughts that encourage it should disappear also. The idea about impotence [*being caused by celibacy*] is rather irrational — impotence comes from over-indulgence or wrong indulgence (certain perverse habits); it does not come from self-control. Self-control means only a diversion to other powers, because the controlled sex-power becomes a

force for the life-energies, the powers of the mind and the more and more potent workings of the spiritual consciousness.

*

Why impose one rule of Brahmacharya to an advanced age on all men or the age of 25 on all women? Everybody is not intended to be a Brahmachari. Men and women belong to every stage of development and need different kinds of experience suitable for their stage in order to grow and advance farther.

Marriage

It is not helpful to abandon the ordinary life before the being is ready for the full spiritual life. To do so means to precipitate a struggle between the different elements and exasperate it to a point of intensity which the nature is not ready to bear. The vital elements in you have partly to be met by the discipline and experience of life, while keeping the spiritual aim in view and trying to govern life by it progressively in the spirit of Karmayoga.

It is for this reason that we gave our approval to your marriage.

*

If she consents to marry, that would be the best. All these vital disturbances proceed from suppressed sex-instinct, suppressed but not rejected and overcome. A mental acceptance or enthusiasm for the sadhana is not a sufficient guarantee nor a sufficient ground for calling people, especially young people, to begin it. Afterwards these vital instincts rise up and there is nothing sufficient to balance or prevail against them, only mental ideas which do not prevail against the instinct but on the other hand also stand in the way of their natural social means of satisfaction. If she marries now and gets experience of the human vital life, then hereafter there may be a chance of her mental aspiration for sadhana turning into the real thing.

*

As to the question of marriage in general, we do not consider it advisable for one who desires to come to the spiritual life. Marriage means usually any amount of trouble, heavy burdens, a bondage to the worldly life and great difficulties in the way of single-minded spiritual endeavour. Its only natural purpose would be, if the sexual trend was impossible to conquer, to give it a restricted and controlled satisfaction. I do not see in what way it could help you to keep the mind under control and subjugation; a restless mind can only be quieted from within.

*

It is not right once you have turned to the Divine, to allow despondency of any kind to take hold of you. Whatever the difficulties and troubles, you must keep this confidence that by relying on the Divine, the Divine will take you through. Now I answer the questions you put to me in your letter.

1. If to follow the spiritual path is your resolve, marriage and family life can only come across it. Marriage would be the right thing only if the sexual push was so strong that there was no hope of overcoming it except by a controlled and rational indulgence for some time during which it could be slowly brought under subjection to the will. But you say its hold on you is diminishing, so that does not seem indispensable.

2. As for leaving all and coming away from there that must be only when there is a clear and settled decision within you. To do so on an impulse would be to feel all the pull of old things after you come here and entail severe disturbance and struggle in the sadhana. When the other things fall away or are cut away from you then it can be done. Persist in your aspiration, insist on your vital to have faith and be more quiet. It will come.

*

You are right in feeling that the protection and grace are always there and that all has been for the best. In your wife's condition, the best was that she should change her body and she has been able to do so in the state of mind which would give her the

happiest conditions both after death and for a renewal hereafter of the spiritual development for which she had begun to aspire. It is good also that you have been able to keep your poise and the freedom of your spirit in this occurrence.

Again, you are entirely right in your resolution not to marry again; to do so would be in any case to invite serious and probably insuperable difficulties in your following the path of Yoga, and, as in this path of Yoga it is necessary to put away sexual desire, marriage would be not only meaningless but an absolute contradiction of your spiritual life. You can expect full support and protection from us in your resolve and, if you keep a sincere will and resolution in this matter, you may be sure that the Divine Grace will not fail you.

The Relationship of Man and Woman

These are ideas of the vital plane⁷ where the strong demand subservience from those who are not physically or otherwise so strong. The spiritual truth is quite other than these things.

Skin Diseases and Sex

Yes, of course, skin diseases have much to do with sexual desires — not of course always, but often.

*

I suppose it [*pimples on the face*] is often the result of suppressed sexuality — suppressed in act but still internally active. These things do not act in the same way with all, with some it may act on the blood, with some it may not or else not in the same form. Moreover I do not suppose that sex is the only cause of pimples on the face — there are other things also that can give that.

⁷ *The correspondent asked whether there was any “basic truth” in these two ideas: first, that in a relationship the woman should surrender to the man, and second, that a man has a right to be attracted to several women at a time, whereas a woman should be devoted to one man alone. — Ed.*

Section Three

Illness, Doctors and Medicines

Chapter One

Illness and Health

Illness and Yoga

Whatever it may be—the power of the illness to prevent the sadhana ought not to exist. The Yogic consciousness and its activities must be there whether there is health or illness.

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You ought not to allow the physical illnesses to interfere with your sadhana or affect your mind—these illnesses are nothing compared with what many others have had to pass through—you have some constipation, headaches, rheumatic pains, that ought not to be so difficult to bear. You have to separate yourself from the body consciousness and not allow yourself to be overpowered by it.

*

Physical sufferings are due to attacks of the forces of the Ignorance. But if one knows how to do it, one can make them a means of purification. There are however better and less difficult means of purification.

*

Illness must not be accepted as a means of transformation; it rather indicates certain difficulties encountered by the force of transformation especially in the vital and the body. But it is not necessary that these difficulties should be allowed to take this obscure form of illness. All illness should be rejected and all suggestions of illness; the Force should be called in to cure by the assent to health and the refusal of assent to the suggestions that bring or prolong its opposite.

*

All illnesses are obviously due to the imperfect nature of the body and the physical nature. The body can be immune only when it is open to the higher consciousness and the latter can descend into it. Till then what he writes is the remedy — if he can also call in the force to throw out the illness, that is the most powerful help possible.

*

It is only by the conquest of the material nature that illness can cease altogether to come.

*

I do not think X's trance has anything to do with her ill health; I have never known the habit of trances of that kind to have any such result, only the violent breaking of a trance might have a bad result though it would not necessarily produce a disaster. But there is the possibility that if the conscious being goes out of the body in an absolutely complete trance, the thread which connects it with the body might be broken or else cut by some adverse force and it would not be able to return into the physical frame. Apart from any such fatal possibility there might be a shock which might produce a temporary disorder or even some kind of lesion; as a rule, however, a shock would be the only consequence.

The general question is a different matter. There is a sort of traditional belief in many minds that the practice of Yoga is inimical to the health of the body and tends to have a bad effect of one kind or another and even finally leads to a premature or an early dropping of the body. Ramakrishna seems to have held the view, if we can judge from his remarks about the connection between Keshav Sen's progress in spirituality and the illness which undermined him, that one was the result and the desirable result of the other, a liberation and release from life in this world, *mukti*. That may or may not be; but I find it difficult to believe that illness and deterioration of the body is the natural and general result of the practice of Yoga or that that practice is the cause of an inevitable breakdown of health or of the final

illnesses which bring about their departure from the body. On what ground are we to suppose or how can it be proved that while non-Yogis suffer from ill health and die because of the disorders of Nature, Yogis die of their Yoga? Unless a direct connection between their death and their practice of Yoga can be proved—and this could be proved with certainty only in particular cases and even then not with an absolute certainty—there is no sufficient reason to believe in such a difference. It is more rational to conclude that both Yogis and non-Yogis fall ill and die from natural causes and by the same dispensation of Nature; one might even advance the view, since they have the Yoga Shakti at their disposal if they choose to use it, that the Yogi falls ill and dies not because of but in spite of his Yoga. At any rate, I don't believe that Ramakrishna (or any other Yogi) fell ill because of his trances; there is nothing to show that he ever suffered in that way after a trance. I think it is said somewhere or he himself said that the cancer in his throat of which he died came by his swallowing the sins of his disciples and those who approached him: that again may or may not be, but it will be his own peculiar case. It is no doubt possible to draw the illnesses of others upon oneself and even to do it deliberately; the instance of the Greek king Antigonus and his son Dimitrius is a famous historical case in point. Yogis also do this sometimes; or else adverse forces may throw illnesses upon the Yogi, using those round him as a door or a passage or the ill wishes of people as an instrumental force. But all these are special circumstances connected, no doubt, with his practice of Yoga; but they do not establish the general proposition as an absolute rule. A tendency such as X's to desire or welcome or accept death as a release could have a force because of her advanced spiritual consciousness which it would not have in ordinary people.

On the other side there can be an opposite use and result of the Yogic consciousness: illness can be repelled from one's own body or cured, even chronic or deep-seated illnesses and long-established constitutional defects remedied or expelled and even a predestined death delayed for a long period. Narayan Jyotishi,

a Calcutta astrologer, who predicted, not knowing then who I was, in the days before my name was politically known, my struggle with Mlechchha enemies and afterwards the three cases against me and my three acquittals, predicted also that though death was prefixed for me in my horoscope at the age of 63, I would prolong my life by Yogic power for a very long period and arrive at a full old age. In fact I have got rid by Yogic pressure of a number of chronic maladies that had got settled in my body, reduced others to a vanishing minimum, brought about steadily progressing diminution of two that remained and on the last produced a considerable effect. But none of these instances either on the favourable or unfavourable side can be made into a rule; there is no validity in the tendency of human reason to transform the relativity of these things into an absolute.

Finally I may say of X's trances that they are the usual *savikalpa* kind opening to all kinds of experiences, but the large abiding realisations in Yoga do not usually come in trance but by a persistent waking sadhana. The same may be said of the removal of attachments; some may be got rid of sometimes by an experience in trance, but more usually it must be done by persistent endeavour in waking sadhana.

Illness Not the Result of the Force

Illness does not rise up by the descent of the Force, nor hereditary taint nor madness. They come up of themselves, as in X's case who never had even the smallest grain of a descent or a Force anywhere. It is only after he went off his centre, that we are putting Force (not as a descent, but as an agent) to keep him as straight and as sound as possible.

*

A descent [*of the force*] cannot possibly produce nausea and vomiting etc. There can, if one pulls down too much force, be produced a headache or giddiness; both of these go if one keeps quiet a little, ceases pulling and assimilates. A descent cannot

produce blood pressure, madness or apoplexy or heart failure or any other illness.

*

A heat is sometimes created in the body by the pressure of a Force of tapas because there are things that resist in the vital or in the body habit or in the brain-mind — the cause of the heat is therefore not the Force itself but the resistance. As soon as the system is cleared there is no sense of heat any longer. But this heat is clearly distinguishable from illness.

*

Whatever force is sent is for cure. Increase of illness or physical suffering is not the result of the force.

The Lower Nature, the Hostile Forces and Illness

Attacks of illness are attacks of the lower nature or of adverse forces taking advantage of some weakness, opening or response in the nature, — like all other things that come and have got to be thrown away, they come from outside. If one can feel them so coming and get the strength and the habit to throw them away before they can enter the body, then one can remain free from illness. Even when the attack seems to rise from within, that means only that it has not been detected before it entered the subconscious; once in the subconscious, the force that brought it rouses it from there sooner or later and it invades the system. When you feel it just after it has entered, it is because though it came direct and not through the subconscious, yet you could not detect it while it was still outside. Very often it arrives like that, frontally or more often tangentially from the side, direct, forcing its way through the subtle vital envelope which is our main armour of defence, but it can be stopped there in the envelope itself before it penetrates the material body. Then one may feel some effect, e.g. feverishness or a tendency to cold, but there is not the full invasion of the malady. If it can be stopped earlier or if the vital envelope of itself resists and remains strong,

vigorous and intact, then there is no illness; the attack produces no physical effect and leaves no traces.

*

Illness is always an attack of contrary forces in Nature — but not always of what are specially called the Hostile Forces or intended to frustrate aspiration. A desire is an ordinary force of the lower Nature, though it may be used by the Hostile Forces.

*

Hostile [*source of illness*] here means hostile to the Yoga. An illness which comes in the ordinary course as the result of physical causes — even though adverse universal forces are the first cause — is an ordinary illness. One brought by the forces hostile to Yoga to upset the system and prevent or disturb progress — without any adequate physical reason — is a hostile attack. It may have the appearance of a cold or any other illness, but to the eye which sees the action of forces and not only the outward symptoms or results, the difference is clear.

*

These are waves of the hostile force which come trying whom they can touch. When you feel an attack of this kind, you must realise that this comes on you from outside and touches some weak point in you, and you have to remain as quiet as you can, reject it and open yourself. I judge from what you have written that it was the physical and vital-physical consciousness that it made restless and inclined to revolt and it did not take the whole of your consciousness. If you can keep it localised like that when it comes and remain quiet in mind and heart and reject it, then it will not be so difficult to throw it out. The peace and force must be called down into this vital-physical (nervous) part and the whole body until you feel the atmosphere and force pervading you and in you always in all the body and not only upon or around you. If you still find a difficulty, it is because of the past habit of reaction in the nervous being and a certain weakness there; but persevere, do not consent to the invasion of the old

forces. The habit will lessen and disappear and the true Force occupying the body will remove the weakness.

*

It is a hostile pressure that is organising a habit in the body of recurrence at a fixed time or times. This habit of fixed recurrence gives a great force for any illness to persist, as the body consciousness expects the recurrence and the expectation helps it to come.

*

It is this expectation in the mind [*that an attack of obscurity will come at a fixed time*] that helps most to maintain the rhythm of the attack. If it could be got rid of, the rhythm also could be broken.

*

According to all statements the deaths in early age are much less in Europe and men live longer on the whole. But certain diseases have greatly increased in spite of the advance in hygiene — influenza, T.B. and venereals. There are also new diseases coming in that hardly existed before. That seems obviously the work of the Hostiles.

The Suggestion of Illness

The feeling of illness is at first only a suggestion; it becomes a reality because your physical consciousness accepts it. It is like a wrong suggestion in the mind; if the mind accepts it, it becomes clouded and confused and has to struggle back into harmony and clearness. It is so with the body consciousness and illness. You must not accept but reject it with your physical mind and so help the body consciousness to throw off the suggestion. If necessary, make a counter-suggestion, “No, I shall be well; I am and shall be all right.” And in any case call in the Mother’s Force to throw out the suggestion and the illness it is bringing.

*

By suggestion [*of illness*] I do not mean merely thoughts or words. When the hypnotist says, “Sleep”, it is a suggestion; but when he says nothing but only puts his silent will to convey sleep or makes movements of his hands over the face, that also is a suggestion.

When a force is thrown on you or a vibration of illness, it carries to the body this suggestion. A wave comes in the body — with a certain vibration in it, the body remembers “cold” or feels the vibrations of a cold and begins to cough or sneeze or to feel chill — the suggestion comes to the mind in the form, “I am weak, I don’t feel well, I am catching a cold.”

*

A suggestion is not one’s own thought or feeling, but a thought or feeling that comes from outside, from others, from the general atmosphere or from external Nature, — if it is received, it sticks and acts on the being and is taken to be one’s own thought or feeling. If it is recognised as a suggestion, then it can be more easily got rid of. This feeling of doubt and self-distrust and hopelessness about oneself is a thing moving about in the atmosphere and trying to enter into people and be accepted; I want you to reject it, for its presence not only produces trouble and distress but stands in the way of restoration of health and return to the inner activity of the sadhana.

*

The suggestion of weakness comes to the subconscious part of the body consciousness and therefore the mind is most often unaware of it. If the body itself were truly conscious, then the suggestions could be detected in time and thrown off before they took effect. Also the rejection by the central consciousness would be supported by a conscious rejection in the body and act more immediately and promptly.

*

All these suggestions that came to you were of course part of the attack on the physical consciousness, — the attack on the body

is used to raise these ideas and the ideas are used to make it more difficult for the body to recover. At a certain stage attacks fall heavily on the body because the opposing forces find it more difficult than before to upset the mind or vital directly, so they fall on the physical in the hope that that will do the trick, the physical being more vulnerable. But the sensibility of the body to attacks is no proof of incapacity, just as a finer sensibility of the mind or vital to attacks was no proof — it can in due time be overcome. As for the feelings about the Mother and that her love is only given for a return in work or to those who can do sadhana well, that is the usual senseless idea of the vital-physical mind and has no value.

There is nothing wrong in taking care of the body in regard to health and, if the liver has gone wrong, the instinct to refuse too sweet or greasy or heavy foods is a right instinct. Mother has no objection to your abstaining while the illness is there nor has she insisted on your taking *dal*. Her objection is only to what people often do, getting ideas about this or that food and abstaining even when there is no acute illness. During an acute state of bad liver, abstinence is often necessary. Only one must not create by wrong ideas a nervous incapacity of the stomach or a chronic nervous dyspepsia. She had no other meaning.

I hope you will be all right soon. If the body does not right itself, you must keep me informed from time to time.

*

There is a general suggestion in the air about catching dengue or influenza. It is this suggestion that is enabling the adverse forces to bring about symptoms of this kind and spread the complaints; if one rejects both the suggestions and the symptoms, then these things will not materialise.

*

That is how illnesses try to come from one person to another — they attack, by a suggestion like this or otherwise, the nervous being and try to come in. Even if the illness is not contagious, this often happens, but it comes more easily in contagious illnesses.

The suggestion or touch has to be thrown off at once.

There is a sort of protection round the body which we call the nervous envelope — if this remains strong and refuses entrance to the illness force, then one can remain well even in the midst of plague or other epidemics — if the envelope is pierced or weak, then illness can come in.

What you felt attacked was not really the physical body, but this nervous envelope and the nervous body (*prāṇakoṣa*) of which it is an extension or cover.

*

A body is not a cloth — nor is a sick body a torn cloth. A body weak or sick can renew itself, recover its vitality — that happens to thousands of people. A cloth has not a renewable vitality. It is only if one is old beyond fifty-five or sixty that the renewal becomes difficult — even then health and strength can be kept or recovered enough to keep the body in a good condition.

I do not also quite catch what you mean about the inner being. If you mean by the *vikās* the development of the sadhana, to recover health and strength is very necessary for that. The body is an instrument for the sadhana no less than the mind and vital, and it should be kept in a good condition as far as possible. Not to care for the body, thinking it is of no importance compared with the inner state, is not the rule of this Yoga.

*

It is a pity that X could not write all this time. Formerly when she wrote often she used to get better after writing. It is also a pity that she has been told by the doctors that she is not going to live; even if it is true, such a thing should not be told unless in case of necessity (which does not exist in her case) for it takes away much of the power of resistance and diminishes what chances of cure and survival there were. X's physical destiny has always been against her but this is a thing that can be cancelled if one can have sufficient faith and inner strength and openness and receive the spiritual force.

*

These auto-suggestions [*of being restored to good health*] — it is really faith in a mental form — act both on the subliminal and the subconscious. In the subliminal they set in action the powers of the inner being, its occult power to make thought, will or simple conscious force effective on the body — in the subconscious they silence or block the suggestions of death and illness (expressed or unexpressed) that prevent the return of health. They help also to combat the same things (adverse suggestions) in the mind, vital, body consciousness. Where all this is completely done or with some completeness, the effects can be very remarkable.

*

In much the same way as Coué's suggestion system cured most of his patients, [*so an ordinary doctor would cure his patients,*] only by a physical instead of a mental means. The body consciousness responds to the suggestion or the medicine and one gets cured for the time being or it doesn't respond and there is no cure. How is it that the same medicine for the same illness succeeds with one man and not with another or succeeds at one time with a man and afterwards doesn't succeed at all? Absolute cure of an illness so that it cannot return again depends on clearing the mind, the vital and the body consciousness and the subconscious of the psychological response to the force bringing the illness. Sometimes this is done by a sort of order from above (when the consciousness is ready, but it cannot always be done like that). The complete immunity from all illness for which our Yoga tries can only come by a total and permanent enlightenment of the below from above resulting in the removal of the psychological roots of ill health — it cannot be done otherwise.

Curative Auto-Suggestion: The Coué Method

It is the final discovery that one makes that in this world everything depends upon consciousness and its movements, even the things that seem not to do so. In these matters of illness, vital trouble etc., that resolves itself into suggestion (hostile) and

auto-suggestion. Coué, though he did not know these things, had the brilliant intuition of adopting the contrary method of curative auto-suggestion and giving it a thorough and systematic application. Here it does not succeed so well because the anti-Coué spirit is very strong in many, the habit of entertaining hostile suggestions or this openness to them. Yet in Yoga also faith and right auto-suggestion are of great use until the point comes when no suggestion is necessary because the Truth-consciousness acts automatically and produces its natural results.

*

The suggestions that create illness or unhealthy conditions of the physical being come usually through the subconscious — for a great part of the physical being, the most material part, is subconscious, i.e. to say, it has an obscure consciousness of its own but so obscure and shut up in itself that the mind does not know its movements or what is going on there. But all the same it is a consciousness and can receive suggestions from Forces outside, just as the mind and vital do. If it were not so, there would not be any possibility of opening it to the Force and the Force curing it; for without this consciousness in it it would not be able to respond. In Europe and America there are many people now who recognise this fact and treat their illnesses by making conscious mental suggestions to the body which counteract the obscure secret suggestions of illness in the subconscious. There was a famous Doctor in France who cured thousands of people by making them persistently put such counter-suggestions upon the body. That proves that illness has not a purely material cause, but is due to a disturbance of the secret consciousness in the body.

To bear quietly and in silence does help to release from the reaction of grief, if one makes the vital quiet; but it should be at the same time surrendered to the Mother. For the Mother to know from within is not enough; there must be this laying before her and giving up to her so that the reaction may disappear.

*

It is certainly better not to dwell on the difficulties or give them too much voice, because, our experience shows us, to do so helps to make them return like a recurring decimal. The Coué formula is too crude and simple to be entirely true in principle, but it has a great practical force, and behind it there is a very great truth in a world and a consciousness governed by the Overmind Maya: it is this, that what we affirm strongly gets power to persist in the consciousness and experience and calls circumstances to its support, what we deny and reject and refuse to support by the power of the Word, tends, after a time and some resistance, to lose force in the consciousness and the circumstances and movements that support it tend also to recur less often and finally disappear. It is fundamentally the principle of the mantra. On that ground I approve of your resolution not to give any more the *avalambana* of the written word to these things. A constant affirmation from within on the other side — of that which is to be realised — brings always in the end a response from above.

*

These things [*cures by faith-healing and psychotherapy*] are a matter of evidence and the evidence for Coué's success is overwhelming. There have also been many great healers (*guérisseurs*) all over the world whose successes are well-attested. Faith-healing and psychotherapy are also facts.

Faith, Confidence and Cure

Most of them [*illnesses*] can be got rid of almost at once by faith and calling in the force. Those that are chronic are more difficult, but they too can be got rid of by the same means if persistently used.

*

You have only to admit that the mind and vital can influence the body — then no difficulty is left. In this action of mind and vital on the body faith and hope have an immense importance. I do not at all mean that they are omnipotent or infallibly effective

—that is not so. But they assist the action of any force that can be applied, even of an apparently purely material force like medicine. In fact however there is no such thing as a purely material force, but the action may be purely material when it is a question of material objects. But in things that have life or mind and life one cannot isolate the material operation like that. There is always a play of other forces mixed with it in the reception at least and for the most part in the inception and direction also.

*

Remain quiet, within, concentrated only on receiving strength and health, confident that we are with you all the time, and you will soon be all right.

Parts of the Being and Illness

Your description makes it clear that the obstruction in the throat is not physical, it is the obstruction of a formation of obscure force in the physical mind, — for the throat is the centre of the physical mind. In your other parts of the mental there is not any opposition, but here in the physical mind there is probably a habitual form of old external ideas which are rejected but something of them remains. It is this that translates itself in the obstruction and pain. It is a mechanical difficulty which we must try to remove.

*

It is neither the vital nor the body that contains these illnesses — it is a force from outside that creates them and the nervous being (physical vital) and the body respond from habit or inability to throw it away. It is always better not to say, “I will now have no more illness”, it attracts the attention of these malevolent powers and they immediately want to prove that they can still disturb the body. Simply when they come, reject them.

*

The nervous (vital-physical) being supports the body — if it is calm and strong and solid, then the body is well supported and can withstand illness and weakness or, if illness comes, it will bear and more easily get rid of it. If the nervous being is weak, then it is the opposite. If the nervous being is not merely weak, but nervous and unstable, over-sensitive, vehement or excitable, then there is much fluctuation, restlessness, exaltation and depression in the being — there may even be a wrongly acute creative imagination which brings in disorders into the body that are nervous and not physical — there is no physical illness of the heart but there are pains and palpitations, nothing physically wrong with stomach and intestines and yet there is inability to digest — nervous dyspepsia; pains are created in different parts of the body and so on — sometimes there is hysteria.

These conditions are not always native to the body — they are often created by troubles in the life, some disturbing illness or other reasons — but often it is due to some hereditary cause or otherwise native to the system. Women tend to get like this sometimes if there is disorder of the menstruation.

When there is this tendency of the nervous being, it is imperative to get down peace and strength into the nervous being and not allow it to upset the body or the general system.

*

Always the same rigid mind that turns everything into a statement of miraculous absoluteness! It is my experience and the Mother's that all illnesses pass through the nervous or vital-physical sheath of the subtle consciousness and subtle body before they enter the physical. If one is conscious of the subtle body or with the subtle consciousness, one *can* stop an illness on its way and prevent it from entering the physical body. But it may have come without one's noticing, or when one is asleep or through the subconscious, or in a sudden rush when one is off one's guard; then there is nothing to do but to fight it out from a hold already gained on the body. Let us suppose however that I am always on guard, always conscious, even in sleep — that does not mean that I am immunised in my very nature from

all illness. It only means a power of self-defence against it when it tries to come. Self-defence by these inner means may become so strong that the body becomes practically immune as many Yogis are. Still this “practically” does not mean “absolutely” for all time. The absolute immunity can only come with the supramental change. For below the supramental it is the result of an action of a Force among many forces and can be disturbed by a disruption of the equilibrium established — in the supramental it is a law of the nature; in a supramentalised body immunity from illness would be automatic, inherent in its new nature.

There is a difference between Yogic Force on the mental and inferior planes and Supramental Nature. What is acquired and held by the Yoga Force in the mind and body consciousness is in the supramental inherent and exists not by achievement but by nature — it is self-existent and absolute.

*

What I meant was that the body consciousness through old habit of consciousness admits the force of illness and goes through the experiences which are associated with it — e.g. congestion of phlegm in the chest and feeling of suffocation or difficulty of breathing etc. To get rid of that one must awaken a will and consciousness in the body itself that refuses to allow these things to impose themselves upon it. But to get that, still more to get it completely is difficult. One step towards it is to get the inner consciousness separate from the body — to feel that it is not you who are ill but it is only something taking place in the body and not affecting your consciousness. It is then possible to see this separate body consciousness, what it feels, what are its reactions to things, how it works. One can then act on it to change its consciousness and reactions.

*

I am glad to know the disturbance was expelled last night. Now the receptivity in the body consciousness has to be kept so that it may not at all return or, if it tries, may immediately be expelled. You must always try to keep the quietude, not allow depressing

or disturbing thoughts or feelings to enter you or take hold of your mind or your speech — there is no true reason after one has gained the inner quietness and wideness why that should be allowed to lapse and these things enter. And if the mind keeps its quietude and receptivity to higher forces only, it can then easily pass on that quietude and receptivity to the body consciousness and even to the material cells of the body.

*

As the body consciousness becomes more open to the Force (it is always the most difficult and the last to open up entirely), this frequent stress of illness will diminish and disappear.

*

As for the question about the illness, perfection in the physical plane is indeed part of the ideal of the Yoga, but it is the last item and, so long as the fundamental change has not been made in the material consciousness to which the body belongs, one may have a certain perfection on other planes without having immunity in the body.

Accepting and Enjoying Illness

Your theory of illness is rather a perilous creed — for illness is a thing to be eliminated, not accepted or enjoyed. There *is* something in the being that enjoys illness, it is possible even to turn the pains of illness like any other pain into a form of pleasure; for pain and pleasure are both of them degradations of an original Ananda and can be reduced into the terms of each other or else sublimated into their original principle of Ananda. It is true also that one must be able to bear illness with calm, equanimity, endurance, even recognition of it, since it has come, as something that had to be passed through in the course of experience. But to accept and enjoy it means to help it to last and that will not do; for illness is a deformation of the physical nature just as lust, anger, jealousy etc. are deformations of the vital nature and error and prejudice and indulgence of

falsehood are deformations of the mental nature. All these things have to be eliminated and rejection is the first condition of their disappearance while acceptance has a contrary effect altogether.

*

If one has faith and is open to the Force, illnesses can of course be removed in that way. What I objected to was the acceptance of illness and taking pleasure in it; that is admissible in Yogas which do not aim at transformation of the physical consciousness, but not here.

*

By will [*to get rid of illness*] I meant this that there is something in the body that accepts the illness and has certain reactions that make this acceptance effective — so there must always be a contrary will in the conscious parts of the being to get rid of this most physical acceptance.

*

All that is quite wrong.¹ Illness is a wrong movement of the body and is no more to be cherished than a wrong movement of the mind or vital. Pain and illness have to be borne with calm, detachment and equanimity, but not cherished — the sooner one gets rid of them the better.

*

It is always wrong to wish for illness. Fever is not a purifying action; it is the sign of an attack on the body and a fight and resistance to the attack. Illness in the body is like impurity in the vital, a thing undesirable and to be rejected. It may happen that in throwing out the illness (the attacking force) one throws out also something within, some impurity which helped it to come, but that is the result of a Force working within and not

¹ *The correspondent wrote: "Some sadhaks hold the theory that illness is a thing to be cherished. It comes to us from the Divine who wants to test our faith by it. Illness makes us remember the Divine more often than otherwise. Therefore one should not even ask the Mother to throw it away from us. How do you regard this?" — Ed.*

of the illness. It is quite possible that an illness or attack can be transferred in this way from one to another and indeed it very commonly happens; but it does not follow that it happened in this instance.

*

It was the mind that did not want it [*illness*]; this vital when left to itself often invites illness, it finds it dramatic — thinks it makes it interesting to others, likes to indulge the *tamas*, etc. etc.

*

That [*weakness of the body*] also is *tamas*. If you threw off the strain of the idea of weakness, the strength would come back. But there is always something in the vital physical which is pleased with becoming more weak and ill so that it can feel and lament its tragic case.

*

If this [*stomach acidity and colic*] is his only illness, there is absolutely no reason why it should not be cured, if he keeps proper habits and diet and above all the right attitude. I expect that the reason why the illness has such a hold and strong effect on him, is in the imagination and the nerves, more than anything else. There is something there that expects the illness, accepts it when it comes and gives it free play. He must learn to keep calm and quiet in the mind and vital being, to refuse to regard the illness and the tendency to it in the body as something normal to it, regarding it rather as something imposed from outside, and he must believe firmly that it must and will go. If he can keep this attitude and open to the true force, the mind and nervous being once strengthened, the illness and weakness will disappear.

Depression and Illness

It is not anything physical but a vital depression (in some part of the vital, not the whole) that prevents the body from recovering its elasticity. There was some part of the vital that was resisting a radical change and even, unknown to your mind, trying to go

on as it was under cover of the change in the rest of your being. This has now, owing to this last affair, received a blow and got depressed and, when the vital is depressed like that, it affects the body. You say rightly that it is part of a change or turn that is taking place. But these effects of inertia and weakness need not continue; as soon as this vital part acquiesces gladly in the turn or change, the elasticity and energy will return.

*

It is good that you reject the sense of illness and allow no depression. Let there be no apprehension in the physical consciousness; with faith make it open to the Force.

*

The seeds of these old illnesses remain in the subconscious after they are cured. So when the subconscious is being worked, an adverse push bringing a general depression may make them sprout up; but they can be counteracted by the Force if you are vigilant and persistent in your sadhana and not remain to trouble.

Fear and Illness

If you have fear or apprehension of illness in your vital, that is the first thing to be thrown away, as it helps the illnesses to come in.

*

People taking the utmost precautions catch an illness, while often those who take no precautions escape. One has to take reasonable care if there is some immediate and definite cause of apprehension, but that is all.

*

What is the difficulty [*in understanding how the subtle forces of illness attack the body using bacilli and viruses for their purpose*]? You are like the scientists who say or used to say that there is no such thing as mind or thought independent of the physical brain. Mind and thought are only names for brain

quiverings. Or that there is no such thing as vital Force because all the movements of life depend upon chemicals, glands and what not. These things and the germs also are only a minor physical instrumentation for something supraphysical.

They [*the forces of illness*] first weaken or break through the nervous envelope, the aura. If that is strong and whole, a thousand million germs will not be able to do anything to you. The envelope pierced, they attack the subconscious mind in the body, sometimes also the vital mind or mind proper — prepare the illness by fear or thought of illness. The doctors themselves said that in influenza or cholera in the Far East 90 per cent got ill through fear. Nothing to take away the resistance like fear. But still the subconscious is the main thing.

If the contrary Force is strong in the body, one can move in the midst of plague and cholera and never get contaminated. Plague too, rats dying all around, people passing into Hades. I have seen that myself in Baroda.

*

I have gone through the report of the Doctor and it seems to be clear from it — he says so himself — that there is nothing serious the matter and no danger. If there is some dilation of the heart, it was so slight that it was difficult to detect it and all else in it is healthy and normal.

Whatever is wrong in the system can easily be set right — but the first thing necessary is that you should dismiss this fear which hampers the action of the Force and opposes the cure. It is also necessary that you should now abstain finally not only from alcohol and wine, but from sex and smoking. Healthy conditions of living are necessary to help the Force to undo what has been done in the past and restore the full strength and normality of the body.

Fix in yourself the calm and courage of the sadhak. Fear nothing, open yourself, reject the weaknesses that remain — then the progress that had begun here will complete itself and the body also become an abiding place of the true consciousness and force.

Inertia and Illness

The human body has always been in the habit of answering to whatever forces chose to lay hands on it and illness is the price it pays for its inertia and ignorance. It has to learn to answer to the one Force alone, but that is not easy for it to learn.

*

It is a weakness and inertia in the physical nature which makes it undergo and acquiesce in the attacks of illness, instead of refusing and repelling them. That is the character of the material physical in all. It can only be remedied by the Force and Consciousness from above occupying the whole physical being.

*

There seem to be two elements in the physical difficulty that is weighing on you. The first is the liver trouble which weakens and must weaken still more if it leads you to diminish your food below what the body needs for maintaining sufficient strength to react — also probably the nervous tendency to insomnia with its consequences. The second is an inertia of the lower vital and physical consciousness which prevents it from throwing off the lassitude, from reacting against the attacks and from opening steadily to the Force which would remove these things. All that is due to the breakdown of the poise that you had for so long, the vital trouble that caused it and the reaction of the lower vital to the insistence on throwing out the causes of the trouble. This reaction seems to have been a listlessness at losing the things to which it was still holding — such a reaction always brings the inertia of the physical consciousness, while the right reaction in the lower vital brings on the contrary a sense of peace, release, quietude which definitely opens the lowest physical parts to the higher consciousness and force. If you can get over this and get back the old poise, then all these things can be made to disappear.

X was of course right from the medical point of view in recommending exercise — both for the liver and as a tonic to the body it is helpful. So some walking may be advisable. Care

should be taken of the body certainly, the care that is needed for its good condition, rest, sleep, proper food, sufficient exercise; what is not good is too much preoccupation with it, anxiety, despondency in illness etc., for these things only favour the prolongation of ill-health or weakness. For such things as the liver attacks treatment can always be taken when necessary.

But it is always the right inner poise, quietude inward and outward, faith, the opening of the body consciousness to the Mother and her Force that are the true means of recovery — other things can only be minor aids and devices.

Anger and Illness

What has caused all the trouble for X is his insistence on his ego, its ideas, claims, desires, intentions and his aggressiveness in expressing them so that he quarrels with everybody. This quarrelsomeness opens him to all sorts of forces of the vital plane and their attacks. It is also the cause of the damage done to the liver and organs of digestion — for anger and quarrelsomeness always tend to spoil the liver and through it the stomach and intestines. As his quarrelsomeness is colossal, so also is the damage done to liver and digestion extreme. He must get rid of his egoism, quarrelsomeness and bad feelings towards others, if he wants to recover his health and his sadhana.

Work and Illness

I do not know why working with X must make good health impossible, unless you mean that there is too much work imposed on you, — but then the work can be lessened. In fact a complete rest and relief from the work can be arranged at present and for the future we can see afterwards. If you mean that working according to somebody else's ideas makes or keeps you ill, I do not see why it should be so. 999 people out of every 1000 do that — only a few are able to carry out their own ideas and even they have to a large extent to suit their ideas to those of other people in the actual execution of their work. If you mean

that to have to work under discipline, doing things in what you consider not the best way, makes you nervous, discouraged and ill, that is a pity. It would be so much better if you could leave the responsibility of the way of doing things to the Mother and do cheerfully what you have to do. However, if you cannot bring yourself to that attitude, some other way will have to be found hereafter. But at the present, if that is the case, to take rest as a relief would seem the only way.

*

It is no use stopping work because of rheumatism (unless it is of the kind that disables one from working), — it only makes things worse.

Sleep and Illness

Yes. If you don't sleep enough the physical system becomes more open to these attacks [*of illness*]. If it is kept in good condition, then usually it repels them automatically and one does not notice even that there has been an attack.

*

I said that when the body is in good condition it automatically repels any attack of illness which is in the air without the mind even having to notice that there is an attack. If the attack is automatically repelled what is the need of dealing with it?

Pain

Pain is caused because the physical consciousness in the Ignorance is too limited to bear the touches that come upon it. Otherwise, to cosmic consciousness in its state of complete knowledge and complete experience, all touches come as Ananda.

*

Yes — all pain can become Ananda — pain is only the perversion of what in the original Consciousness would be Ananda.

*

Pain can be turned into Ananda, but I don't think that there is a special stage for that.

*

Peace in the cells first, then consolidated force [*is the secret of being able to bear heat and cold*]. Pain and discomfort come from a physical consciousness not forceful enough to determine its own reaction to things.

*

The healing of the nervous pain in the stomach does not depend on more or less eating — often these pains come when one does not eat enough, not only when one eats too much — so it is not by eating less you can cure it.

These pains are a part of the pressure of the old nature on the body; that is why we consider it can only be healed by the Peace and Power bringing a new movement of the physical nature there. In the stage of the struggle between the two natures, the peace does not always remain, but it will remain longer and longer as you get the habit of opening constantly to it.

*

The pains in the body come from the same source as the trouble in the vital nature; both are attacks from the same outside Force that wants to mislead or, when it cannot mislead, to trouble and disturb you. When once you can get rid of the vital invasion and prevent its recurrence, it will be easier to get rid too of the physical trouble whose origin is nervous (vital-physical); although its symptoms seem to be those of a physical illness, it is really an attack on the nervous part and a weakening of it for the time that gives you these pains.

Remain always quiet and persist in opening yourself. The Force that releases you from the vital trouble, can also remove the disturbance in the nervous part and the physical body.

*

The physical pain is obviously due to attacks — any physical

cause being only a means for the action of the attack. I have often seen that when the mind and consciousness have rejected the attacks, the contrary forces fall on some weak point in the body hoping that by pain or illness they will depress the consciousness and so make it less strong to resist and reject them. We must see whether this recurrence of the pain cannot be quietly pushed out altogether.

*

It is a great gain if you feel no depression when the attack on the body comes.

The pain itself is, from your description, evidently nervous and, if you develop openness in the more physical layers of the being, then the action of the Force can always remove it or you will yourself be able to use the Force to push it away. It is a matter of getting the habit of opening in the body consciousness.

The consciousness or unconsciousness, as you have seen in the matter of the French studies, is dependent on the condition. It is not that you are unconscious, but that the physical being is prone to the tamasic condition (the condition of inertia) and then it becomes either inactive or obscure, stupid and unconscious; when the *tamas* goes away the condition becomes bright and what was difficult before becomes natural and easy. The whole thing is to get the physical out of its habit of falling back into *tamas* or inertia, and that can be done by opening and accustoming it to the action of the Force. When the action of the Force becomes constant, then there will be no more *tamas*.

*

You had opened your consciousness, so the pain disappeared. If it came back during sleep, it must have been because you lost touch and fell back into the ordinary consciousness. That often happens.

*

Pains of that kind must be due to some resistance or obstruction to the force on the body — it is not the pressure that creates them.

*

All these pains are a sign that you have put too great and sudden a strain on your physical system. The mind and vital were ready, but the body could not follow. You will have to diminish your work until you recover from the pains and fatigue. You may remember that I suggested to you to do only part of the sweeping work; it was for this reason that I was not sure that the physical system was ready. Now you should follow that — do only part of the work and ask X to arrange for the rest. See whether with this diminution and taking rest during the spare time the pain and the fatigue of the body disappear. If it does, then we can see what is best to do.

*

That is what they [*pains*] do at first; when one drives them out of one place, they go to another. It is better than their fixing in any place.

Separation and Detachment from Pain

The body [*experiences physical pain*], naturally — but the body transmits it to the vital and mental. With the ordinary consciousness the vital gets disturbed and afflicted and its forces diminished, the mind identifies and is upset. The mind has to remain unmoved, the vital unaffected, and the body has to learn to take it with equality so that the higher Force may work.

The Self is never affected by any kind of pain. The psychic takes it quietly and offers it to the Divine for what is necessary to be done.

*

You must arrive at a complete separation of your consciousness from these feelings of the body and its acceptance of illness and from that separated consciousness act upon the body. It is only so that these things can be got rid of or at least neutralised.

*

If it [*the consciousness*] is separate, it should not suffer from

them [*pains*]. Even for the pains, the body may suffer but the consciousness should not feel itself suffering or overpowered.

*

I suppose there are only two ways [*to prevent the lowering effect of pain*]: (1) to think of something else if you can manage it, (2) to be able to detach yourself from the body consciousness, so that the body alone feels the pain, the mind and the vital are not affected.

*

It is a detachment of even the physical mind from the pain that makes one able to go on as if nothing were there, but this detachment of the physical mind is not easy to acquire.

*

It is by an attack on your physical consciousness that the old forces are bringing back the wrong condition. As you got the power before to stand back from the vital movement and localise it, while the rest of your consciousness observed and was not overpowered, so you must learn to stand back from the physical pain or uneasiness and localise it. If you can do that and do it completely, the pain or uneasiness itself will be more easily and quietly removed and you will not be overpowered like this with the sense of weakness. You can see that the Force has the power to take away the pains; but you allow yourself to be nervously overcome and therefore it is difficult for it to act with a continuous result. What was done at that time in the vital, must be done in the physical also. It is the only way to get free from the attacks.

*

The main difficulty seems to be that you are too subject to an excitement of the nerves — it is only by bringing quietude and calm into the whole being that a steady progress in the sadhana can be assured.

The first thing to be done in order to recover is to stop

yielding to the attack of the nerves—the more you yield and identify yourself with these ideas and feelings, the more they increase. You have to draw back and find back something in you that is not affected by pains and depressions, then from there you can get rid of the pains and depressions.

Chapter Two

Doctors and Medicines

Cure by Yogic Force and by Medicines

To heal [*illness*] by the true force is obviously the best — provided the body is amenable. It has a consciousness of its own which must be fully enlightened before it gives a full response.

*

Yes, if the faith and opening are there, medicines are not indispensable.

*

To separate yourself from the thing and call in the Mother's force to cure it [*is the Yogic method*] — or else to use your own will force with faith in the power to heal, having the support of the Mother's force behind you. If you cannot use either of these methods then you must rely on the action of the medicine.

*

Yogic force is all right when one is in a Yogic condition and when it acts. But when it does not, medicine is handy.

*

All ill-health is due to some inertia or weakness or to some resistance or wrong movement there [*in the vital*], only it has sometimes a more physical and sometimes a more psychological character. Medicines can counteract the physical results.

*

Medicines are a *pis aller* that have to be used when something in the consciousness does not respond or responds superficially to the Force. Very often it is some part of the material consciousness that is unreceptive — at other times it is the subconscious

which stands in the way even when the whole waking mind, life, physical consent to the liberating influence. If the subconscious also answers, then even a slight touch of the Force can not only cure the particular illness but make that form or kind of illness practically impossible hereafter.

*

As for the illness itself, we understood from what you wrote that it was only a cold and not a serious illness. In such a case one can take medicines from the Dispensary to hasten the cure or one relies on the Force and opens oneself to the Mother, rejecting the suggestions of illness, putting oneself on the side of the helping forces. You had sufficient experience of sadhana to know that and we did not think it necessary to write what we supposed to be in your knowledge.

*

Try to keep yourself open to our Force in the body, that is the main thing. If the nerves (physical) are quieted, the illness itself will be less intense in its symptoms and can be more easily got over.

*

As for curing you by the Force, the main obstacle is your own vital movements. All this egoistic insistence on your own ideas, claims, preferences — assertion of your own righteousness as against the wickedness of others, complaints, quarrels, disputes, rancours against those around you and the reactions they cause — have had this effect on your liver and stomach and nerves. If you give up all that and live quietly and at peace with others, thinking less of yourself and others and more of the Divine, it would make things much easier and help to restore your health. Quietness of the mind in facing your illness is also necessary — agitation stops the action of the Force.

*

Certainly, one can act from within on an illness and cure it. Only it is not always easy as there is much resistance in Matter,

a resistance of inertia. An untiring persistence is necessary; at first one may fail altogether or the symptoms increase, but gradually the control of the body or of a particular illness becomes stronger. Again, to cure an occasional attack of illness by inner means is comparatively easy, to make the body immune from it in future is more difficult. A chronic malady is harder to deal with, more reluctant to disappear entirely than an occasional disturbance of the body. So long as the control of the body is imperfect, there are all these and other imperfections and difficulties in the use of the inner force.

If you can succeed by the inner action in preventing increase, even that is something; you have then by *abhyāsa* to strengthen the power till it becomes able to cure. Note that so long as the power is not entirely there, some aid of physical means need not be altogether rejected.

*

Illness marks some imperfection or weakness or else opening to adverse touches in the physical nature and is often connected also with some obscurity or disharmony in the lower vital or the physical mind or elsewhere.

It is very good if one can get rid of illness entirely by faith and Yoga-power or the influx of the Divine Force. But very often this is not altogether possible, because the whole nature is not open or able to respond to the Force. The mind may have faith and respond, but the lower vital and the body may not follow. Or if the mind and vital are ready, the body may not respond, or may respond only partially, because it has the habit of replying to the forces which produce a particular illness and habit is a very obstinate force in the material part of the nature. In such cases the use of the physical means can be resorted to, — not as the main means, but as a help or material support to the action of the Force. Not strong and violent remedies, but those that are beneficial without disturbing the body.

The Role of Doctors

If the whole being is open to the force, then only outward means have not to be taken or used very little. But till then Doctors and their ways of treating things cannot be dispensed with altogether.

*

I have got X's report. I gather from it that there is general nervous weakness. I shall write to ask him if this is correct and what treatment he proposes to give. As for medical treatment it is sometimes a necessity. If one can cure by the Force as you have often done, it is the best — but if for some reason the body is not able to respond to the Force (e.g. owing to doubt, lassitude or discouragement or for inability to react against the disease), then the aid of medical treatment becomes necessary. It is not that the Force ceases to act and leaves all to the medicines, — it will continue to act through the consciousness but take the support of the treatment so as to act directly on the resistance in the body, which responds more readily to physical means in its ordinary consciousness.

*

You refuse to speak to the Doctor and on the other hand your body is not yet able to receive the Forces in such a way as to cure it. When the body is not able to receive the Forces *unaided*, it is then that we send the Doctor and work through him — but here your mind comes in and refuses. So both means are stopped.

*

Where the illness becomes pronounced and chronic in the body, it is necessary often to call in the aid of physical treatment and that is then used as a support of the Force. X in his treatment does not rely on medicines alone, but uses them as an instrumentation for the Mother's force.

*

You are very much behind the times. Do you not know that even

many doctors now admit and write it publicly that medicines are an element but only one and that the psychological element counts as much and even more? I have heard that from doctors often and read it over reputable medical signatures. And among the psychological elements, they say, one of the most important is the doctor's optimism and self-confidence, (his faith, what? it is only another word for the same thing) and the confidence, hope, helpful mental atmosphere he can inspire in or around his patient. I have seen it stated categorically that a doctor who can do that is far more successful than one who knows Medicine better but cannot.

*

Miracles can be done, but there is no reason why they should be all instantaneous, whether from Gods or doctors.

Medical Systems

Of course injections are all the fashion; for everything it is “inject, inject and again inject”. Medicine has gone through three stages in modern times — first (at the beginning in Molière's days) it was “bleed and douche”, then “drug and diet”, now it is “serum and injection”. Praise the Lord! not for the illnesses, but for the doctors. However each of these formulas has a part truth behind it — with its advantages and disadvantages. As all religions and philosophies point to the Supreme but each in a different direction, so all medical fashions are ways to health — though they don't always reach it.

*

Medicine is not exactly science. It is theory + experimental fumbling + luck.

*

The theory [*of allopathic medicine*] is imposing, but when it comes to application, there is too much fumbling and guesswork for it to rank as an exact science. There are many scientists (and

others) who grunt when they hear medicine called a science. Anatomy and physiology, of course, are sciences.

*

There are plenty of allopathic doctors who consider homeopathy, Nature-Cure, Ayurveda and everything else that is not orthodox “medical science” to be quackery. Why should not homeopaths etc. return the compliment?

*

I have put down a few comments to throw cold water on all this blazing hot allopathism. But all these furious disputes seem to me now of little use. I have seen the working of both systems [*allopathy and homeopathy*] and of others and I cannot believe in the sole truth of any. The ones damnable in the orthodox view, entirely contradicting it, have their own truth and succeed — also both the orthodox and heterodox fail. A theory is only a constructed idea-script which represents an imperfect human observation of a line of processes that Nature follows or can follow; another theory is a different idea-script of other processes that also she follows or can follow. Allopathy, homeopathy, naturopathy, osteopathy, Kaviraji, hakimi have all caught hold of Nature and subjected her to certain processes; each has its successes and failures. Let each do its own work in its own way. I do not see any need for fights and recriminations. For me all are only outward means and what really works are unseen forces behind; as they act, the outer means succeed or fail — if one can make the process a right channel for the right force, then the process gets its full utility — that is all.

*

Tumour, syphilis etc. are specialities, but what I have found in my psycho-physical experience is that most disorders of the body are connected, though they go by families, — but there is also connection between the families. If one can strike at their psycho-physical root, one can cure even without knowing the pathological whole of the matter and working through the

symptoms is a possibility. Some medicines invented by demimystics have the power. What I am now considering is whether homeopathy has any psycho-physical basis. Was the founder a demimystic? I don't understand otherwise certain peculiarities of the way X's medicines act.

*

Of course [X consults his homeopathy books in choosing medicines]. He learned homeopathic medicine in America and his ideas of homeopathy are the American ideas. But how does his knowledge prevent intuition? Even an allopathic doctor has often to intuit what medicine he should give or what mixture — and it is those who intuit best that succeed best. All is not done by sole rule of book or sole rule of thumb even in orthodox Science.

The Right Use of Medicines

X wrote two or three days ago that you were not regular in taking his medicine and in that case he could not be responsible (if the treatment was not strictly followed to the end) if the cure was imperfect or if afterwards there was a relapse which might be irremediable. Dr. Y told the Mother that he was amazed at the improvement in your case. He had not believed such a thing was possible, but he had seen with his own eyes and now knew that it was. It would be a pity if such a result were not carried out to full success because of carelessness in following the treatment. I would recommend you to give it a full chance.

*

I did not mean that it [*cure through the Force*] cannot be done without medicines. But if it is to be done with the aid of medicines, then the right medicine is helpful, the wrong one obviously brings in a danger.

*

It is not enough for a medicine to be a specific [*for it to be*

helpful]. Certain drugs have other effects or possible effects which can be ignored by the physician who only wants to cure his case, but cannot be in a whole-view of the system and its reactions. The unfavourable reactions of quinine are admitted by medical opinion itself and doctors in Europe have been long searching for a substitute for quinine.

*

There are some remedies which cure the disease temporarily but are bad for the system like quinine — others which suit some people but harm others, others which have a good effect one way, but a bad one in another way. That is why Mother does not like them to be used indiscriminately. Some she disapproves of altogether, e.g. quinine. She also disapproves of the excessive use of purgatives.

*

It is hardly possible to give a list of drugs [*not to be prescribed for persons practising Yoga*], but the general rule is that very strong or violent medicines should be avoided as much as possible — for Yoga increases the sensitivity of the vital and physical reactions and drugs tend to produce stronger or other effects than with ordinary persons.

*

The morphia stuns locally or otherwise the consciousness and its reaction to the subconscious pressure and so suspends the pain or deadens it. Even that it does not always do — X took five morphine injections in succession without even diminishing his liver inflammation pains. What became of the power of the drug over the subconscious in that case? The resistance was too strong just as the resistance of Y's subconscious to the Force.

*

Injection should be taken only if indispensable. Medical treatment can be resorted to if the illness is or has become of a chronic kind.

Chapter Three

Specific Illnesses, Ailments and Other Physical Problems

Cancer

I do not know why the doctors speak of cancer as inevitable. There are so many people who carry gall-stones in the bladder for so many years without any development of cancer. It is evident that it is a dangerous illness, not easily curable — but we cannot say positively either that she will not survive. There is no such thing as an incurable illness in reality — for what the doctors call such is only an illness for which they have not yet been able to discover a physical remedy. X has one force on her side, her faith and her will to survive for the sadhana; on the other side is a kind of destiny of the body which is strong but not absolutely insurmountable. Her faith must be left intact — and we must send force to help her. That is all that we can say at present. If she can by her faith draw down and open to such a force as will counteract the adverse physical forces in her body, then she will survive.

*

Of course it [*cancer*] can [*be cured by Yoga*], but on condition of faith or openness or both. Even a mental suggestion can cure cancer — with luck, of course, as is shown by the case of the woman operated on unsuccessfully for cancer, but the doctors lied and told her it had succeeded. Result, cancer symptoms all ceased and she died many years afterwards of another illness altogether.

Tuberculosis

T.B. is the result of a strong psychic-vital depression. Sex cannot

directly cause T.B. though it may be a factor in bringing about a fall of the vital forces and a withdrawal of the psychic supporting forces leading to T.B. The lack of vitality which easily comes as a result of modern civilisation is therefore a very strong contributing cause. Moderns have not the solid nervous system and the natural (as opposed to the artificial and morbid) zest of life that their ancestors had. But I don't know about the soldiers — the hideous trench war with all its ghastly circumstances and surroundings was, I imagine, far more difficult to bear than the open air marching and fighting of the Napoleonic times.

Fever

Fever is of course more often than not a struggle of the body to fight out impurities that have got in, but sometimes the remedy is as bad if not worse than the disease. It is the same with the mind difficulties — an illness sometimes results in a throwing out of some impurities but it can also do more harm than good.

Influenza

The first thing to do is to keep throughout a perfect equanimity and not to allow thoughts of disturbed anxiety or depression to enter you. It is quite natural after this severe attack of influenza that there should be weakness and some fluctuations in the progress to recovery. What you have to do is to remain calm and confident and not worry or be restless — be perfectly quiet and prepared to rest as long as rest is needed. There is nothing to be anxious about; rest, and the health and strength will come.

Head Cold

What you describe [*a "loaded" head with sluggish thinking and mechanical thoughts*] happens very usually during a cold in the head, as ordinarily one depends upon the brain cells for the transmission of the mental thought. When the mind is not so dependent on the brain cells, then their obscuration by the cold

does not interfere with clear seeing and thinking and one is not thrown back in the mechanical mind.

Weak Vision

Finally about your eyes. The wearing of glasses does inevitably confirm any weakness in the eyes, so we would not recommend you to resort to them for a strain which can surely be remedied in other ways.

*

It is better to take the sun-treatment (for the eyes) if you give up your spectacles. It is not a treatment in the ordinary sense, as there are no medicines, but a use of certain natural forces and physical observations to correct the impaired mechanism of the eye.

*

You will have to be careful about your eyes. Reading by night (too much) is inadvisable. There are two suggestions of the sun-treatment man which I have found to be not without foundation. First, one should blink freely in looking at things or reading and not fix the eyes or stare. Second, palming gives a very useful rest — palming means keeping the hands crossed over the closed eyes (without pressing on the eyes) so as to shut out all light.

Glaucoma

We cannot take the responsibility of advising against operation. Glaucoma is supposed to bring inevitable blindness — there is no known successful medical treatment — the operation is considered the only chance of avoiding the natural result of the illness. So they must be left free to undergo it if there is no way out.

Stammering

I don't think stammering has anything to do with insufficient

lung-power nor is it usually caused by malformation of the vocal organ — it is commonly a nervous (physico-nervous) impediment and is perfectly curable. I can't say that I know of any especial device for it — people have used various kinds of devices to get over it, but behind them all will-power and a patient discipline of the utterance are indispensable.

Menstrual Problems

The attack you had on the body must, from the description, have been a crisis of the circulation due to the period you are passing through, the turning of the age when the menstruation is preparing to cease but has not yet ceased altogether. It is a very uncomfortable period because of the irregularities and these things can happen — they cease when this period of life is over. Some pass through it very easily with only the irregularities of the flow and an occasional trouble of this kind; others have more difficulty. If there is then no sexual movement in the nature or none of any intensity, then things go more smoothly.

Constipation

Constipation is not determined by food; it is due to an inertia in the physical — get off the inertia and the constipation goes.

Sciatica

Sciatica is something more than nervous — it affects the movement of the muscles through the nerves. It can be got rid of at once, however, if you can manage to direct the Force on it.

*

There is no outer means. Sciatica is a thing which yields only to inner concentrated force or else it goes away of itself and comes of itself. Outer means at best can only be palliatives.

*

If you cannot get rid of the sciatica by inner means, the medical remedy (not for curing it, but for keeping free as long as possible) is not to fatigue yourself. It comes for periods which may last for weeks, then suddenly goes. If you remain quiet physically and are not too active, it may not come for a long time. But that of course means an inactive life, physically incapable. It is what I meant by eternising the sciatica — and the inertia also.

*

The inertia is there because there was always in your outer being a great force of *tamas* and it is this that is being used by the resistance. There was also a deficiency of steady will-power in the outer mind which makes it more difficult for the Force to come down than for the Knowledge. When you are entirely open the Force can act on the sciatica and it lessens or disappears, but with the consciousness blocked by the inertia these difficulties come in the way.

*

If you can cure by withdrawing [*from work*] so much the better. The sciatica has often tried to fall on the Mother and on myself — we have always found that it cannot resist the Force quietly and persistently applied. Other illnesses can resist, but sciatica being entirely *tamasic* cannot. The application of Force does not yet, probably, come natural to you, so it brings a sense of struggle not of quiet domination, hence the restlessness etc.

Growing Taller

It is rather difficult to grow taller when once the period of growth is over. It may come in the period of material transformation at the end of the Yoga — but that is far off and I don't think there are any means by which it can be done otherwise.

Bearing the Heat

Dry heat is supposed to be less bad for the general health than

damp heat. There is however usually less need of food and therefore less appetite. From the point of view of Yoga if one can keep a certain quiet in the material body, “peace in the cells”, the heat is easier to bear.

Section Four

The Subconscious and the Inconscious and the Process of Yoga

Chapter One

The Subconscious and the Integral Yoga

The Change of the Subconscious

The change of the subconscious is most important for our Yoga — for without it there can only be an incomplete personal experience without the change we seek for being established in the very roots of the being here and consequently in the earth-consciousness.

*

No man is perfect; the vital is there and the ego is there to prevent it. It is only when there is the total transformation of the external and the internal being down to the very subconscious, that perfection is possible. Till then imperfection will remain as our common heritage.

*

So long as there is not the Supramental change down to the subconscious complete and final the lower nature has always a hold on some part of the being.

*

The Yoga cannot be done in a minute. Some essential changes are made rapidly, but even these have to be worked out and confirmed in the detail of action. What you speak of [*a sudden change in the subconscious*], only the Supramental could do if it acted directly or some force fully supported by the Supramental, but that occurs rarely.

The Subconscious, the Inner Being and the Outer Being

In our Yoga we mean by the subconscious that quite submerged part of our being in which there is no wakenly conscious and coherent thought, will or feeling or organised reaction, but which yet receives obscurely the impressions of all things and stores them up in itself and from it too all sorts of stimuli, of persistent habitual movements, crudely repeated or disguised in strange forms can surge up into dream or into the waking nature. For if these impressions rise up most in dream in an incoherent and disorganised manner, they can also and do rise up into our waking consciousness as a mechanical repetition of old thoughts, old mental, vital and physical habits or an obscure stimulus to sensations, actions, emotions which do not originate in or from our conscious thought or will and are even often opposed to its perceptions, choice or dictates. In the subconscious there is an obscure mind full of obstinate *sanskaras*, impressions, associations, fixed notions, habitual reactions formed by our past, an obscure vital full of the seeds of habitual desires, sensations and nervous reactions, a most obscure material which governs much that has to do with the condition of the body. It is largely responsible for our illnesses; chronic or repeated illnesses are indeed mainly due to the subconscious and its obstinate memory and habit of repetition of whatever has impressed itself upon the body consciousness. But this subconscious must be clearly distinguished from the subliminal parts of our being such as the inner or subtle physical consciousness, the inner vital or inner mental; for these are not at all obscure or incoherent or ill-organised, but only veiled from our surface consciousness. Our surface constantly receives something, inner touches, communications or influences, from these sources but does not know for the most part whence they come.

*

The subconscious is below the waking physical consciousness — it is an automatic, obscure, incoherent, half-unconscious realm

into which light and awareness can with difficulty come. The inner vital and physical are quite different — they have a larger, plastic, subtler, freer and richer consciousness than the surface vital and physical, much more open to the Truth and in direct touch with the universal.

*

The inner being does not depend on the subconscious, but the outer has depended on it for thousands of lives — that is why the outer being and physical consciousness's habit of response to the subconscious can be a formidable obstacle to the progress of the sadhana and is so with most. It keeps up the repetition of the old movements, is always pulling down the consciousness and opposing the continuity of the ascent and bringing the old nature or else the *tamas* (non-illumination and non-activity) across the descent. It is only if you live wholly and dynamically in the inner being and feel the outer as a quite superficial thing that you can get rid of the obstruction or minimise it until the transformation of the outer being can be made complete.

*

It [*a condition of obscurity*] is most probably something that has come from outside and covered. This happens at this stage when the working is in the physical and subconscious — for that is the nature of these parts, to live in the external with the inner being covered up by a sort of natural veil of obscurity. Therefore when one makes the opening through this veil, it has a tendency to come back. When that happens, one has to remain undisturbed and call down the Force and Light from above to remove the obstacle. This must be done till the opening is permanent and complete and no covering is possible.

The Subconscious and the Physical Being

The subconscious difficulty is *the* difficulty now¹ — because the

¹ This letter was written in April 1935. — Ed.

whole struggle in the general sadhana is now there. It is in the subconscious, no longer in the vital or conscious physical that the resistance is all massed together.

*

There is a close connection between the subconscious and the physical and lower vital parts; so long as the subconscious is not cleared, the seed you speak of remains.

*

The material [*consciousness*] is for the most part subconscious — it depends upon the subtler parts for its waking consciousness.

*

The subconscious material plane is a field that still opposes the entrance of the Divine Light.

*

Until they [*the material and subconscious parts of the being*] aspire or at least assent fully to the aspiration and will of the higher being, there can be no lasting change in them.

*

It [*the reason the physical can help to remove inertia*] is because, the subconscious being just below the physical, the enlightened physical can act on it directly and completely in a way in which mind and vital cannot and by this direct action can help to liberate the mind and vital also.

*

Yes, what you write is correct. When the physical consciousness has to be changed, it is of course essential to work on the subconscious, as it has a great influence on the physical which is very dependent on it.

The loss of consciousness comes naturally at first when the subconscious is being worked upon. You have to be careful that it does not become habitual. If you react with a will for the

change of this tendency (no struggle is needed) it will pass in time.

*

It is not a fact that formless things [*such as vague subconscious impressions*] can have no power — all that is necessary is that they should have a force in them. The subconscious influences the body because all in the body has developed out of the subconscious and all in itself still is only half conscious and much of its action can be called subconscious. It is therefore much more easily influenced by the subconscious than by the conscious mind and conscious will or even the vital mind and vital will except in those things in which a conscious mental or vital control has been established and the subconscious itself has accepted it. If it were not so, man's control of his actions and physical states would be complete, there would be no illness or, if there were, it could be immediately cured by mental action. But it is not so. For that reason the higher consciousness has to be brought down, the body and the subconscious enlightened by it and accustomed to obey its control.

*

It is good. Emptiness and silence of the consciousness prepare the being to live within, with the outer consciousness only as a means of communication and action on the physical world instead of living in the external only.

As there is a superconscious (something above our present consciousness) above the head from which the higher consciousness comes down into the body, so there is also a subconscious (something below our consciousness) below the feet. Matter is under the control of this power, because it is that out of which it has been created — that is why matter seems to us to be quite unconscious. The material body is very much under the influence of this power for the same reason; it is why we are not conscious of what is going on in the body, for the most part. The outer consciousness goes down into this subconscious when we are asleep, and so it becomes unaware of what is going

on in us when we are asleep except for a few dreams. Many of these dreams rise up from the subconscious and are made up of old memories, impressions etc. put together in an incoherent way. For the subconscious receives impressions of all we do or experience in our lives and keeps these impressions in it, sending up often fragments of them in sleep. It is a very important part of the being, but we can do nothing much with it by the conscious will. It is the higher Force working in us that in its natural course will open the subconscious to itself and bring down into it its control and light.

*

It is in the Yogic consciousness that one feels the seat of the subconscious below the feet, but the influence of the subconscious is not confined there — it is spread in the body. In the waking state it is overpowered by the conscious thinking mind and vital and conscious physical mind, but in the sleep state it comes on the surface.

Habits and the Subconscious

The subconscious is a thing of habits and memories and repeats persistently or whenever it can old suppressed reactions, reflexes, mental, vital or physical responses. It must be trained by a still more persistent insistence of the higher parts of the being to give up its old responses and take on the new and true ones.

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The subconscious is the support of habitual action — it can support good habits as well as bad.

*

The exterior consciousness can be invaded by what rises up from the subconscious or comes in from outside and owing to a renewed vibration of the past habit can respond — but that does not mean that the will of the vital or of the physical mind is for these things. If there was anything in them normally on the side

of sex or violence, then you could say the impurities were there. But if it were so, there would be more than these attacks, there would be a daily struggle with anger and desire.

If one had to wait for an absolute purity free from all possibility of these attacks before beginning to realise the Divine, nobody would ever be able to realise. It is as the realisation progresses, that the fundamental transformation takes place.

The Environmental Consciousness and the Subconscious

These cravings and desires are old habits of the physical which came to it from the universal Nature and which it accepted and took as part of itself and its life. When these things are rejected by the waking consciousness they try to take refuge in the subconscious or else in what may be called the environmental consciousness and from there they press upon the consciousness trying to recover their hold or simply to recur for a time. If they are in the subconscious they come up most usually in dreams, but they may also surge up into the waking consciousness. If they come from the environment they take the form of thought-suggestions or impulses or a vague restless or disturbing pressure. It is probably this environmental pressure that you feel. When the body is full of the new consciousness, Peace and Power at the same time, then this outward pressure is felt but can no longer disturb and finally it recedes to a distance (no longer pressing immediately on the physical mind or body) and either gradually or rapidly disappears.

By environmental consciousness I mean something that each man carries around him, outside his body, even when he is not aware of it, — by which he is in touch with others and with the universal forces. It is through this that the thoughts, feelings etc. of others pass to enter into one — it is through this also that waves of the universal force — desire, sex, etc. — come in and take possession of the mind, vital or body.

*

When these things [*base feelings such as jealousy*] are rejected

and disappear for a time, some part of them may go out into the environmental consciousness and from there they can return in a wave from the general Nature. If one is conscious, one can even feel them coming in. The rejection of such returns is an important part of the purification and it is not complete till this power of returning is no longer there. But also it may be that some part is not so much rejected as suppressed by mental control, then it sinks into the subconscious and when the subconscious is active (as in dream or in a passive state of the mind) or else when the subconscious itself is brought up for purification, then it may rise up even with much violence. There especially the sense that one has to begin all again and nothing has been done may come upon the sadhak. But it is not so really. One has to be firm and not get upset but this time detach firmly and completely so as to uproot completely from the nature.

*

What is taking place, the subsiding of the surge of subconscious thoughts and movements, and their pressure on the mind, is just what ought to take place. It is not a suppression or pulling back into the subconscious, it is an expulsion from the conscious self into which it has arisen. It is true that something more may rise from the subconscious, but it will be what is still left there. What is now rejected, if it goes anywhere and is not abolished, will go not into the subconscious but into the surrounding consciousness which one carries around him — once there it no longer belongs to oneself in any way and if it tries to return it will be as foreign matter which one has not to accept or allow any longer. These are the two last stages of rejection by which one gets rid of the old things of the nature, they go down into the subconscious and have to be got rid of from there or they go out into the environmental consciousness and are no longer ours.

The idea that one should let what rises from the subconscious go on repeating itself till it is exhausted is not the right idea. For that would needlessly prolong the troubled condition and might be harmful. When these things rise they have to be observed and then thrown out, not kept.

The Rising Up of Things from the Subconscious

The human like the animal mind lives largely in impressions rising up from the subconscious.

*

What must have happened was that as the physical consciousness is now being worked upon, all the past impressions (which usually remain in the subconscious and rise up from time to time and meanwhile influence the thought and action and feelings without being noticed) rose up in a mass and threw themselves on the consciousness. This usually happens in order that the sadhak may see and reject them and get liberated entirely (in the subconscious as well as the conscious parts) from his physical past. That is why you felt afterwards the sense of release. The throat is the centre of the externalising mind (physical mind).

*

I do not think you have gone back — probably what has been happening to many if not most in the Asram (especially those who have done some serious sadhana) is happening to you. It is the rising of old habitual thoughts, feelings, impulses in a confused way from the subconscious in a mechanical repetition. The subconscious is the basis of the ordinary physical nature and the light has to come into it also. Moreover even if the progress gained has been covered over by these things, what is once gained is not lost; it always reemerges after obscuration and one can get back into it. Ideas of discouragement should always be rejected.

*

What is happening just now [*the rising of confused, depressing thoughts*] is that there is a great uprush of the subconscious in which are the seeds or the strong remnants of the habitual difficulties of the nature. But its character is a confusion and obscurity without order or clear mental or other arrangement — it is a confused depression, discouragement, inability to progress

— a feeling of what are we doing? why are we here? how can we go on? will anything ever be attained? and along with it old difficulties recurring in a confused and random but often violent and distressing fashion.

You cannot “begin” again; it would be too difficult a thing in this confusion. You have to get back to the point at which you deviated. If you can get back to the Peace that was coming and with it aspire to the freedom and wideness of the Purusha consciousness forming a *point d'appui* of detachment and separation from all this confusion of the subconscious Prakriti, then you will have a firm ground to stand upon and proceed. But for that you must make your choice firmly and refuse to be upset at every moment and diverted from it.

*

But in reality these things [*old movements of the lower nature*] are not sufficient reasons for getting sad and depressed. It is quite normal for difficulties to come back like that and it is not a proof that no progress has been made. The recurrence (after one has thought one has conquered) is not unaccountable. I have explained in my writings what happens. When a habitual movement long embedded in the nature is cast out, it takes refuge in some less enlightened part of the nature, and when cast out of the rest of the nature, it takes refuge in the subconscious and from there surges up when you least expect it or comes up in dreams or sudden unconscious movements or it goes out and remains in wait in the environmental being through which the universal Nature works, and attacks from there as a force from outside trying to recover its kingdom by a suggestion or repetition of old movements. One has to stand fast till the power of return fades away. These returns or attacks must be regarded not as parts of oneself, but as invasions—and rejected without allowing any depression or discouragement. If the mind does not sanction them, if the vital refuses to welcome them, if the physical remains steady and refuses to obey the physical urge, then the recurrence of the thought, the vital impulse, the physical feeling will begin to lose

its last holds and finally they will be too feeble to cause any trouble.

*

You do not realise how much of the ordinary natural being lives in the subconscious physical. It is there that habitual movements, mental and vital, are stored and from there they come up into the waking mind. Driven out of the upper consciousness, it is in this cavern of the Panis that they take refuge. No longer allowed to emerge freely in the waking state, they come up in sleep as dreams. It is only when they are cleared out of the subconscious, their very seeds killed by the enlightening of these hidden layers, that they cease for good. As your consciousness deepens inwardly and the higher light comes down into those inferior covered parts, the things that now recur in this way will disappear.

*

What you describe seems to be in its nature an uncontrolled rushing up of the subconscious taking the form of a mechanical recurrence of old thoughts, interests or desires with which the physical mind is usually occupied. If that were all, the only thing would be to reject them, detach yourself and let them pass till they quieted down. But I gather from what you write that there is an attack, an obscure force using these recurrences to invade and harass the mind and body. It would be helpful if you could give an exact description of the main character of the thoughts that come, what things and ideas they are concerned with etc. But in any case the one thing to do is to open yourself to the Mother's force by aspiration, thought of the Mother or any other way and let it drive out the attack. We shall send Force continually till this is done. It will be better to let us know every three days or so how you go on, for that will help to make the action of the Force more precise.

*

These thoughts that attack in sleep or in the state between sleep and waking do not belong to any part of your conscious being, but come either from the subconscious or from the surrounding

atmosphere through the subconscious. If they are thoughts you had in the past and have thrown out from you, then what rises must be impressions left by them in the subconscious — for all things thought, felt or experienced leave such impressions which can rise from there in sleep. Or the thoughts can have gone out from you into the environmental consciousness, that is, an atmosphere of consciousness which we carry around us and through which we are connected with universal Nature and from there they may be trying to return upon you. As it is difficult for them to succeed in the waking state, they take advantage of the absence of conscious control in sleep and appear there. If it is something new and not yours, then it can be neither of these, but an attack of some outside Force.

It is to be hoped that as you have rejected them, they will not come again, but if they do, then you must put a conscious will before going to sleep that they should not come. A suggestion of that kind on the subconscious is often successful, if not at once, after a time; for the subconscious learns to obey the will put upon it in the waking state.

*

The dream you had was really a rising up of past formations or impressions from the subconscious. All that we do, feel or experience in life leaves an impression, a sort of essential memory of itself in the subconscious and this can come up in dreams even long after those feelings, movements or experiences have ceased in the conscious being, — still more when they have been recent and are only now or lately thrown away from the mind or vital. Thus long after one has ceased to think of old acquaintances or relatives dreams about them go on coming up from this source. So too when sex or anger no longer troubles the conscious vital, dreams of sex or dreams of anger and strife can still rise. It is only when the subconscious is cleared that they cease; meanwhile they are of not much importance (provided one understands what they are and is not affected) so long as the old movements are not allowed to recur or remain in the waking state.

*

It [*variation in the intensity of past memories*] is always so with the impressions left in the subconscious physical. One day they come as pale and distant things, with no life in them, another they seem to get a certain force. It depends on whether they are caught up by a current of force from the universal or rise up of themselves with no force except what is left in them from the past.

*

All these movements simply mean that a certain part of the nature, full of habitual emotional movements, had been lying suppressed but not definitely dealt with and has now come up with as much force as possible, taking advantage of the descent of the consciousness from the peace and Ananda. It is an old habitual movement of the egoistic vital that is repeating itself. You had pushed it down into the subconscious and away to the outskirts of your nature, but not cleared the nature of it entirely. It is not surprising that it has pushed back the inner self and its experiences for the time being; if it had not done that, it could not last for a moment. But that is no reason why you should talk as if it were a hopeless downfall; it is not that, though it is a serious stumble. You have to recognise it for what it is and get out of the wave and throw it away from you. Steady yourself and look straight at what has happened without overstressing its importance; it will then pass away sooner.

*

As for the mood that came on you, it comes up from the subconscious, where things of the old nature sink when they are rejected. When moods come up like that, you have to remain quiet and call the Mother till it is gone. After a time this power of mechanical repetition without reason from the subconscious gets worn out and disappears — then these moods come no more.

*

All that [*sense of grief and sorrow*] is probably things that rise

from the subconscious—or perhaps the subconscious itself is being worked upon to arrive at a state of light and peace. It sometimes enters into a happy condition, sometimes into a neutral one, sometimes it raises up a causeless sorrow. The movements of the subconscious take place even without reason, of themselves, owing to the inherent habit in Nature, that is why the grief is without discoverable cause. It is only because it is in the subconscious that you cannot locate it. When the grief comes, you must dissociate yourself from it and reject it, not taking it as your own, until it ceases to come and call down the Mother's peace and Ananda in its place.

*

Yes, surely it is present [*vanity in the subconscious*]. All normal reactions and characteristics are there in the subconscious, and even remain there after they have been rejected from the conscious nature and can return from it in the conscious nature.

*

Certainly, the subconscious has many more fears in it than those admitted or acknowledged by the waking consciousness.

*

The dark wells of the subconscious are deep and until they are altogether cleared some gushing up of the old sources is always possible.

Dealing with the Subconscious

As for the subconscious that is best dealt with when the opening of the consciousness to what comes down from above is complete. Then one becomes aware of the subconscious as a separate domain and can bring down into it the silence and all else that comes from above.

*

The subconscious can be entirely dealt with only when the other

parts are sufficiently open and changed — but meanwhile it can feel the pressure of the change in the mind and vital.

*

The conscious parts have to be prepared first — impossible to deal successfully with the subconscious till then, except in points and details. Just as the musician has first to learn the right principle and execution of his music with his mind and vital (aesthetic) perception and will — and teach his fingers to execute it — afterwards the subconscious in his fingers will learn its work and do the right thing of itself — e.g. touching the right keys without his eyes having to follow.

*

These [*vital and physical weaknesses*] are symptoms and feelings that can easily come in the period when the subconscious is being dealt with — *tamas*, age, decay, illness, death, weakness, inertia, the mechanical play (as if the inevitable round of a machine) of the lower vital have their seeds in the subconscious and when the subconscious rises up in its native power, these threaten to rise with them. Never consent to the attack or allow the faith and the will to go down before them. Affirm always the higher Truth against them and call down the Power and Light into the cells, into the whole body and plunge them into the subphysical below the body so that the very roots of the subconscious may get illuminated and change. It is only by doing this that realisation in the body will become possible.

*

It [*insincerity in the vital*] can only be dangerous if the waking mind accepts it. All the same, so long as it remains in the subconscious, it keeps a seed of possibility — so it must be got out altogether.

*

Just as one can concentrate the thought on an object or the vision on a point, so one can concentrate will on a particular

part or point of the body and give an order to the consciousness there. That order reaches the subconscious.

Dealing with Memories from the Subconscious

It is most probably from the subconscious [*that the past memories come*]. When these memories arise, they should be treated on the basis that they have arisen in order to be dissolved and dismissed, so that by their persistent dissolution one may not be tied by the impressions in the subconscious to the past (that is the machinery of Karma) but free for the spirit's unbound future.

The best is when you can get the true knowledge about it, why it happened and what purpose it served; then it goes easily.

*

Reject them [*past memories*] from their roots with the idea that they have come up in order to be abolished from the subconscious. It may take a little time to get rid of some memories which are persistent and recurrent, but usually this process has an effect of clearance after a time.

*

If you do not pay attention, they [*past memories*] fall into the background and become a mechanical action which it is more easy to get rid of.

*

This review of the past is a very good sign, for it usually comes when there is a preparation of the physical consciousness and subconscious for change. One has not to regret the stumbles of the past but look with a quiet eye and understand, for all came — the stumbles included — as part of the necessary experience by which the being learns and advances through error to the Light and through the imperfections of Nature towards the divine perfection.

Clearing or Emptying the Subconscious

There is always a great deal to do in the subconscious, but if you specially feel it [*the need to clear the subconscious*], it must be that the time for clearing it has come. If the other parts keep open and responsive, this should not give too much trouble.

*

It is only if the mind is silent that the subconscious can be empty. What has to be done is to get all the old ignorant unyogic stuff out of the subconscious.

*

If the subconscious is emptied, it would mean that you have got beyond the ordinary consciousness and the subconscious itself is prepared to be an instrument of the Truth.

Illumining the Subconscious

The subconscious is a dark and ignorant region, so that it is natural that the obscurer movements of the Nature should have more power there. It is so indeed with all the lower parts of the nature from the lower vital downwards. But it does send up good things also though more rarely. It has in the course of the sadhana to be illumined and made a support of the higher consciousness in the physical nature instead of a basis of the instinctive lower movements.

*

The work [*going on in the subconscious*] is of a general nature, not individual, but necessarily everyone here is to some extent affected by it.² If consciousness and light is not brought into the subconscious, then there can be no change. For it is in the subconscious that there are the seeds of all the old lower vital instincts and movements and however much they may be cleared in the

² *This letter was written in November 1937. — Ed.*

lower vital itself, they may sprout up again from below. Also the subconscious is the secret basis of the bodily consciousness. The subconscious must admit into itself the higher consciousness and the Truth light.

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[First effects of the Light penetrating and changing the subconscious:]

1. The subconscious begins to show more easily what is in it.

2. Things rising from there come to the awareness of the mind before they can touch or affect the consciousness.

3. The subconscious becomes less the refuge of the ignorant and obscure movements and more an automatic response of the material to the higher consciousness.

4. It gives less covert and less passage to the suggestions of the hostile forces.

5. It is more easy to be conscious in sleep and to have higher forms of dream experience. Hostile dreams — e.g. sex-suggestions can be met and stopped in the dream itself and any result like emission prevented.

6. A waking will put on the dream state before sleeping becomes more and more effective.

*

The subconscious is to be penetrated by the light and made a sort of bedrock of truth, a store of right impressions, right physical responses to the Truth. Strictly speaking, it will not be subconscious at all, but a sort of bank of true values held ready for use.

Psycho-analysis and the Integral Yoga

Your practice of psycho-analysis was a mistake. It has, for the time at least, made the work of purification more complicated, not easier. The psycho-analysis of Freud is the last thing that one should associate with Yoga. It takes up a certain part, the

darkest, the most perilous, the unhealthiest part of the nature, the lower vital subconscious layer, isolates some of its most morbid phenomena and attributes to it and them an action out of all proportion to its true role in the nature. Modern psychology is an infant science, at once rash, fumbling and crude. As in all infant sciences, the universal habit of the human mind — to take a partial or local truth, generalise it unduly and try to explain a whole field of Nature in its narrow terms — runs riot here. Moreover, the exaggeration of the importance of suppressed sexual complexes is a dangerous falsehood and it can have a nasty influence and tend to make the mind and vital more and not less fundamentally impure than before.

It is true that the subliminal in man is the largest part of his nature and has in it the secret of the unseen dynamisms which explain his surface activities. But the lower vital subconscious which is all that this psycho-analysis of Freud seems to know — and even of that it knows only a few ill-lit corners, — is no more than a restricted and very inferior portion of the subliminal whole. The subliminal self stands behind and supports the whole superficial man; it has in it a larger and more efficient mind behind the surface mind, a larger and more powerful vital behind the surface vital, a subtler and freer physical consciousness behind the surface bodily existence. And above them it opens to higher superconscious as well as below them to lower subconscious ranges. If one wishes to purify and transform the nature, it is the power of these higher ranges to which one must open and raise to them and change by them both the subliminal and the surface being. Even this should be done with care, not prematurely or rashly, following a higher guidance, keeping always the right attitude; for otherwise the force that is drawn down may be too strong for an obscure and weak frame of nature. But to begin by opening up the lower subconscious, risking to raise up all that is foul or obscure in it, is to go out of one's way to invite trouble. First, one should make the higher mind and vital strong and firm and full of light and peace from above; afterwards one can open up or even dive into the subconscious with more safety and some chance of a rapid and successful change.

The system of getting rid of things by *anubhava* can also be a dangerous one; for on this way one can easily become more entangled instead of arriving at freedom. This method has behind it two well-known psychological motives. One, the motive of purposeful exhaustion, is valid only in some cases, especially when some natural tendency has too strong a hold or too strong a drive in it to be got rid of by *vicāra* or by the process of rejection and the substitution of the true movement in its place; when that happens in excess, the *sadhaka* has sometimes even to go back to the ordinary action of the ordinary life, get the true experience of it with a new mind and will behind and then return to the spiritual life with the obstacle eliminated or else ready for elimination. But this method of purposive indulgence is always dangerous, though sometimes inevitable. It succeeds only when there is a very strong will in the being towards realisation; for then indulgence brings a strong dissatisfaction and reaction, *vairāgya*, and the will towards perfection can be carried down into the recalcitrant part of the nature.

The other motive for *anubhava* is of a more general applicability; for in order to reject anything from the being one has first to become conscious of it, to have the clear inner experience of its action and to discover its actual place in the workings of the nature. One can then work upon it to eliminate it, if it is an entirely wrong movement, or to transform it if it is only the degradation of a higher and true movement. It is this or something like it that is attempted crudely and improperly with a rudimentary and insufficient knowledge in the system of psychoanalysis. The process of raising up the lower movements into the full light of consciousness in order to know and deal with them is inevitable; for there can be no complete change without it. But it can truly succeed only when a higher light and force are sufficiently at work to overcome, sooner or later, the force of the tendency that is held up for change. Many, under the pretext of *anubhava*, not only raise up the adverse movement, but support it with their consent instead of rejecting it, find justifications for continuing or repeating it and so go on playing with it, indulging its return, eternising it; afterwards when they want to get rid of

it, it has got such a hold that they find themselves helpless in its clutch and only a terrible struggle or an intervention of divine grace can liberate them. Some do this out of a vital twist or perversity, others out of sheer ignorance; but in Yoga, as in life, ignorance is not accepted by Nature as a justifying excuse. This danger is there in all improper dealings with the ignorant parts of the nature; but none is more ignorant, more perilous, more unreasoning and obstinate in recurrence than the lower vital subconscious and its movements. To raise it up prematurely or improperly for *anubhava* is to risk suffusing the conscious parts also with its dark and dirty stuff and thus poisoning the whole vital and even the mental nature. Always therefore one should begin by a positive, not a negative experience, by bringing down something of the divine nature, calm, light, equanimity, purity, divine strength into the parts of the conscious being that have to be changed; only when that has been sufficiently done and there is a firm positive basis, is it safe to raise up the concealed subconscious adverse elements in order to destroy and eliminate them by the strength of the divine calm, light, force and knowledge. Even so, there will be enough of the lower stuff rising up of itself to give you as much of the *anubhava* as you will need for getting rid of the obstacles; but then they can be dealt with with much less danger and under a higher internal guidance.

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I find it difficult to take these psycho-analysts at all seriously when they try to scrutinise spiritual experience by the flicker of their torch-lights, — yet perhaps one ought to, for half-knowledge is a very powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the coming in front of the true Truth. This new psychology looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet, exulting in putting their a-b-c-d of the subconscious and the mysterious underground super-ego together and imagining that their first book of obscure beginnings (c-a-t=cat, t-r-e-e=tree) is the very heart of the real knowledge. They look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities; but the foundation of these things is above

and not below, *uṣari budhna eṣām*. The superconscient, not the subconscient, is the true fountain of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms for ever in the Light above. The self-chosen field of these psychologists is besides poor and dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest. That is the province of a greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing.

Chapter Two

The Inconscient and the Integral Yoga

The Descent of the Sadhana into the Inconscient

There is another cause of the general inability to change which at present afflicts the sadhak.¹ It is because the sadhana, as a general fact, has now and for a long time past come down to the Inconscient; the pressure, the call is to change in that part of the nature which depends directly on the Inconscient, the fixed habits, the automatic movements, the mechanical repetitions of the nature, the involuntary reactions to life, all that seems to belong to the fixed character of a man. This has to be done if there is to be any chance of a total spiritual change. The Force (generally and not individually) is working to make that possible, its pressure is for that, — for, on the other levels, the change has already been made possible (not, mind you, assured to everybody). But to open the Inconscient to the light is a Herculean task; change on the other levels is much easier. As yet this work has only begun and it is not surprising that there seems to be no change in things or people. It will come in time, but not in a hurry.

As for experiences, they are all right but the trouble is that they do not seem to change the nature, they only enrich the consciousness — even the realisation, on the mind level, of the Brahman seems to leave the nature almost where it was, except for a few. That is why we insist on the psychic transformation as the first necessity — for that does change the nature — and its chief instrument is bhakti, surrender etc.

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¹ *This letter was written in April 1944, the one that follows it in June 1944. The final letter in the group was written in April 1947. — Ed.*

The sunlit path can only be followed if the psychic is constantly or usually in front or if one has a natural spirit of faith and surrender or a face turned habitually towards the sun or psychic predisposition (e.g. a faith in one's spiritual destiny) or if he has acquired the psychic turn. That does not mean that the sunlit man has no difficulties; he may have many, but he regards them cheerfully as "all in the day's work". If he gets bad beatings, he is capable of saying, "Well, that was a queer go, but the Divine is evidently in a queer mood and if that is his way of doing things, it must be the right one; I am surely a still queerer fellow myself and that, I suppose, was the only means of putting me right." But everybody can't be of that turn, and surrender which would put everything right is, as you say, difficult to do completely. That is why we do not insist on total surrender at once, but are satisfied with a little to begin with, the rest to grow as it can.

I have explained to you why so many people (not by any means all) are in this gloomy condition, dull and despondent. It is the *tamas*, the inertia of the Inconscient, that has got hold of them. But also it is the small physical vital which takes only an interest in the small and trivial things of the ordinary daily and social life and nothing else. When formerly the *sadhana* was going on on higher levels (mind, higher vital etc.), there was plenty of vigour and verve and interest in the details of the Asram work and life as well as in an inner life; the physical vital was carried in the stream. But for many this has dropped; they live in the unsatisfied vital physical and find everything desperately dull, gloomy and without interest or issue. In their inner life the *tamas* from the Inconscient has created a block or a bottleneck and they do not find any way out. If one can keep the right condition and attitude, a strong interest in work or a strong interest in *sadhana*, then this becomes quiescent. That is the malady. Its remedy is to keep the right condition and to bring gradually or, if one can, swiftly the light of the higher aspiration into this part of the being also, so that whatever the conditions of the environment, it may keep also the right poise. Then the sunlit path should be less impossible.

The extreme acuteness of your difficulties is due to the Yoga having come down against the bedrock of Inconscience which is the fundamental basis of all resistance in the individual and in the world to the victory of the Spirit and the Divine Work that is leading toward that victory. The difficulties themselves are general in the Asram as well as in the outside world. Doubt, discouragement, diminution or loss of faith, waning of the vital enthusiasm for the ideal, perplexity and a baffling of the hope for the future are the common features of the difficulty. In the world outside there are much worse symptoms such as the general increase of cynicism, a refusal to believe in anything at all, a decrease of honesty, an immense corruption, a preoccupation with food, money, comfort, pleasure to the exclusion of higher things and a general expectation of worse and worse things awaiting the world. All that, however acute, is a temporary phenomenon for which those who know anything about the workings of the world-energy and the workings of the Spirit were prepared. I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is preparing behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming. Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking; after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the Light will come.

Part Four

Difficulties in the Practice of the Integral Yoga

Section One

Difficulties of the Path

Chapter One

The Difficulties of Yoga

Difficulties and the Aim of Life

It is the lesson of life that always in this world everything fails a man — only the Divine does not fail him, if he turns entirely to the Divine. It is not because there is something bad in you that blows fall on you, — blows fall on all human beings because they are full of desire for things that cannot last and they lose them or, even if they get, it brings disappointment and cannot satisfy them. To turn to the Divine is the only truth in life.

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As for the blows, well, are they always given by the Yoga — is it not sometimes the sadhak of the Yoga who gives blows to himself? There are plenty of blows too in ordinary life according to my experience. Blows are the order of existence, and of Yoga; our nature or the nature of things brings them upon us until we learn to present to them a back which they cannot touch.

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The ordinary life naturally has its mental, vital and physical pleasures, but it is of a superficial character and there is no firm foundation of the consciousness anywhere — all is at the mercy of the play of forces. In Yoga there is the period of struggle and difficulty in which the difficulty and suffering can be acute and the period of the foundation in the true consciousness after which there is no serious disturbance of the peace and freedom leading to the state of realisation in all the being in which grief etc. are impossible.

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All X's troubles are due partly to past Karma in another life, partly to his nature which is unable to harmonise with his

surroundings or to master them by strong will and clear understanding or to face them with calm poise and balance. Life is for experience and growth and until one has learned one's lesson things go on happening that are the result of one's imperfect balance with Nature or inner imperfections. All that happens is for the best is true only if we see with the cosmic view that takes in past and future development which is aided by ill fortune, as well as good fortune, by danger, death, suffering and calamity, as well as by happiness, success and victory. It is not true if it means that only things happen which are fortunate or obviously good for the person in the human sense.

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What you describe is a nature divided against itself by a mind which has corrupted its action through a wrong use of its powers and a physical weakened by indulgence of vital desire.

Introspection is good only when it is used as a means for changing the nature so as to bring it into accord with a higher ideal steadily held before you. The present nature of man is egoistic in motive, full of falsehoods created by the Ignorance into which he is born and which the mind and life accept in order to follow their ego's aims and desires. By introspection one comes to see that, but by itself that can only create distrust of oneself, loss of motive to action, cynicism and weakness. One must have the faith and aspiration towards a higher consciousness which one has to build up in place of this lower nature, then the introspection and the knowledge of the defects of the nature it gives become useful, as it helps one to see what has to be changed while the higher ideal gives what has to take the place of the old movements and the old nature.

But all that is not easy to do unless you resolve to give an aim to your life and erect the higher ideal towards which you have to grow. Just as the mind can destroy the force of life and its balance, so it can do that also, it can help to restore the power on a new basis and acquire a new and greater force and true balance. But for that you must have the will to do it. To create

the will the mind must press for faith and vision and discourage their opposites.

What you have written has some power of thought and style and vision though of a mixed character. There is no harm in writing these things when they of themselves come; it may help the inner element of aspiration to grow in you.

Difficulties and the Integral Yoga

This Yoga is certainly difficult, but is any Yoga really easy? You speak of the lure of liberation into the extracosmic Absolute, but how many who set out on the path of Nirvana attain to it in this life or without a long, strenuous and difficult endeavour? Which of the paths has not to pass through the dry desert in order to reach the promised land? Even the path of Bhakti which is said to be the easiest is full of the lamentations of the bhaktas complaining that they call but the Beloved eludes their grasp, the place of meeting is prepared but even now Krishna does not come. Even if there is the joy of a brief glimpse or the passion of *milana*, it is followed by long periods of *viraha*. It is a mistake to think that any path of Yoga is facile, that any is a royal road or short cut to the Divine, or that like a system of "French made easy" or "French without tears", so there can be a system of "Yoga made easy" or "Yoga without tears". A few great souls prepared by past lives or otherwise lifted beyond the ordinary spiritual capacity may attain realisation more swiftly; some may have uplifting experiences at an early stage, but for most the *siddhi* of the path, whatever it is, must be the end of a long, difficult and persevering endeavour. One cannot have the crown of spiritual victory without the struggle or reach the heights without the ascent and its labour. Of all it can be said, "Difficult is that road, hard to tread like the edge of a razor."

You find the path dry precisely because you have not yet touched the fringe of it. But all paths have their dry periods and for most though not for all it is at the beginning. There is a long stage of preparation necessary in order to arrive at the inner psychological condition in which the doors of experience

can open and one can walk from vista to vista — though even then new gates may present themselves and refuse to open until all is ready. This period can be dry and desert-like unless one has the ardour of self-introspection and self-conquest and finds every step of the effort and struggle interesting or unless one has or gets that secret of trust and self-giving which sees the hand of the Divine in every step of the path and even in the difficulty the grace or the guidance. The description of Yoga as “bitter like poison in the beginning” because of the difficulty and struggle “but in the end sweet as nectar” because of the joy of realisation, the peace of liberation or the divine Ananda and the frequent description by sadhaks and bhaktas of the periods of dryness shows sufficiently that it is no unique peculiarity of this Yoga. All the old disciplines recognised this and it is why the Gita says that Yoga should be practised patiently and steadily with a heart that refuses to be overcome by despondency. It is a recommendation applicable to this path but also to the way of the Gita and to the hard “razor” path of the Vedanta, and to every other. It is quite natural that the higher the Ananda to come down, the more difficult may be the beginning, the drier the deserts that have to be crossed on the way.

Certainly, the supramental manifestation does not bring peace, purity, force, power of knowledge only; these give the necessary conditions for the final realisation, are part of it, but Love, Beauty and Ananda are the essence of its fulfilment. And although the supreme Ananda comes with the supreme fulfilment, there is no real reason why there should not be the love and Ananda and beauty of the way also. Some have found that even at an early stage before there was any other experience. But the secret of it is in the heart, not the mind — the heart that opens its inner door and through it the radiance of the soul looks out in a blaze of trust and self-giving. Before that inner fire the debates of the mind and its difficulties wither away and the path however long or arduous becomes a sunlit road not only towards but through love and Ananda.

Nevertheless, even if that does not come at first, one can arrive at it by a patient perseverance — the psychic change is

indeed the indispensable preliminary of any approach to the supramental path and this change has for its very core the blossoming of the inner love, joy, bhakti. Some may find a mental opening first and the mental opening may bring peace, light, a beginning of knowledge first, but this opening from above is incomplete unless it is followed by an opening inward of the heart. To suppose that the Yoga is dry and joyless because the struggles of your mind and vital have made your first approach to it dry is a misunderstanding and an error. The hidden springs of sweetness will reveal themselves if you persevere, even if now they are guarded by the dragons of doubt and unsatisfied longing. Grumble, if your nature compels you to it, but persevere.

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The only thing to do with such depressing thoughts is not to indulge them, to send them away at once. Vital difficulties are the common lot of every human being and of every sadhak — they are to be met with a quiet determination and confidence in the Divine Grace.

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It needs either a calm resolute will governing the whole being or a very great *samatā* to have a quite smooth transformation. If they are there, then there are no revolts though there may be difficulties, no attacks, only a conscious dealing with the defects of the nature, no falls but only setting right of wrong steps or movements.

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These obstacles can only be got rid of gradually by persistent sadhana. The alternation of dark and bright states is normal and inevitable.

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The headache if it comes is only a result of the body not being accustomed to the pressure or else to some resistance there. The difficulties of course rise up, but it is not always in the

beginning. Sometimes the first effect is such that one feels as if there were no difficulties, — they rise afterwards when the exultation wanes and the normal consciousness has a chance to assert itself against the flood of power or light from above. There is a resistance that has to be fought out or worked out — fought out if the nature is unsteady or resists violently, worked out if the will is steady and the nature moderate in its reactions. On the other hand if there has been a long preparation and the resistances of the nature have been already largely dealt with by the psychic or by the enlightened mental will, then there are no primary or later aggravations but a steady and quiet pulsing of the change, the remaining difficulties falling away of themselves as the new consciousness develops, or else there may be no difficulties at all, only a necessary readjustment and change.

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If X has allowed any fall in her consciousness and action which retards her sadhana and is not yet able wholly to overcome her weakness, that is no reason why you should allow *her* difficulty to overcome *your* faith and endeavour. There is no natural connection between the two and no reason why there should be — it is only your mind that is making one. Each sadhak has his own separate sadhana, his own difficulties, his own way to follow. His sadhana is between him and the Divine; no one else has a part in it. Nor is there any reason why, even if one falls or fails, the other should torment himself for that, lose his faith and abandon his way. X's struggle, whatever its nature or limits, is her own and concerns herself and the Mother. It is not yours and ought not to touch or concern you at all; if you allow it to touch and shake you because she happens to be your sister, you bring in an unnecessary difficulty to add to your own and hamper your own progress. Keep to your own path, concentrate on your own obstacles to overcome them. As for her, you can at most pray to the Divine Power to help her and leave it there.

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Yoga has always its difficulties, whatever Yoga it be. Moreover

it acts in a different way on different seekers. Some have to overcome the difficulties of their nature first before they get any experiences to speak of, others get a splendid beginning and all the difficulties afterwards, others go on for a long time having alternate risings to the top of the wave and then a descent into the gulfs and so on till the vital difficulty is worked out — that is the case with X; others have a smooth path which does not mean that they have no difficulties — they have plenty, but they do not care a straw for them, because they feel sure that the Divine will help them to the goal, or that he is with them even when they do not feel him — their faith makes them imperturbable. What Y feels is true — there are certain signs by which one can know it. As for Z he never tried to do Yoga, so he is not a case in point at all — if he had wanted he might have done something, but except at the beginning he did not want it in the least.

For yourself it seems to me that the consciousness is growing towards the point at which there can be the decisive change upwards and inwards, decisive and effective, and there is no cause for depression — for that change is the one thing needful.

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The difficulties that remain, although not identical, are similar in their cause and their fundamental nature to those you have either largely or completely overcome, and they can be conquered in the same way; it is a question of time and of acquiescence within yourself in the pressure from the Divine which makes man change.

Human nature and the character of the individual are a formation that has arisen in and out of the inconscience of the material world and can never get entirely free from the pressure of that Inconscience. As consciousness grows in the being born into this material world, it takes the form of an Ignorance slowly admitting or striving with difficulty after knowledge and human nature is made of that Ignorance and the character of the individual is made from the elements of the Ignorance. It is largely mechanistic like everything else in material Nature and there is almost invariably a resistance and, more often than not, a strong

and stubborn resistance to any change demanded from it. The character is made up of habits and it clings to them, is disposed to think them the very law of its being and it is a hard job to get it to change at all except under a strong pressure of circumstances. Especially in the physical parts, the body, the physical mind, the physical life movements, there is this resistance; the tamasic element in Nature is powerful there, what the Gita describes as *aprakāśa*, absence of light, and *apavṛtti*, a tendency to inertia, inactivity, unwillingness to make an effort and, as a result, even when the effort is made, a constant readiness to doubt, to despond and despair, to give up, renounce the aim and the endeavour, collapse.

Fortunately, there is also in human nature a sattwic element which turns towards light and a rajasic or kinetic element which desires and needs to act and can be made to desire not only change but constant progress. But these too, owing to the limitations of human ignorance and the obstructions of the fundamental inconscience, suffer from pettiness and division and can resist as well as assist the spiritual endeavour. The spiritual change which Yoga demands from human nature and individual character is, therefore, full of difficulties, one may almost say that it is the most difficult of all human aspirations and efforts. In so far as it can get the sattwic and the rajasic (kinetic) elements to assist it, its path is made easier but even the sattwic element can resist by attachment to old ideas, to preconceived notions, to mental preferences and partial judgments, to opinions and reasonings which come in the way of higher truth and to which it is attached: the kinetic element resists by its egoism, its passions, desires and strong attachments, its vanity and self-esteem, its constant habit of demand and many other obstacles. The resistance of the vital has a more violent character than the others and it brings to the aid of the others its own violence and passion and that is a source of all the acute difficulty, revolt, upheavals and disorders which mar the course of the Yoga. The Divine is there, but He does not ignore the conditions, the laws, the circumstances of Nature; it is under these conditions that He does all His work, His work in the world and in man and

consequently also in the sadhak, the aspirant, even in the God-knower and God-lover; even the saint and the sage continue to have difficulties and to be limited by their human nature. A complete liberation and a complete perfection or the complete possession of the Divine and possession by the Divine is possible but it does not usually happen by an easy miracle or a series of miracles. The miracle can and does happen but only when there is the full call and complete self-giving of the soul and the entire widest opening of the nature.

Still, if the call of the soul is there, although not yet full, however great and obstinate the difficulties, there can be no final and irretrievable failure; even when the thread is broken it is taken up again and reunited and carried to its end. There is a working in the nature itself in response to the inner need which, however slowly, brings about the result. But a certain inner consent is needed; the progress that you have marked in yourself is due to the fact that there was this consent in the soul and also in part of the nature; the change was insisted on by the mind and desired by part of the vital; the resistance in part of the mind and part of the vital made it slow and difficult but could not prevent it. The strong development you have observed in your powers with its proof in the response of others is due to the same reason; part of your being consented to it, wanted and needed it as a self-fulfilment of the nature and the soul wanted it as a means of service to the Divine; the rest was due to the pressure of the Divine force and my pressure. As for the distaste, the lack of interest etc. all this is temporary and belongs only to a part of you. In so far as it comes from a kind of *vairāgya*, it may have helped you in overcoming some of your attachments, but it is defective in so far as the element of *tamas* and *apraṁṛtti* is there; it is not so fundamental as to resist the victorious drive of the pressure of the Divine Force.

You ask what I want you to do. What I want is that you should persist and give more and more that assent in you which brought about the progress you have made so that here too the resistance may diminish and eventually disappear.

And you must now get rid of an exaggerated insistence

on the use of reason and the correctness of your individual reasoning and its right to decide in all matters. The reason has its place especially with regard to certain physical things and general worldly questions — though even there it is a very fallible judge — or in the formation of metaphysical conclusions and generalisations; but its claim to be the decisive authority in matters of Yoga or in spiritual things is untenable. The activities of the outward intellect there lead only to the formation of personal opinions, not to the discovery of Truth. It has always been understood in India that the reason and its logic or its judgment cannot give you the realisation of spiritual truths but can only assist in an intellectual presentation of ideas; realisation comes by intuition and inner experience. Reason and intellectuality cannot make you see the Divine, it is the soul that sees. Mind and the other instruments can only share in the vision when it is imparted to them by the soul and welcome and rejoice in it. But also the mind may prevent it or at least stand long in the way of the realisation or the vision. For its prepossessions, preconceived opinions and mental preferences may build a wall of arguments against the spiritual truth that has to be realised and refuse to accept it if it presents itself in a form which does not conform to its own previous ideas: so also it may prevent one from recognising the Divine if the Divine presents himself in a form for which the intellect is not prepared or which in any detail runs counter to its prejudgments and prejudices. One can depend on one's reason in other matters provided the mind tries to be open and impartial and free from undue passion and is prepared to concede that it is not always right and may err; but it is not safe to depend on it alone in matters which escape its jurisdiction, especially in spiritual realisation and in matters of Yoga which belong to a different order of knowledge.

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The Divine may be difficult, but his difficulties can be overcome if one keeps at him.

Why Difficulties Come

No, it is not a test. The difficulties come because the mind, vital and physical or some part is open to the movements which bring the difficulties.

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The difficulties are there in vital and physical nature because they are full of obscurity, falsehood, inertia and ignorance. They have to be got rid of by opening the vital and physical wholly to the power of the psychic and the power of the Truth from above.

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It is quite true that falsehood reigns in this world; that is the reason why these difficulties manifest. But you have not to allow yourself to be shaken. You must remain calm and strong and go straight, using the power of Truth and the Divine Force supporting you to overcome the difficulties and set straight what has been made crooked by the falsehood.

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All who enter the spiritual path have to face the difficulties and ordeals of the path, those which rise from their own nature and those which come in from outside. The difficulties in the nature always rise again and again till you overcome them; they must be faced with both strength and patience. But the vital part is prone to depression when ordeals and difficulties rise. This is not peculiar to you, but comes to all sadhaks — it does not imply an unfitness for the sadhana or justify hopelessness. But you must train yourself to overcome this reaction of depression, calling in the Mother's force to aid you.

All who cleave to the path steadfastly can be sure of their spiritual destiny. If anyone fails to reach it, it can only be for one of two reasons, either because they leave the path or because for some lure of ambition, vanity, desire etc. they go astray from the sincere dependence on the Divine.

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The Power does not descend with the object of raising up the lower forces, but in the way it has to work at present, that uprising comes in as a reaction to the working. What is needed is the establishment of the calm and wide consciousness at the base of the whole Nature so that when the lower nature appears, it will not be as an attack or struggle but as if a Master of forces were there seeing the defects of the present machinery and doing step by step what is necessary to remedy and change it.

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It [*progress, then struggle*] is the usual course of the process by which the change of consciousness is effected. The lower Forces seldom yield the ground without a protracted and often repeated struggle. What is gained can be covered over, but it is never lost.

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If you go down into your lower parts or ranges of nature, you must be always careful to keep a vigilant connection with the higher already regenerated levels of the consciousness and to bring down the Light and Purity through them into these nether still unregenerated regions. If there is not this vigilance, one gets absorbed in the unregenerated movement of the inferior layers and there is obscuration and trouble.

The safest way is to remain in the higher part of the consciousness and put a pressure from it on the lower to change. It can be done in this way, only you must get the knack and the habit of it. If you achieve the power to do that, it makes the progress much easier, smoother and less painful.

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There are higher forces and the lower — the latter have to be worked out by contact with the higher and in the working out sometimes they rise, sometimes disappear till they are done with. It is not necessarily due to some mistake or fault that they rise.

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I am not aware of any case in which the lower forces did not

rise up. If such a case occurred, I fancy it would be the first in human history.

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All the difficulties are bound to vanish in time under the action of the Force. They rise, because if they did not rise the action would not be complete, for all has to be faced and worked out, in order that nothing may be left to rise up hereafter. The psychic being itself can throw the light by which the full consciousness will come and nothing remain in the darkness.

Chapter Two

The Difficulties of Human Nature

Obstacles of Human Nature

There are only three fundamental obstacles that can stand in the way:

(1) Absence of faith or insufficient faith.

(2) Egoism — the mind clinging to its own ideas, the vital preferring its own desires to a true surrender, the physical adhering to its own habits.

(3) Some inertia or fundamental resistance in the consciousness, not willing to change because it is too much of an effort or because it does not want to believe in its own capacity or the power of the Divine — or for some other more subconscious reason.

You have to see for yourself which of these it is.

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These obstacles are usual in the first stages of the sadhana. They are due to the nature being not yet sufficiently receptive. You should find out where the obstacle is, in the mind or the vital, and try to widen the consciousness there, call in more purity and peace and in that purity and peace offer that part of your being sincerely and wholly to the Divine Power.

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In one form or another the resistance of the mind and the Prana seeking to be independent and fulfil ego under the plea of spiritual realisation is a frequent obstacle in the Yoga.

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The main difficulty in the sadhana consists in the movements of the lower nature, ideas of the mind, desires and attractions of the vital, habits of the body consciousness that stand in the

way of the growth of the higher consciousness — there are other difficulties, but these make the bulk of the opposition.

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Each part of the nature wants to go on with its old movements and refuses, so far as it can, to admit a radical change and progress, because that would subject it to something higher than itself and deprive it of its sovereignty in its own field, its separate empire. It is this that makes transformation so long and difficult a process.

Mind gets dulled because at its lower basis is the physical mind with its principle of *tamas* or inertia — for in matter inertia is the fundamental principle. A constant or long continuity of higher experiences produces in this part of the mind a sense of exhaustion or reaction of unease or dullness. Trance or *samādhi* is a way of escape — the body is made quiet, the physical mind is in a state of torpor, the inner consciousness is left free to go on with its experiences. The disadvantage is that trance becomes indispensable and the problem of the waking consciousness is not solved; it remains imperfect.

The Dual Nature of the Human Being

There are usually in the human being two different tendencies in two parts of the being, one psychic or mental supported by the psychic which seeks the better way and higher things, the other whose main seat is in the vital part of the being which is full of the life-instincts and life-desires, which is attached to or turns towards the things of the lower nature and is subject to the passions, anger, sex etc. If the higher part is dominant, then the lower is kept under control and does not give much trouble. But often the latter is supported by outer forces and powers of the lower Nature in the universe and sometimes these intrude and give the coarse part of the being a separate personality and independence of its own. This may be the explanation of the dream of the ugly monster and of the resistance of this other personality. If it be so, then this must be regarded not as

part of oneself but as a foreign element to the true being. It is only by a persistent choice of the dictates of the higher and a persistent rejection of the other that the latter loses ground and finally recedes. This should be met as calmly as possible without allowing the mind to be troubled by any fall or failure — with a quiet constant vigilance and resolute will.

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The difficulty is that in everyone there are two people (to say the least) — one in the outer vital and physical clinging to the past self and trying to get or retain the consent of the mind and the inner being, the other which is the soul asking for a new birth. That which has spoken in you and made the prayer is the psychic being expressing itself through the aid of the mind and the higher vital, and it is this which should always arise in you through prayer and through turning to the Mother and give you the right idea and the right impulse.

It is true that if you refuse always the action suggested by the old Adam, it will be a great step forward. The struggle is then transferred to the psychological plane, where it will be much easier to fight the matter out. I do not deny that there will be difficulty for some time; but if there is the control of action, the control of thought and feeling is bound to come. If there is yielding, on the contrary, a fresh lease is given to the old self.

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The reason why you have these alternating moods is because there are two different elements in you. On one side there is trying to develop in you your psychic being which, when it awakes, gives you the sense of closeness or union with the Mother and the feeling of Ananda; on the other, there is your old vital nature, restless and full of desires and, because of this restlessness and desire, unhappy. It is this old vital nature, which you were accepting and indulging, that made you go wrong and stood in the way of your progress. It is when the desire and restlessness of the vital are rejected that the psychic in you comes forward and then the vital itself changes and feels full of the joy and

the nearness. When the old unhappy and restless vital comes up again, you feel yourself unfit, without pleasure in anything. What you have to do when this returns is not to accept it, to call in the Mother's nearness again and let the psychic being grow in you. If you do that persistently, rejecting restlessness and desire, the vital part of you will change and become fit for the sadhana.

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I have explained to you that there is a division between your internal and external being — as it is in the case of most people. Your inner being wants and has always wanted the Truth and the Divine — when the peace and power are felt it comes forward and you feel it as yourself and understand things and grow in knowledge and happiness and true feeling. The external nature is being changed by the influence of the inner being, but what is pushed out returns constantly from old habit — and then you feel this old nature as if it were yourself. This external nature has been like that of almost all human beings, like that of most of the sadhaks here, selfish and full of desires and wanting its own desires, not the Truth and the Divine. When it returns like this and covers you up, all these old ideas and feelings which are always the same take hold of you and try to push you to despair — for it is an enemy force that pushes them back into you. The difficulty is that your physical consciousness does not yet know how to reject this when it comes. The inner being rejects it, but as the physical consciousness lets it in, the inner being is pushed back for the time being. You must absolutely learn not to allow this thing to come in, not to indulge and support it when it comes. It is a falsehood and cannot be anything else, and by falsehood I mean not only contrary to the sadhana and contrary to the Divine truth, but contrary to the truth of your own inner being and of your soul's aspiration and your heart's desire. How can such a thing be true? it exists but that does not make it the truth of your being. It is the soul, the inner being that is the true self in everyone. It is that you must know to be your self and reject this as a false thing imposed on you by the lower ignorant Nature.

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You must remember that your being is not one simple whole, all of one kind, of one piece, but complex, made up of many things. There are the inner parts of the being which are easily conscious of the Truth and Divine, — when these come forward, then all is well. There is the external being which is full of past ignorance and defect and weakness, but has begun to change. It is not yet sufficiently changed or changed in all its parts. When any part that is partly changed opens strongly to the peace and force, then all the rest become either quite quiet or not very active and you are aware of the peace and force and at ease or else aware only vaguely of confusion etc. somewhere. But when something ignorant comes up from below or is a little prominent (or else some old movement of consciousness that was thrown out returns and clouds you), then you feel the peace, the force as something alien to you or non-existent or outside you or at a distance. If you keep the quiet persistently, then this instability will begin to decrease, the Mother's Force will get in everywhere and, though there will still be much to do, there will be a firm foundation for what has to be done.

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It is different parts of the being that have these different movements. It is, as you say, something in you, something in the vital that has the "insincerity" or the attraction to the wrong confused condition; but this you should not regard as yourself, but as part of the old nature which has to be transformed. So it is something in the physical that has the obscurity and the unconsciousness; but this too you should not look at as yourself, but as something formed in the exterior nature which has to be changed and will be changed. The real "you" is the inner being, the soul, the psychic being, that which calls the peace and the quiet and the working of the force.

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It is not necessary to put so many questions and get their separate answers. All your ten questions resolve themselves into one. In every human being there are two parts, the psychic with so much

of the thinking mind and higher (emotional, larger dynamic) vital that is open to the psychic and cleaves to the soul's aims and admits the higher experiences and on the other hand the lower vital and the physical or external being (external mind and vital included) which are attached to the ignorant personality and nature and do not want to change. It is the conflict between these two that makes all the difficulty of the sadhana. All the difficulties you enumerate arise from that and nothing else. It is only by curing the duality that one can overcome them. That happens when one is able to live within, aware of one's inner being, identified with it and to regard the rest as not oneself, as a creation of ignorant Nature from which one has separated oneself and which has to disappear and, secondly, when by opening oneself constantly to the Divine Light and Force and the Mother's presence a dynamic action of sadhana is constantly maintained which steadily pushes out the movements of the ignorance and substitutes even in the lower vital and physical being the movements of the inner and higher nature. There is then no struggle any longer, but an automatic growth of the divine elements and fading out of the undivine. The devotion of the heart and the increasing activity of the psychic being, which is best helped by devotion and self-giving, are the most powerful means for arriving at this condition.

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Everyone whose psychic being calls him to the spiritual path has a capacity for that path and can arrive at the goal if or as soon as he develops a single-pointed will towards that alone. But also every sadhak is faced with two elements in him, the inner being which wants the Divine and the sadhana and the outer mainly vital and physical being which does not want them but remains attached to the things of the ordinary life. The mind is sometimes led by one, sometimes by the other. One of the most important things he has to do, therefore, is to decide fundamentally the quarrel between these two parts and to persuade or compel by psychic aspiration, by steadiness of the mind's thought and will, by the choice of the higher vital in his emotional being the

opposing elements to be first quiescent and then consenting. So long as he is not able to do that his progress must be either very slow or fluctuating and chequered as the aspiration in him cannot have a continuous action or a continuous result. Besides so long as this is so, there are likely to be periodical revolts of the vital, repining at the slow progress, despairing, desponding, declaring the Adhar unfit; calls from the old life will come; circumstances will be attracted which seem to justify it, suggestions will come from men and unseen powers pressing the sadhak away from the sadhana and pointing backward to the former life. And yet in that life he is not likely to get any real satisfaction.

Your circumstances are not different from those of others in the beginning and for a long time afterwards. You have come away from the family life, but something in your vital has still kept a habit of response and it is that that is being used to pull you away. This is aided by the impatience of the vital because there is no rapid spiritual progress or continuous good condition — things which even the greatest sadhaks take time to acquire. Circumstances combine to assist the pull — things like X's illness or your husband's appeals which when he soothes and flatters and prays and promises instead of being offensive succeed in mollifying you and creating a condition of less effective defence. And there is the vital Nature and its powers suggesting this and that, that you are not fit, that there is no aspiration, that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo do not help, are displeased, do not care, and it is best to go home.

All that most sadhaks have gone through and come out of it and left the old bonds behind them. There is no reason why you should not do so too. Our help is there always, it is not given at one time and withheld at another, nor given to some and denied to others. It is there for all who make the effort and have the will to arrive. But you have to be steady in your will and not be taken in and deceived by the suggestions from outside or those that come in the shapes of your own adverse thoughts and depressions — you have to fight these and surmount them. It may take a shorter or longer time according to your energy

in combating and overcoming them. But everybody has to make that effort of mastery and overcome the old vital nature.

As for your going over there, you have to look at yourself and see clearly what is wanting to take you there. The plea from inability to do the sadhana has no value whatever. It is merely a plea put forward by the opposing elements in the vital and strengthened by the suggestion of adverse forces. If you say that you find your attachment to husband and son or others is so strong that your soul and your aspiration can do nothing against it and home is the real place for you, then of course your departure is inevitable — but such a statement can hardly in your case be accepted as true. Or if you say that still the pull is so great that you think it better to go for a time and test yourself and exhaust it, then that might just be true for a time, if the vital has risen up strongly; and we would not say no, as we did not say no when you wanted to go and nurse X. But even in that case it would be wiser for you to examine it seriously and not make a decision on the strength of a condition which could pass otherwise. Your husband's letters have no value for us; he has always written like that whenever he saw any hope of your coming away from here; at other times he has a very different tone.

I have put the whole thing before you at length. For us the straight course is always to keep on one's way, whatever the difficulties, until one has got mastery and the way becomes smoother. But at bottom the decision must be left with the sadhak himself — one can press for the right choice but one cannot command that he should make it.

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I don't think it can be said that you have no personality. Coordination and harmonisation of parts is absent in many; it is a thing that has to be attained to or built up. Moreover at a certain stage in sadhana there is almost always a disparity or opposition between the parts that are already turned towards the Truth and are capable of experience and others that are not and pull one down to a lower level. The opposition is not equally acute in all cases, but in one degree or another it is almost

universal. Coordination and organisation can be satisfactorily done only when this is overcome. Till then oscillations are inevitable. As for violence, violence of action has been confined to a few only, but what about violence of speech and the quarrels that take place in the Asram? These are not difficulties that ought to prevent you from looking beyond them to the ultimate spiritual issue out of this flux of contending forces of Nature.

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Aspiration and will to change are not so very far from each other, and if one has either, it is usually enough for going through, — provided of course it maintains itself. The opposition in certain parts of the being exists in every sadhak and can be very obstinate. Sincerity comes by having first the constant central aspiration or will, next, the honesty to see and avow the refusal in parts of the being, finally, the intention of seeing it through even there, however difficult it may be. You have admitted certain things changed in you, so you can no longer pretend that you have made no progress at all.

The peculiarity you note is pretty universal — it is one part of the being which believes and speaks the right and beautiful things; it is another which doubts and says just the opposite. I get communications for instance from X in which for several pages he writes wise and perfect things about the sadhana — suddenly without transition he drops into his physical mind and peevishly and complainingly says — well, things ignorant and quite incompatible with all that wisdom. X is not insincere when he does that — he is simply giving voice to two parts of his nature. Nobody can understand himself or human nature if he does not perceive the multipersonality of the human being. To get all parts into harmony, that is the difficult thing.

As for the lack of response, — well, can't you see that you are in the ancient tradition? Read the "lives of the saints" — you will find them all (perhaps not all, but at least so many) shouting like you that there was no response, no response and getting into frightful tumults, agonies and desperations — until the response came. Many people here who can't say they have

had no experiences, do just the same — so it does not depend on experiences. I don't advise this procedure to anybody — mind you. I only want to say that the feeling of never having had a response does not mean that there never will be a response and that fits of despair at having arrived nowhere do not mean that one will never arrive.

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The thing is that it is unavoidable in the course of the sadhana that some parts of the being should be less open, less advanced, as yet less aware of the Peace and Force, less intimate to them than others. These parts have to be worked upon, and changed, but this can be done smoothly only if you are detached from them, able to regard them as not your very self, even though a part of the nature you have to change. Then when they appear with their defects, you will not be upset, not carried away by their movements, lost to the sense of the Peace and Force; you will be able to work on them (or rather let the Force work) as one would on a machine that has to be repaired or a work that has defects and has to be done better this time. If you identify yourself with these parts, then it is very troublesome. The work will still be done, the change made, but with delay, with bad upsettings, in a painful and not in a smooth way. That is why we always tell people to be calm and detached and look upon these things not as their true selves but as an outer part that has to be worked upon quietly until it is what it should be.

The Good and the Evil Persona

Every man has a double nature except those who are born (not unborn) Asuras, Rakshasas or Pishachas and even they have a psychic being concealed somewhere by virtue of their latent humanity. But a double being (or a double nature in the special sense) refers to those who have two sharply contrasted parts of their being without as yet such a linking control over them. Sometimes they are all for the heights and then they are quite all right — sometimes all for the abysses and then they care nothing

for the heights, even sneer or rail at them and give full rein to the lower man. Or they substitute for the heights a smoky volcano summit in the abyss. These are extreme examples, but others while they do not go so far, yet are now one thing, now just the opposite. If they can convert the lower fellow or discover the central being in themselves, then a true harmonious whole can be created.

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There are always two sides to every human being. In Western occultism they call them the good and the evil Persona (personality). X has a strong personality and a formed, forceful and independent vital. It is a kind of character with great possibilities in it, but not liked by most people because they prefer girls to be soft, butterlike and docile and full of gushing affection and “sweetness”. Such characters, if badly used by life, may develop great vital difficulties. Y and Z probably see only this side; the other side is too unusual for them to appreciate.

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What you say about the “Evil Persona” interests me greatly as it answers to my consistent experience that a person greatly endowed for the work has, always or almost always — perhaps one ought not to make a too rigid universal rule about these things — a being attached to him, sometimes appearing like a part of him, which is just the contradiction of the thing he centrally represents in the work to be done. Or, if it is not there at first, not bound to his personality, a force of this kind enters into his environment as soon as he begins his movement to realise. Its business seems to be to oppose, to create stumblings and wrong conditions, in a word, to set before him the whole problem of the work he has started to do. It would seem as if the problem could not, in the occult economy of things, be solved otherwise than by the predestined instrument making the difficulty his own. That would explain many things that seem very disconcerting on the surface.

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Yes, the solution is certainly the Divine Grace—it comes of itself, intervening suddenly or with an increasing force when all is ready. Meanwhile it is there behind all the struggles, and “the unconquerable aspiration for the light” of which you speak is the outward sign that it will intervene. As for the two natures, it is only one form of the perpetual duality in human nature from which nobody escapes, so universal that many systems recognise it as a standing feature to be taken account of in their discipline, the two Personae, one bright, one dark, in every human being. If that were not there, Yoga would be an easy walk-over and there would be no struggle. But its presence is not any reason for thinking that there is unfitness; the obstinacy of the worldly element is also not a reason, for it is always obstinate—in its very nature. It is like the Germans in their trenches, falling back and digging themselves in for a new mass attack, every time they are baffled. But for all that, if the bright persona is equally determined not to be satisfied without the crown of light, if it is strong enough to make the being unable to rest content in lesser things, then that is the sign that the being is called, one of the elect in spite of outward appearances and its own doubts and despairs—who has them not, not even a Christ or a Buddha is without them—and that the inner spirit *will surely win* in the end. There is no cause for any apprehension on that score.

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There are two or three things that I think it necessary to say to you about your spiritual life and your difficulties.

First, I should like you to get rid of the idea that that which causes the difficulties is so much a part of your self that a true inner life is impossible to you. The inner life is always possible if there is present in the nature, however much covered over by other things, a divine possibility through which the soul can manifest itself and build up its own true form in the mind and life,—a portion of the Divine. In you this divine possibility exists in a marked and exceptional degree. There is in you an inner being of spontaneous light, intuitive vision, harmony and creative beauty which has shown itself unmistakably every time

it has been able to throw off the clouds that gather in your vital nature. It is this that the Mother has always tried to make grow in you and bring it to the front. When one has that in oneself, there is no ground for despair, no just reason for any talk of impossibility. If you could once firmly accept this as your true self, (as indeed it is, for the inner being is your true self and the external, to which the cause of the difficulties belongs, is always something acquired and impermanent and can be changed,) and if you could make its development your settled and persistent aim in life, then the path would be clear and your spiritual future not only a strong possibility but a certitude.

It very often happens that when there is an exceptional power like this in the nature, there is found in the exterior being some contrary element which opens it to a quite opposite influence. It is this that makes the endeavour after a spiritual life so often a difficult struggle: but the existence of this kind of contradiction even in an intense form does not make that life impossible. Doubt, struggle, efforts and failures, lapses, alternations of happy and unhappy or good and bad conditions, states of light and states of darkness are the common lot of human beings. They are not created by Yoga or by the effort after perfection; only in Yoga one becomes conscious of their movements and their causes instead of feeling them blindly, and in the end one makes one's way out of them into a clearer and happier consciousness. The ordinary life remains to the last a series of troubles and struggles, but the sadhak of the Yoga comes out of the trouble and struggle to a ground of fundamental serenity which superficial disturbances may still touch but cannot destroy, and, finally, all disturbance ceases altogether.

Even the experience which so alarms you, of states of consciousness in which you say and do things contrary to your true will, is not a reason for despair. It is a common experience in one form or another of all who try to rise above their ordinary nature. Not only those who practise Yoga, but religious men and even those who seek only a moral control and self-improvement are confronted with this difficulty. And here again it is not the Yoga or the effort after perfection that creates this condition;

there are contradictory elements in human nature and in every human being through which he is made to act in a way which his better mind disapproves. This happens to everybody, to the most ordinary men in the most ordinary life. It only becomes marked and obvious to our minds when we try to rise above our ordinary external selves, because then we can see that it is the lower elements which are being made to revolt consciously against the higher will. There then seems to be for a time a division in the nature, because the true being and all that supports it stand back and separate from these lower elements. At one time the true being occupies the field of the nature, at another the lower nature used by some contrary Force pushes it back and seizes the ground, — and this we now see, while formerly the thing happened but the nature of the happening was not clear to us. If there is the firm will to progress, this division is overpassed and in the unified nature, unified around that will, there may be other difficulties, but this kind of discord and struggle will disappear. I have written so much on this point because I think you have been given the wrong idea that it is the Yoga which creates this struggle and also that this contradiction or division in the nature is the sign of an unfitness or impossibility to go through to the end. Both ideas are quite incorrect and things will be easier if you cast them out of your consciousness altogether.

But it is true that in your case as in others this contradiction has been given a special and very discomfoting kind of intensity by a hereditary weakness of the nervous parts which has always shown itself in you by fits of despondency, gloom, unrest and self-tormenting darkness and spoiled for you the savour of life. Your mistake is to think that this is something to which you are bound and from which you cannot escape, a fate which makes a spiritual change of your nature impossible. I have seen other families afflicted by this kind of hereditary nervous weakness accompanying very often exceptional gifts of intelligence or artistic capacity or spiritual possibilities. One or two may have succumbed to it, like X, but others, sometimes after a period of acute disturbance, overcame the perturbations caused by this weakness; either it disappeared or it took some

minor and innocuous form which did not interfere with the development of the life and its capacities. Why then despair of yourself or fix without any true cause the conviction that you cannot change and this thing will always be there? This despondency, this adverse conviction is the real danger for you; it prevents you from making a quiet and settled resolution and a permanent effective effort; because of it the return of this darker condition makes you quickly yield and allow the adverse external Force which uses this defect to play and do its will with you. It is this false idea that makes more than half the trouble.

There is no true reason why you should not overcome this defect of your external being as many others have done. It is only a part of your vital nature that is affected, even though it often overclouds the rest; the other parts of your being can be easily made the fit instruments of the divine possibility of which I have spoken. Especially, you have a clear and fine intelligence which, when rightly used, becomes a ready instrument of the light and can be of great use to you in overcoming this vital weakness. And this divine possibility, this truth of your inner being, if you accept it, can of itself make certain your liberation and the change of your external nature.

Accept this divine possibility in you; have faith in your inner being and its spiritual destiny. Make its development as a portion of the Divine your aim in life, — for a great and serious aim in life is a most powerful help towards getting rid of this kind of disturbing or disabling nervous weakness; it gives firmness, balance, a strong support to the whole being and a powerful reason for the will to act. Accept too the help we can give you, not shutting yourself against it by disbelief, despair or unfounded revolt. At present you cannot prevail because you have not fixed in yourself a faith, an aim, a settled confidence; the black mood has been able to cloud your whole consciousness. But if you have fixed this faith in you and can cling to it, then the cloud will not be able to fix itself for any long period, the inner being will be able to come to your help. And even the better self will be able to remain on the surface, keep you open to the light and maintain the inner ground for the soul even if the outer is partly

clouded or troubled. When that happens, the victory will have been won and the entire elimination of the vital weakness will be only a matter of a little perseverance.

Outward Circumstances and Personal Defects

That [*proneness to anger*] is the real reason for all these things happening to X. When there is something in the nature that has to be got over, it is always drawing on itself incidents that put it to the test till the sadhak has overcome and is free. At least it is a thing that often happens especially if the person is making a sincere effort to overcome. One does not always know whether it is the hostiles who are trying to break the resolution or putting it to the test (for they claim the right to do it) or whether it is, let us say, the gods who are doing it so as to press and hasten the progress or insisting on the reality and thoroughness of the change aspired after. Perhaps it helps most when one can take it from the latter standpoint.

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You are quite right — that is the way you must take it, that here is an opportunity given to you for overcoming this stumbling block in the nature. When one does sadhana, it is constantly seen that so long as there is an important defect somewhere, circumstances so happen that the occasion comes for the defect to rise until it is thrown out of the being. If one can take the coming of these circumstances clairvoyantly as a call and an opportunity for conquering the defect, then one can progress very quickly.

On the other point, it is very good that you have taken the right attitude and perception with regard to the criticism of others; but this must be extended to their wrong actions also, if there are any. For if their defects flow from their nature, the common human nature of all, their actions flow from the same source, and it is enough to see and understand — the same rule must apply to both these things.

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Outward difficulties are really nothing — it is the inward that are difficult to get rid of, because something in the nature gives consent to them — or at least is accustomed to suffer and tolerate them.

Chapter Three

Imperfections and Periods of Arrest

Imperfections and Progress towards Perfection

Human nature is always full of impurities and imperfections and of itself cannot reach the Divine. It is by the descent of the higher consciousness from above that all that can change; but you must not expect the change to take place in a few days.

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It is not my working, but your moods that are queer. You get something¹ no reasonable being would expect under the ordinary laws of Nature and then you fancy you haven't got it and wail because everything is not absolutely, continuously, faultlessly, increasingly, illimitably miraculous through and through and always and for ever. In no sadhana that I know of does absolute sustained perfection in everything come with a rush and stay celestially perfect for ever more. If it were so there would be no need for sadhana — one would only have to gaze at heaven a little and grow wings and fly into the spheres, a triumphant godhead.

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As I have a few minutes, I may comment on your today's letter so as to get that out of the way. I must say your arguments about X and Y made me smile. When on earth were politeness and good society manners considered as a part or a test of spiritual experience or true Yogic siddhi? It is no more a test than the capacity of dancing well or dressing nicely. Just as there are many very good and kind men who are boorish and rude in their manners, so there may be very spiritual men (I mean those who

¹ *Sri Aurobindo sent the disciple a spiritual force which enabled him to write a very good poem. — Ed.*

have deep spiritual experiences) who have no grasp over physical life or action (many intellectuals too are like that) and are not at all careful about their manners. I suppose I myself am accused of rude and arrogant behaviour because I refuse to see people, do not answer letters, and a host of other misdemeanours. I have heard of a famous recluse who threw stones at anybody coming to his retreat because he did not want disciples and found no other way of warding off the flood of candidates. I at least would hesitate to pronounce that such people had no spiritual life or experience. Certainly, I prefer that sadhaks should be reasonably considerate towards each other, but that is for the sake of collective life and harmony, not as a siddhi of the Yoga or an indispensable sign of inner experience.

As for the other matter how can the *écarts* of the sadhaks here, none of whom have reached perfection or anywhere near it, be a proof that spiritual experience is null or worthless? You write as if the moment one had any kind of spiritual experience or realisation, one must at once become a perfect person without defects or weaknesses. That is to make a demand which it is impossible to satisfy and it is to ignore the fact that spiritual life is a growth and not a sudden and inexplicable miracle. No sadhak can be judged as if he were already a siddha Yogi, least of all those who have only travelled a quarter or less of a very long path as is the case with most of us who are here. Even great Yogis do not claim perfection and you cannot say that because they are not absolutely perfect, therefore their spirituality is false or of no use to the world. There are besides all kinds of spiritual men, some who are content with spiritual experience and do not seek after an outward perfection or progress, some who are saints, others who do not seek after sainthood, others who are content to live in the cosmic consciousness in touch or union with the All but allowing all kinds of forces to play through them, e.g., as in the typical description of the Paramhansa. The ideal I put before our Yoga is one thing, but it does not bind all spiritual life and endeavour. The spiritual life is not a thing that can be formulated in a rigid definition or bound by a fixed mental rule; it is a vast field of evolution, an immense kingdom potentially larger

than the other kingdoms below it with a hundred provinces, a thousand types, stages, forms, paths, variations of the spiritual ideal, degrees of spiritual achievement. It is from the basis of this truth which I shall try to explain in subsequent letters that things regarding spirituality and its seekers must be judged, if they are to be judged with knowledge. Let me do that first and afterwards if I am able to give some idea of it, which is not easy, particular questions can be more soluble.

P.S. All these things I say, must not be applied to the personal cases you mention which are only an occasion for saying them. The one thing that applies to them is that they are sadhaks, not siddhas, raw still, not ripe.

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I am glad to have got your second letter in which the psychic being in you expresses itself with such fullness. It would have been impossible for me to go on with my explanations of the case for spirituality if the exposition of it, carrying as it must do many things contrary to your own mental views, were to upset or hurt you. I have no intention of doing that and have always avoided it except that sometimes I had to express an unpalatable view of things rather plainly in answer to your own insistence. If I write about these questions from the Yogic point of view, even though on a logical basis, there is bound to be much that is in conflict with your own settled and perhaps cherished opinions, e.g. about “miracles”, persons, the limits of judgment by sense data etc. I have avoided as much as possible writing about these subjects because I would have to propound things that cannot be understood except by reference to other data than those of the physical senses or of reason founded on these alone. I might have to speak of laws and forces not recognised by physical reason or science. In my public writings and my writings to sadhaks I have not dwelt on these because they go out of the range of ordinary knowledge and the understanding founded on it. These things are known to some, but they do not usually speak about it, while the public views of such of them as are known are either credulous or incredulous, but in both cases without experience

or knowledge. So if the views founded on them are likely to upset, shock or bewilder, the better way is silence.

I should like, however, to clear up first some misunderstandings in your letter about what I had written:

(1) What I wrote about politeness had nothing to do with X or the quarrel with Y—I referred to that as an *écart* and I said that such lapses on the part of sadhaks who were far from being siddha Yogis could not be advanced as a disproof of spiritual experience or of its value. My remark was not at all meant as justification of loss of self-control in an argument and getting angry and excited if crossed in one's views. It was merely a refusal to accept that as an argument against spirituality in general—spiritual experience, as I said, does not immediately lead to perfection and you cannot expect it to do so. Equality and self-control are most necessary to Yoga, but also *most difficult*, one has to strive slowly after them; they are not, at least in their completeness, easily attainable. The whole being has to be pervaded by calm and peace; the nerves and cells of the body have to be full of calm and peace. Until then what one has to strive to attain is an inner calm in the inner being which remains even when the outer is disturbed by invasions of grief, unease or anger. The Yogi arrives first at a sort of division in his being in which the inner Purusha fixed and calm looks at the perturbations of the outer man as one looks at the passions of an unreasonable child; that once fixed, he can proceed afterwards to control the outer man also. Whether he can easily control the actions depends on the temperament of his outer man, whether it is vehement, emotional and passionate or comparatively sedate and quiet. But a complete control of the outer man needs a long and arduous tapasya. It cannot be expected and even the assured inner calm cannot be expected of those who are still in a very early stage of the journey, who are still sadhaks and not Yogis.

(2) I said that as regards both cases, Z and X, my remarks must be taken as limited to this proposition that you cannot expect from the raw what you can expect from the ripe, that is from the siddha Yogi.

(3) But even from the siddha Yogi you cannot always expect

a perfect perfection; there are many who do not even care for the perfection of the outer nature, yet they have spiritual experience, even spiritual realisation and the unperfected outer nature cannot be held as a disproof of their realisation or experience. If you so regard it, you have to rule out of court the greater number of Yogis of the past and the Rishis of the old time also.

(4) I said that the ideal of my Yoga is different, but I cannot bind by it other spiritual men and their achievements or discipline. My own ideal is transformation of the outer nature, perfection as perfect as it can be. But it is impossible to say that those who have not achieved it or did not care to achieve it had no spirituality or that their spirituality was of no value. Beautiful conduct — not politeness which is an outer thing, however valuable, — but beauty founded upon a spiritual realisation of unity and harmony projected into life, is certainly part of the perfect perfection. But all that I regard as the ideal, the thing to be attained in the fullness of the siddhi. I do not expect perfect perfection from those who are on the way and as yet far from the goal. If they have it, it is delightful; but if they do not have it, I cannot deduce from that that they have no spiritual experiences or that these experiences are of no value.

You yourself speak of the Baradi Brahmachari. Because of his habits of speech, it is surely impossible to deny greatness as a spiritual man to this remarkable ascetic admired by Ramakrishna and revered by Vivekananda. Even Ramakrishna himself had habits of speech about which Vivekananda in a letter to his gurubhais rates them for translating these portions as it would make a very bad impression on his English readers. But would these English readers have been justified in denouncing Ramakrishna on that account as an unspiritual man or spirituality as therefore without value?

This was my reasoning and, so stated in a clearer way, I hope, you will not find it either irrational or offensive. I wanted to clear this because, if you remain under the impression that I am saying outrageous things, it will be difficult to go farther.

I want to show that spiritual seeking and achievement are

not one limited thing that can be clearly defined in a single mental formula and reduced to a single rule or set of rules but a kingdom like the mental kingdom with all sorts of stages, lines, variations, provinces, types of spiritual men, and it is only by so understanding it that one can understand it truly, either in its past or in its future or put in their place the spiritual men of the past and the present or relate the different ideals, stages etc. thrown up in the spiritual evolution of the human being.

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I reply to your letter as Mother is still too much occupied to write.

What was in her view at the time was what is called in the psychology of Indian Yoga a “sattwic” perfection, perfection in the form of the qualities and actions such as would satisfy a mental idealism and be very visible and appreciable to others. This often generates a kind of pride and self-righteousness, a “sattwic” egoism, which makes the consciousness rigid and not flexible and plastic to the Divine Will. The true spiritual perfection is not so much of form; it is of the very substance of the consciousness and, as it consists at its base in an entire harmony with the Divine Consciousness and a free and plastic self-adaptation at each moment to the Divine Will, its forms and the forms of its action are not so easily visible or appreciable. The word “righteous” does not apply to its movements—they are simply right because they are in unison with the Divine.

Obviously real imperfections are not to be indulged—to take that as a principle would be dangerous; the “apparent” imperfections are those which might appear so to an outward view only. A “righteous” anger might easily be part of that self-righteousness which the Mother had in view, and to be identified with the movement of anger righteous or otherwise is spiritually undesirable. But a movement of the kind meant may seem to an outward view identical with the movements of imperfection in the nature, yet be quite the right one in the sense of rightness which I have indicated above. It is not a question of any particular action or attitude to be taken but of the consciousness

within giving a free and supple expression to the Divine Will acting through it.

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The existence of imperfections, even many and serious imperfections, cannot be a *permanent* bar to progress in the Yoga. (I do not speak of a recovery of the former opening, for, according to my experience, what comes after a period of obstruction or struggle is usually a new and wider opening, some larger consciousness and an advance on what had been gained before and seems — but only seems — to be lost for the moment.) The only bar that can be permanent — but need not be, for this too can change — is insincerity, and this does not exist in you. If imperfections were a bar, then no man could succeed in Yoga; for all are imperfect, and I am not sure, from what I have seen, that it is not those who have the greatest power for Yoga who have too, very often, or have had the greatest imperfections. You know, I suppose, the comment of Socrates on his own character; that could be said by many great Yogins of their own initial human nature. Also, self-expression in some form of art does not preclude serious imperfections and, of itself, does not cure them. Here again my experience is that men of this kind have great qualities, but also great faults and defects as a weight in the other balance. In Yoga the one thing that counts in the end is sincerity and with it the patience to persist in the path — many even without this patience go through, for — again I speak from personal experience, — in spite of revolt, impatience, depression, despondency, fatigue, temporary loss of faith, a force greater than one's outer self, the force of the Spirit, the drive of the soul's need, pushes them through the cloud and the mist to the goal before them. Imperfections can be stumbling blocks and give one a bad fall for the moment, but not a permanent bar. Obscurations due to some resistance in the nature can be more serious causes of delay, but they too do not last for ever.

The length of your period of dullness is also no sufficient reason for losing belief in your capacity or your spiritual destiny. I can look back to periods not of two but of many months of

blank suspension of all experience or progress. I believe that alternations of bright and dark periods are almost a universal experience of Yogins, and the exceptions are very rare. If one enquires into the reasons of this phenomenon, — very unpleasant to our impatient human nature, — it will be found, I think, that they are in the main two. The first is that the human consciousness either cannot bear a constant descent of the Light or Power or Ananda, or cannot at once receive and absorb it; it needs periods of assimilation, but this assimilation goes on behind the veil of the surface consciousness; the experience or the realisation that has descended retires behind that veil and leaves this outer or surface consciousness to lie fallow and become ready for a new descent. In the more developed stages of the Yoga these dark or dull periods become shorter, less trying as well as uplifted by the sense of the greater consciousness which, though not acting for immediate progress, yet remains and sustains the outer nature. The second cause is some resistance, something in the human nature that has not felt the former descents, is not ready, is perhaps unwilling to change, — often it is some strong habitual formation of the mind or the vital or some temporary inertia of the physical consciousness and not exactly a part of the nature — and this, whether showing or concealing itself, thrusts up the obstacle. If one can detect the cause in oneself, acknowledge it, see its workings and call down the Power for its removal, then the periods of obscurity can be greatly shortened and their acuity becomes less. But in any case the Divine Power is working always behind and one day, perhaps when one least expects it, the obstacle breaks, the clouds vanish and there is again the light and the sunshine. The best thing in these cases is, if one can manage it, not to fret, not to despond, but to insist quietly and keep oneself open, spread to the Light and waiting in faith for it to come: that, I have found, shortens these ordeals. Afterwards, when the obstacle disappears, one finds that a great progress has been made and that the consciousness is far more capable of receiving and retaining than before. There is a return for all the trials and ordeals of the spiritual life.

I write all this to show you that there is nothing peculiar to

you in this untoward experience, nothing that would warrant you in thinking yourself less called and fit than others for the Yoga, nothing that would justify you in taking the hand from the plough, even though you find long bits of hard soil that resist and need much labour. The opening you had is sufficient proof that you are meant for the Path; for it is a sure sign of the dawns that are to come hereafter.

Periods of Difficulty and Arrest

These periods of difficulty inevitably come — none is without them, for the lower nature is there in all. What you have to do is to keep the firmness of which you speak and persevere till the Divine Power and your will together have dealt with what rises from below. Why do you regard what rises and shows itself (*hīnatā, kṣudratā, āsakti, lobha*) as if it were peculiar to yourself? They are part of the very substance of the lower vital of the human being and there is no one who is without them. So their presence does not at all mean that you cannot reach the Mother. When the mind and soul have chosen the goal, the rest is bound to follow; only as they are more obscure, the resistance there is more blind and obstinate. But even in your vital there is now fixed the will to attain, it is only a lower part there that has had the habit of responding to these things and therefore when a wave comes, it does not know how to avoid and is swallowed up for a time. It can be for a time only, because these things are no longer really yours, since the central being and the greater part of the nature no longer desire them. You have only to go on firmly and the time will come when the waves no longer rise.

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The real reason of the difficulty and the constant alternation is the struggle between the veiled true being within and the outer nature, especially the lower vital full of desires and the physical mind full of obscurity and ignorance. This struggle is inevitable in human nature and no sadhak escapes it; everyone has to deal with that obscurity and resistance and its obstinacy and constant

recurrence; for the lower nature is not only persistent in its repetitions and returns, but even when it is on the point of changing, the general Powers of that plane in universal Nature try to keep up the resistance by bringing back the old movements at each step in order to prevent the progress from being confirmed for good and made final. It is true therefore that a constant sadhana persistent and unceasing is necessary if one wants to go quickly — though even otherwise one will arrive if the soul within has the call, for the soul will persist and after each obscuration or stumble will bring back the light and drive one on on the path till it feels that it is at last secure of a smooth and easy march to the goal.

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A difficulty comes or an arrest in some movement which you have begun or have been carrying on for some time. How is it to be dealt with? — for such arrests are inevitably frequent enough, not only for you, but for everyone who is a seeker; one might almost say that every step forward is followed by an arrest — at least, that is a very common, if not a universal experience. It is to be dealt with by becoming always more quiet, more firm in the will to go through, by opening oneself more and more so that any obstructing non-receptivity in the nature may diminish or disappear, by an affirmation of faith even in the midst of the obscurity, faith in the presence of a Power that is working behind the cloud and the veil, in the guidance of the Guru, by an observation of oneself to find any cause of the arrest, not in a spirit of depression or discouragement but with the will to find out and remove it. This is the only right attitude and, if one is persistent in taking it, the periods of arrest are not abolished, — for that cannot be at this stage, — but greatly shortened and lightened in their incidence. Sometimes these arrests are periods, long or short, of assimilation or unseen preparation, their appearance of sterile immobility is deceptive: in that case, with the right attitude, one can after a time, by opening, by observation, by accumulated experience, begin to feel, to get some inkling of what is being prepared or done. Sometimes it is a period

of true obstruction in which the Power at work has to deal with the obstacles in the way, obstacles in oneself, obstacles of the opposing cosmic forces or any other or of all together, and this kind of arrest may be long or short according to the magnitude or obstinacy or complexity of the impediments that are met. But here too the right attitude can alleviate or shorten and, if persistently taken, help to a more radical removal of the difficulties and greatly diminish the necessity of complete arrests hereafter.

On the contrary, an attitude of depression or unfaith in the help or the guidance or in the certitude of the victory of the guiding Power, a shutting up of yourself in the sense of the difficulties impedes the recovery, prolongs the difficulties, helps the obstructions to recur with force instead of progressively diminishing in their incidence. It is an attitude whose persistence or recurrence you must resolutely throw aside if you want to get over the obstruction which you feel so much — which the depressed attitude only makes, while it lasts, more acute.

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You should realise that these periods of clouding are not due to any special incapacity or perversity in you — even the best sadhaks have them. It is the difficulty of the human nature in getting transformed. This difficulty sometimes takes the form of a bad will in the vital somewhere or a tendency in the physical to cling to old mistakes and old habits or to shrink from the trouble of transformation — but in these respects you have made a great progress. What is there, is the mechanical habit of the lower nature in general — mechanical, not voluntary — to repeat the old movements to which it has been or was quite recently accustomed when any strong wave of them comes in from the surrounding universal Nature. This creates a kind of recurrence of relapse into the states which the spiritual progress is pushing out and it is not easy to get rid of this recurrence altogether. The one thing when they come is not to get distressed or upset, to realise what it is and to remain very quiet calling for the Mother's Force to push it away. In this way the habit

of these recurrences diminishes, the strength and intensity also, and on the other side one is able to recall the true consciousness and the true force, the bright, happy, peaceful, open condition more and more easily and quicker. One can then proceed on an assured basis to a more and more positive progress.

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Do not allow these ideas [*of unfitness*] to gain on you or even to occupy your mind. It is not by their merit or their effort or the capacity they show that men advance in the spiritual path, but by their opening to the divine help and grace. For that you must have the confidence that whatever your own weakness, the grace will not fail you. Difficulties may come, dry and barren moments or even periods may come, but they will be passed over and overcome. It is this idea and feeling that you must cherish and encourage and make to grow in you. Then it will be easier for you to advance.

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I do not think there is any sadhak however advanced who has the full consciousness all the time. These changes come and one cannot help it because there is something of the ordinary consciousness that is still left and it comes up to be dealt with. One has to understand this and not get upset — for getting upset only delays the process. If the true consciousness were constant in its fullness, the sadhana would be finished and there would be the siddhi. That cannot come at once.

Chapter Four

Resistances, Sufferings and Falls

Resistances in Sadhana

There are always these resistances in sadhana; it is because the world is full of forces that don't want men to find the Divine. Even the Rishis of old times used always to be obstructed and disturbed until they conquered desire, anger and all else and became full of the Divine.

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The resistance is not always an intentional one. It is the resistance of the nature, the mind's personal ideas and preferences, the vital's desires, attachments, depressions, revolts, egoistic insistences on its own ways and freedom to follow its inclinations and fancies, the physical's *tamas*, want of faith, inertia. These things are parts of human nature. The Force comes to change them, but if the sadhak accepts these things, justifies them, or simply allows them to hold his consciousness without reacting, then their resistance which is always there can last a long time.

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Your proposed remedy would be no remedy at all. One has to go forward not backward to some old starting point.

It is a wrong idea to get disgusted with doing the right thing because you cannot do it absolutely now. It has to be done by a progressive movement. In everyone there is something that resists, until the ignorant parts of the being are transformed. That is no reason for giving up. It is sufficient if there is something behind that feels and can respond even if it is very much covered by the obscure external nature. It is that in you which feels the Force above the head and the atmosphere of quietness, and it is through that that it will be done whatever the amount of the external resistance.

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What you feel coming across the meditation is a resistance in the subconscious material throwing up a thing like the cold or a nervous unrest or a causeless uneasiness. They must of course be dismissed. When this part opens to the pressure from above, then these things are felt no more.

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To break and rebuild is often necessary for the change; but once the fundamental consciousness has come there is no reason why it should be done with trouble and disturbance — it can be done quietly. It is the resistance of the lower parts that brings in trouble and disturbance.

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There is no invariable rule of such suffering. It is not the soul that suffers; the Self is calm and equal to all things and the only sorrow of the psychic being is the sorrow of the resistance of Nature to the Divine Will or the resistance of things and people to the call of the True, the Good and the Beautiful. What is affected by suffering is the vital nature and the body. When the soul draws towards the Divine, there may be a resistance in the mind and the common form of that is denial and doubt — which may create mental and vital suffering. There may again be a resistance in the vital nature whose principal character is desire and the attachment to the objects of desire, and if in this field there is conflict between the soul and the vital nature, between the Divine Attraction and the pull of the Ignorance, then obviously there may be much suffering of the mind and vital parts. The physical consciousness also may offer a resistance which is usually that of a fundamental inertia, an obscurity in the very stuff of the physical, an incomprehension, an inability to respond to the higher consciousness, a habit of helplessly responding to the lower mechanically, even when it does not want to do so; both vital and physical suffering may be the consequence. There is moreover the resistance of the Universal Nature which does not want the being to escape from the Ignorance into the Light. This may take the form of a vehement insistence on the continuation of

the old movements, waves of them thrown on the mind and vital and body so that old ideas, impulses, desires, feelings, responses continue even after they are thrown out and rejected, and can return like an invading army from outside, until the whole nature, given to the Divine, refuses to admit them. This is the subjective form of the universal resistance, but it may also take an objective form — opposition, calumny, attacks, persecution, misfortunes of many kinds, adverse conditions and circumstances, pain, illness, assaults from men or forces. There too the possibility of suffering is evident. There are two ways to meet all that — first that of the Self, calm, equality, a spirit, a will, a mind, a vital, a physical consciousness that remain resolutely turned towards the Divine and unshaken by all suggestion of doubt, desire, attachment, depression, sorrow, pain, inertia. This is possible when the inner being awakens, when one becomes conscious of the Self, of the inner mind, the inner vital, the inner physical, for that can more easily attune itself to the divine Will, and then there is a division in the being as if there were two beings, one within, calm, strong, equal, unperturbed, a channel of the Divine Consciousness and Force, one without, still encroached on by the lower Nature; but then the disturbances of the latter become something superficial which are no more than an outer ripple, — until these under the inner pressure fade and sink away and the outer being too remains calm, concentrated, unattackable. There is also the way of the psychic, — when the psychic being comes out in its inherent power, its consecration, adoration, love of the Divine, self-giving, surrender and imposes these on the mind, vital and physical consciousness and compels them to turn all their movements Godward. If the psychic is strong and master throughout, then there is no or little subjective suffering and the objective cannot affect either the soul or the other parts of the consciousness — the way is sunlit and a great joy and sweetness are the note of the whole sadhana. As for the outer attacks and adverse circumstances, that depends on the action of the Force transforming the relations of the being with the outer Nature; as the victory of the Force proceeds, they will be eliminated; but however long they last, they cannot impede the sadhana, for

then even adverse things and happenings become a means for its advance and for the growth of the spirit.

Pain and Suffering

The sufferings and distress which come to people are part of their karma, part of the experience the being has to go through on its way through life after life till it is ready for spiritual change. In the life of the sadhak all vicissitudes are part of the path and, if he is a sadhak, he will recognise them as such though he may not understand their full meaning till afterwards—good and bad fortune, outward happiness and suffering are to be taken with an unshaken equality and trust in the Divine Wisdom till one has attained a position in which, united with the Divine Will, one can dominate them.

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Suffering is not inflicted as a punishment for sin or for hostility—that is a wrong idea. Suffering comes like pleasure and good fortune as an inevitable part of life in the ignorance. The dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and grief, good fortune and ill fortune are the inevitable results of the ignorance which separates us from our true consciousness and from the Divine. Only by coming back to it can we get rid of suffering. Karma from the past lives exists, much of what happens is due to it, but not all. For we can mend our karma by our own consciousness and efforts. But the suffering is simply a natural consequence of past errors, not a punishment, just as a burn is the natural consequence of playing with fire. It is part of the experience by which the soul through its instruments learns and grows until it is ready to turn to the Divine.

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Sometimes pain and suffering are means by which the soul is awakened and pushed forward to the Divine. That is the experience on which X constantly dwells as he has suffered much in his life—but all do not find it like that.

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The idealist's question is why should there be pain at all, even if it is counterweighed by the fundamental pleasure of existence. The real crux is why should inadequacy, limit and suffering come across this natural pleasure of life. It does not mean that life is initially miserable in its very nature.

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Life as it is is certainly full of mishap and suffering and looks like an inconsequence of Nature that has no eventual significance. But even if one does not find the concealed significance, yet if one can live in the higher calm, one can pass through it without being immersed in its bitternesses or its engulfing turmoils. That you have seen for yourself. I certainly hope that you will arrive at stability and security in that higher calm and with it the security of life cannot fail to come.

The divine support will always be there if you hold on to it and our direct help cannot but be yours when you ask and call for it. You have only to hold on to your effort in spite of what seeks to shake you. Then certainly you will reach the height to which you aspire. I do not see why it should not be in the end the highest height — but that we will leave for the future to decide. To have solid calmness is in itself something fundamental and sufficient.

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There is no need of suffering. Refuse it when it comes.

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There is no reason why suffering should be indispensable for making progress. You bring the suffering on yourself by the wrong ideas of the mind and by the revolts of the vital. The Mother's grace and love are there, but the mind refuses to recognise it. If there is confidence, if the mind and vital consent to surrender and have full faith and reliance, then there may be difficulties but there is no suffering.

There are people who think that the proper way of progress is through revolt, but this is a mistake. Conditions of light

followed by darker conditions come to everyone, but to revolt because there is delay and difficulty does not help. One has to go on in the confidence that in spite of all delays and difficulties, if one is faithful, then in the end, the goal will be reached and one will attain to the Divine.

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I cannot say that I follow very well the logic of your doubts. How does a brilliant scholar being clapped into prison invalidate the hope of the Yoga? There are many dismal spectacles in the world, but that is after all the very reason why Yoga has to be done. If the world were all happy and beautiful and ideal, who would want to change it or find it necessary to bring down a higher consciousness into earthly Mind and Matter? Your other argument is that the work of the Yoga itself is difficult, not easy, not a happy canter to the goal. Of course it is, because the world and human nature are what they are. I never said it was easy or that there were not obstinate difficulties in the way of the endeavour. Again I do not understand your point about raising up a new race by writing trivial letters. Of course not — nor by writing important letters either; even if I were to spend my time writing fine poems it would not build up a new race. Each activity is important in its own place — an electron or a molecule or a grain may be small things in themselves, but in their place they are indispensable to the building up of a world, — it cannot be made up only of mountains and sunsets and streamings of the aurora borealis — though these have their place there. All depends on the force behind these things and the purpose in their action — and that is known to the Cosmic Spirit which is at work, — and it works, I may add, not by the mind or according to human standards but by a greater consciousness which, starting from an electron, can build up a world and, using a “tangle of ganglia”, can make them the base here for the works of the Mind and Spirit in Matter, produce a Ramakrishna, or a Napoleon, or a Shakespeare. Is the life of a great poet, either, made up only of magnificent and important things? How many “trivial” things had to be dealt with and done before there could

be produced a *King Lear* or a *Hamlet*! Again, according to your own reasoning, would not people be justified in mocking at your pother — so they would call it, I do not — about metre and scansion and how many ways a syllable can be read? Why, they might say, is X wasting his time in trivial prosaic things like this when he might have been spending it in producing a beautiful lyric or fine music? But the worker knows and respects the material with which he must work and he knows why he is busy with “trifles” and small details and what is their place in the fullness of his labour.

As for faith, you write as if I had never had a doubt or any difficulty. I have had worse than any human mind can think of. It is not because I have ignored difficulties, but because I have seen them more clearly, experienced them on a larger scale than anyone living now or before me that, having faced and measured them, I am sure of the results of my work. Even if I still saw the chance that it might come to nothing (which is impossible), I would go on unperturbed, because I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do and what is so done always counts in the economy of the universe. But why should I feel that all this may come to nothing when I see each step and where it is leading and every week and day — once it was every year and month and hereafter it will be every day and hour — brings me so much nearer to my goal? In the way that one treads with the greater Light above, even every difficulty gives its help and has its value and the Night itself carries in it the burden of the light that has to be.

As for your own case, it comes to this that experiences come and stop, there are constant ups and downs, in times of recoil and depression no advance at all seems to have been made, there is as yet no certitude. So it was with me also, so it is with everyone, not with you alone. The way to the heights is always like that up to a certain point, but the ups and downs, the difficulties and obstacles are no proof that it is a chimera to aspire to the summits.

What you said to X is indeed very true, especially the phrase, “However feeble the clay, the flower is in the bud and it will blossom.” That is true not only of individuals, but of the earth as a whole — Earth is a feeble clay for the spiritual planting, but all that is sown in it buds eventually and the bud once there will blossom.

La Rochefoucauld’s saying [“*We are always strong enough to bear the sufferings of others*”] is true in general, but not quite true. There are some who can bear their own sufferings much better than they can bear the sufferings of others, while the Yogi can bear the whole world’s suffering in himself and yet not falter.

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The attitude you express in your letter is quite the right one — whatever sufferings come on the path, are not too high a price for the victory that has to be won and, if they are taken in the right spirit, they become even a means towards the victory.

Dangers, Falls and Failures

I have never said that Yoga or that this Yoga is a safe and easy path. What I say is that anyone who has the will to go through can go through. For the rest, if you aim high, there is always the danger of a steep fall if you misconduct your aeroplane. But the danger is for those who allow themselves to entertain a double being, aiming high but also indulging their lower outlook and hankerings. What else can you expect when people do that? You must become single-minded, then the difficulties of the mind and vital will be overcome. Otherwise those who oscillate between their heights and their abysses, will always be in danger till they have become single-minded. That applies to the “advanced” as well as to the beginner. These are facts of nature — I can’t pretend for anybody’s comfort that they are otherwise. But there is the fact also that nobody need keep himself in this danger. One-mindedness (*ekaniṣṭhā*), surrender to the Divine, faith, true love for the Divine, complete sincerity in the will, spiritual humility (real, not formal) — there are so many things

that can be a safeguard against any chance of eventual downfall. Slips, stumbles, difficulties, upsets everyone has; one can't be insured against these things, but if one has the safeguards, they are transitory, help the nature to learn and are followed by a better progress.

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Men like X and Y are not likely to pretend to have experiences they do not have. Z's fall after his one year's rapid progress had obvious reasons in his character which do not exist in theirs. But apart from that the fall of a sadhak from Yoga proves nothing against the truth of spiritual experience. It is well known to all Yogis that a fall is possible and the Gita speaks of it more than once. But how does the fall prove that spiritual experience is not true and genuine? The fall of a man from a great height does not prove that he never reached a great height. The experiences of Y have been those of many others before him and will be those of many others who do not yet have them; I fail to see why the fact of people having them or their intensity or the joy and confidence they give should make them suspect as untrue.

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A man who has risen high *can* fall low, especially if his experiences are only through the spiritual mind and the vital and physical remain as they were. But it is an absurdity to say that he is *sure* to fall low.

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I have not said that to reach the overmind is impossible; I have only said that it is difficult. Difficulty is not a reason why the things should not be done.

It is not easy for a physical being to reach the highest truth because his consciousness is something ignorant that has emerged out of the material inconscience and is very much tied to and hampered by the obscurity of its origin — in addition to the mental and vital difficulties of ego and desire. Yoga itself is

not easy; if it were so, it would be a multitude and not only a few that would be practising it.

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There is no reason to have a vague doubt about one's own future founded upon no other ground than the failure of others. That is what X and Y are always doing, and it is a great disturber of their progress. Why not instead, if one is to go by others, gather hope from the example of those who are satisfied and progressing? It is true however that these do not show their success as the others do their failure. However, that apart, failure comes by very positive errors and not by the absence of an invariable and unflagging aspiration or effort. The effort demanded of the sadhak is that of aspiration, rejection and surrender. If these three are done, the rest is to come of itself by the grace of the Mother and the working of her force in you. But of the three the most important is surrender of which the first necessary form is trust and confidence and patience in difficulty. There is no rule that trust and confidence can only remain if aspiration is there. On the contrary when even aspiration is not there because of the pressure of inertia, trust and confidence and patience can remain. If trust and patience fail when aspiration is quiescent, that would mean that the sadhak is relying solely on his own effort — it would mean, "Oh my aspiration has failed, so there is no hope for me. My aspiration fails so what can Mother do?" On the contrary, the sadhak should feel, "Never mind, my aspiration will come back again. Meanwhile I know that the Mother is with me even when I do not feel her; she will carry me through even the darkest period." That is the fully right attitude you must have. To those who have it depression could do nothing; even if it comes, it has to return baffled. That is not tamasic surrender. Tamasic surrender is when one says, "I won't do anything; let Mother do everything. Aspiration, rejection, surrender even are not necessary. Let her do all that in me." There is a great difference between the two attitudes. One is that of the shirker who won't do anything, the other is that of the sadhak who does his best but even when he is reduced to

quiescence for a time and things seem adverse, keeps always his trust in the Mother's force and presence behind all and by that trust baffles the opposition force and calls back the activity of the sadhana.

Section Two

Overcoming the Difficulties of Yoga

Chapter One

The Right Attitude towards Difficulties

The Sunlit Path and the Path of Darkness

I don't believe much in this Divine Darkness. It is a Christian idea. For us the Divine is Peace, Purity, Wideness, Light, Ananda.

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I spoke of strange ideas in connection with what you said about peace and cheerfulness being obstacles in the Yoga because they are incompatible with an ardent longing for realisation. Peace was the very first thing that the Yogins and seekers of old asked for and it was a quiet and silent mind — and that always brings peace — that they declared to be the best condition for realising the Divine. A cheerful and sunlit heart is the fit vessel for the Ananda and who shall say that Ananda or what prepares it is an obstacle to the divine union? As for despondency, it is surely a terrible burden to carry on the way. One has to pass through it sometimes, like Christian of *The Pilgrim's Progress* through the Slough of Despond, but its constant reiteration cannot be anything but an obstacle. The Gita specially says, "Practise the Yoga with an undespondent heart", *anirvinñacetasā*.

I know perfectly well that pain and suffering and struggle and excesses of despair are natural — though not inevitable — on the way, — not because they are helps, but because they are imposed on us by the darkness of this human nature out of which we have to struggle into the Light. . . .

The dark path is there and there are many who make like the Christians a gospel of spiritual suffering; many hold it to be the unavoidable price of victory. It may be so under certain circumstances, as it has been in so many lives at least at the beginning, or one may choose to make it so. But then the price has

to be paid with resignation, fortitude or a tenacious resilience. I admit that if borne in that way the attacks of the Dark Forces or the ordeals they impose have a meaning. After each victory gained over them, there is then a sensible advance; often they seem to show us the difficulties in ourselves which we have to overcome and to say, "Here you must conquer us and here." But all the same it is a too dark and difficult way which nobody should follow on whom the necessity does not lie.

In any case one thing can never help and that is to despond always and say, "I am unfit; I am not meant for the Yoga." And worse still are these perilous mental formations such as you are always accepting that you must fare like X (one whose difficulty of exaggerated ambition was quite different from yours) and that you have only six years etc. These are clear formations of the Dark Forces seeking not only to sterilise your aspiration but to lead you away and so prevent your sharing in the fruit of the victory hereafter. I do not know what Krishnaprem has said but his injunction, if you have rightly understood it, is one that cannot stand as valid, since so many have done Yoga relying on tapasya or anything else but not confident of any Divine Grace. It is not that, but the soul's demand for a higher Truth or a higher life that is indispensable. Where that is, the Divine Grace whether believed in or not, will intervene. If you believe, that hastens and facilitates things; if you cannot yet believe, still the soul's aspiration will justify itself with whatever difficulty and struggle.

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I am extremely glad to know that the worst of the attack has passed; I hope the after-effects will quickly disappear. You had stood out so well for two months and repelled all incipient movements of the kind, that the sudden violence of this one was not expected — especially as the last darshan had gone off well. But when they get a chance these forces take it.

I quite agree with you in not relishing the idea of another attack of this nature. I am myself, I suppose, more a hero by necessity than by choice — I do not love storms and battles —

at least on the subtle plane. The sunlit way may be an illusion, though I do not think it is — for I have seen people treading it for years; but a way with only natural or even only moderate fits of rough weather, a way without typhoons surely is possible — there are so many examples. *Durgam pathastat* may be generally true and certainly the path of laya or nirvana is difficult in the extreme to most (although in my case I walked into nirvana without intending it or rather nirvana walked casually into me not so far from the beginning of my Yogic career without asking my leave). But the path *need* not be cut by periodical violent storms, though that it *is* so for a great many is an obvious fact. But even for these, if they stick to it, I find that after a certain point the storms diminish in force, frequency, duration. That is why I insisted so much on your sticking — for if you stick, the turning-point is bound to come. I have seen some astonishing instances here recently of this typhonic periodicity beginning to fade out after years and years of violent recurrence.

These things are not part of the normal difficulties, however acute, of the nature but especial formations — tornadoes which start (usually from a particular point, sometimes varying) and go whirling round in the same circle always till it is finished. In your case the crucial point, whatever may have been the outward starting-point if any, is the idea or feeling of frustration in the sadhana; once that takes hold of the mind, all the rest follows. That again is why I have been putting all sorts of suggestions before you for getting rid of this idea — not because my suggestions, however useful and true if they can be followed, are binding laws of Yoga, but because if followed they can wipe out this point of danger. A formation like this is very often the result of something in past lives — the Mother has so seen it in yours — which prolongs a karmic sanskara (as the Buddhists would say) and tries to repeat itself once again. To dissolve it ought to be possible if one sees it for what it is and is resolved to get rid of it — never allowing any mental justification of it, however logical, right and plausible the justification may seem to be — always replying to all the mind's arguments or the vital's feelings in favour of it, like Cato to the debaters, "*Delenda est*

Carthago” — “Carthage must be destroyed”, Carthage in this case being the formation and its nefarious circle.

Anyway the closing idea in your letter is the right one. “The Divine is worth ferreting out even if oceans of gloom have to be crossed.” If you could confront the formation always with that firm resolution, it should bring victory. In the Mother’s vision Kali did express a wish to interfere and break the thing — I don’t know how she proposes to do it — by giving you the strength you pray for or by breaking the head of the unwelcome lodger or visitor. I hope she will soon do it.

*

A possibility in the soul or in the inner being generally remains always a possibility — at the worst, its fulfilment can be postponed, but even that only if the possessor of the possibility gives up or breaks away from the true spiritual path without probability of early return — because he is in chase of the magnified and distorted shadow of his own ego or for some other distortion of the nature produced by a wrong egoistic misuse of the Yoga. A mere appearance of inability or obstruction of progress in the outer being, a covering of the inner by the outer, even if it lasts for years, has no probative value, because that happens to a great number, perhaps to the majority of aspirants to Yoga. The reason is that they take somehow the way of raising up all the difficulties in their nature almost at the beginning and tunnelling through the mass instead of the alternative way of going ahead, slowly or swiftly, and trusting to time, Yoga and the Force Divine to clear out of them in the proper season what has to be eliminated. It is not of their own deliberate choice that they do it, something in their nature drives them. There are many here who have had or still have that long covering of the inner by the outer or separation of the inner from the outer consciousness. You yourself took that way in spite of our expostulations to you advising you to take the sunlit road, and you have not yet got out of the habit. But that does not mean that you won’t get out of the tunnel and when you do you will find your inner being waiting for you on the other side — in the

sun and not in the shadow. I don't think I am more patient than a guru ought to be. Anyone who is a guru at all ought to be patient, first because he knows the difficulty of human nature and, secondly, because he knows how the Yoga force works, in so many contrary ways, open or subterranean, slow or swift, volcanic or coralline, — passing even from one to the other — and he does not use the surface reason but the eye of inner knowledge and Yogic experience.

*

There is no contradiction between my former statements about the sunlit path and what I have said about the difficult and unpleasant passages which the Yoga has to pass through in its normal development in the way of human nature. The sunlit path can be followed by those who are able to practise surrender, first a central surrender and afterwards a more complete self-giving in all the parts of the being. If they can achieve and preserve the attitude of the central surrender, if they can rely wholly on the Divine and accept cheerfully whatever comes to them from the Divine, then their path becomes sunlit and may even be straightforward and easy. They will not escape all difficulties, no seeker can, but they will be able to meet them without pain and despondency, — as indeed the Gita recommends that Yoga should be practised, *anirvinñacetasā*, — trusting in the inner guidance and perceiving it more and more or else in the outer guidance of the Guru. It can also be followed even when one feels no light and no guidance if there is or if one can acquire a bright settled faith and happy bhakti or has the nature of the spiritual optimist and the firm belief or feeling that all that is done by the Divine is done for the best even when we cannot understand his action. But all have not this nature, most are very far from it, and the complete or even the central surrender is not easy to get and to keep it always is hard enough for our human nature. When these things are not there, the liberty of the soul is not attained and we have instead to undergo the law or fulfil a hard and difficult discipline.

That law is imposed on us by the Ignorance which is the

nature of all our parts; our physical being is obviously a mass of ignorance, the vital is full of ignorant desires and passions, the mind is also an instrument of Ignorance struggling towards some kind of imperfect and mostly inferior and external knowledge. The path of the seeker proceeds through this ignorance; for a long time he can find no light of solid experience or realisation, only the hopes and ideas and beliefs of the mind which do not give the true spiritual seeing; or he gets glimpses of light or periods of light but the light often goes out and the luminous periods are followed by frequent or long periods of darkness. There are constant fluctuations, persistent disappointments, innumerable falls and failures. No path of Yoga is really easy or free from these difficulties or fluctuations; the way of bhakti is supposed to be the easiest, but still we find constant complaints that one is always seeking but never finding and even at the best there is a constant ebb and tide, *milana* and *viraha*, joy and weeping, ecstasy and despair. If one has the faith or in the absence of faith the will to go through, one passes on and enters into the joy and light of the divine realisation. If one gets some habit of true surrender, then all this is not necessary; one can enter into the sunlit way. Or if one can get some touch of what is called pure bhakti, *śuddhā bhakti*, then whatever happens that is enough; the way becomes easy, or if it does not, still this is a sufficient start to support us to the end without the sufferings and falls that happen so often to the ignorant seeker.

In all Yoga there are three essential objects to be attained by the seeker: union or abiding contact with the Divine, liberation of the soul or the Self, the Spirit, and a certain change of the consciousness, the spiritual change. It is this change, which is necessary for reaching the other two objects, necessary at least to a certain degree, that is the cause of most of the struggles and difficulties; for it is not easy to accomplish it; a change of the mind, a change of the heart, a change of the habits of the will is called for and is obstinately resisted by our ignorant nature. In this Yoga a complete transformation of the nature is aimed at because that is necessary for the complete union and the complete liberation not only of the soul and the spirit but of the

nature itself. It is also a Yoga of works and of the integral divine life; for that the integral transformation of nature is evidently necessary; the union with the Divine has to carry with it a full entrance into the divine consciousness and the divine nature; there must be not only *sāyujya* or *sālokya* but *sādṛśya* or, as it is called in the Gita, *sādharma*. The full Yoga, Purna Yoga, means a fourfold path, a Yoga of knowledge for the mind, a Yoga of bhakti for the heart, a Yoga of works for the will and a Yoga of perfection for the whole nature. But, ordinarily, if one can follow wholeheartedly any one of these lines, one arrives at the result of all the four. For instance, by bhakti one becomes close to the Divine, becomes intensely aware of Him and arrives at knowledge, for the Divine is the Truth and the Reality; by knowing Him, says the Upanishads, one comes to know all. By bhakti also the will is led into the road of the works of love and the service of the Divine and the government of the nature and its acts by the Divine, and that is Karmayoga. By bhakti also comes spiritual change of the consciousness and the action of the nature which is the first step towards its transformation. So it is with all the other lines of the fourfold path.

But it may be that there are many obstacles in the being to the domination of the mind and heart and will by bhakti and the consequent contact with the Divine. The too great activity of the intellectual mind and its attachment to its own pride of ideas, its prejudices, its fixed notions and its ignorant reason may shut the doors to the inner light and prevent the full tide of bhakti from flooding everything; it may also cling to a surface mental activity and refuse to go inside and allow the psychic vision and the feelings of the inner heart to become its guides, though it is by this vision and this feeling that bhakti grows and conquers. So too the passions and desires of the vital being and its ego may block the way and prevent the self-giving of the mind and heart to the Divine. The inertia, ignorance and inconstancy of one's physical consciousness, its attachment to fixed habits of thought and feeling and action, its persistence in the old grooves may come badly in the way of the needed change. In such circumstances the Divine may have to bide his

time; but if there is real hunger in the heart, all that cannot prevent the final realisation; still, it may have to wait till the obstructions are removed or at least so much cleared out as to admit an unimpeded working of the Divine Power on the surface nature. Till then, there may be periods of inner ease and some light in the mind, periods also of the feeling of bhakti or of peace, periods of the joy of self-consecration in works and service; for these will take long to stay permanently and there will be much struggle and unrest and suffering. In the end the Divine's working will appear and one will be able to live in his presence.

I have described the difficulties of Yoga at their worst, as they may hamper and afflict even those predestined to the realisation but as often there is an alternation or a mixture of the light and the darkness, initial attainment perhaps and heavy subsequent difficulties, progress and attacks and retardations, strong movements forward and a floundering in the bogs of the Ignorance. Even great realisations may come and high splendours of light and spiritual experience and yet the goal is not attained; for in the phrase of the Rig Veda, "As one climbs from peak to peak there is made clear the much that is still to be done." But there is always something that either carries us on or forces us on. This may take the shape of something conscious in front, the shape of a mastering spiritual idea, indestructible aspiration or fixed faith which may seem sometimes entirely veiled or even destroyed in periods of darkness or violent upheaval, but always they reappear when the storm has passed or the blackness of night has thinned, and reassert their influence. But also it may be something in the very essence of the being deeper than any idea or will in the mind, deeper and more permanent than the heart's aspiration but hidden from one's own observation. One who is moved to Yoga by some curiosity of the mind or even by its desire for knowledge can turn aside from the path from disappointment or any other cause; still more can those who take it up from some inner ambition or vital desire turn away through revolt or frustration or the despondency of frequent check and failure. But if this deeper thing is there, then one

cannot permanently leave the path of spiritual endeavour: one may decide to leave the path but is not allowed from within to do it or one may leave but is obliged to return to it by the secret spiritual need within him.

All these things are common to every path of Yoga; they are the normal difficulties, fluctuations and struggles which come across the path of spiritual effort. But in this Yoga there is an order or succession of the workings of the secret Force which may vary greatly in its circumstances in each sadhak, but still maintains its general line. Our evolution has brought the being up out of inconscient Matter into the Ignorance of mind, life and body tempered by an imperfect knowledge and is trying to lead us into the light of the Spirit, to lift us into that light and to bring the light down into us, into body and life as well as mind and heart and to fill with it all that we are. This and its consequences, of which the greatest is the union with the Divine and life in the divine consciousness, is the meaning of the integral transformation. Mind is our present topmost faculty; it is through the thinking mind and the heart with the soul, the psychic being behind them that we have to grow into the Spirit, for what the Force first tries to bring about is to fix the mind in the right central idea, faith or mental attitude and the right aspiration and poise of the heart and to make these sufficiently strong and firm to last in spite of other things in the mind and heart which are other than or in conflict with them. Along with this it brings whatever experiences, realisations or descent or growth of knowledge the mind of the individual is ready for at the time or as much of it, however small, as is necessary for its further progress: sometimes these realisations and experiences are very great and abundant, sometimes few and small or negligible; in some there seems to be in this first stage nothing much of these things or nothing decisive — the Force seems to concentrate on a preparation of the mind only. In many cases the sadhana seems to begin and proceed with experiences in the vital; but in reality this can hardly take place without some mental preparation, even if it is nothing more than a turning of the mind or some kind of opening which makes the

vital experiences possible. In any case, to begin with the vital is a hazardous affair; the difficulties there are more numerous and more violent than on the mental plane and the pitfalls are innumerable. The access to the soul, the psychic being, is less easy because it is covered up with a thick veil of ego, passion and desire. One is apt to be swallowed up in a maze of vital experiences, not always reliable, the temptation of small siddhis, the appeal of the powers of darkness to the ego. One has to struggle through these densities to the psychic being behind and bring it forward; then only can the sadhana on the vital plane be safe.

However that may be, the descent of the sadhana, of the action of the Force into the vital plane of our being becomes after some time necessary. The Force does not make a wholesale change of the mental being and nature, still less an integral transformation before it takes this step: if that could be done, the rest of the sadhana would be comparatively secure and easy. But the vital is there and always pressing on the mind and heart, disturbing and endangering the sadhana and it cannot be left to itself for too long. The ego and desires of the vital, its disturbances and upheavals have to be dealt with and if not at once expelled, at least dominated and prepared for a gradual if not a rapid modification, change, illumination. This can only be done on the vital plane itself by descending to that level. The vital ego itself must become conscious of its own defects and willing to get rid of them; it must decide to throw away its vanities, ambitions, lusts and longings, its rancours and revolts and all the rest of the impure stuff and unclean movements within it. This is the time of the greatest difficulties, revolts and dangers. The vital ego hates being opposed in its desires, resents disappointment, is furious against wounds to its pride and vanity; it does not like the process of purification and it may very well declare Satyagraha against it, refuse to cooperate, justify its own demands and inclinations, offer passive resistance of many kinds, withdraw the vital support which is necessary both to the life and the sadhana and try to withdraw the being from the path of spiritual endeavour. All this has to be faced and

overcome, for the temple of the being has to be swept clean if the Lord of our being is to take his place and receive our worship there.

*

I know that this is a time of trouble for you and everybody. It is so for the whole world; confusion, trouble, disorder and upset everywhere is the general state of things. The better things that are to come are preparing or growing under a veil and the worse are prominent everywhere. The one thing is to hold on and to hold out till the hour of light has come.

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I am afraid I can hold out but cold comfort for the present at least to those of your correspondents who are lamenting the present state of things. Things *are* bad, are growing worse and may at any time grow worst or worse than worst if that is possible — and anything however paradoxical seems possible in the present perturbed world. The best thing for them is to realise that all this was necessary because certain possibilities had to emerge and be got rid of if a new and better world was at all to come into being; it would not have done to postpone them for a later time. It is as in Yoga where things active or latent in the being have to be put into action in the light so that they may be grappled with and thrown out or to emerge from latency in the depths for the same purificatory purpose. Also they can remember the adage that night is darkest before dawn and that the coming of dawn is inevitable. But they must remember too that the new world whose coming we envisage is not to be made of the same texture as the old and different only in pattern and that it must come by other means, from within and not from without — so the best way is not to be too much preoccupied with the lamentable things that are happening outside, but themselves to grow within so that they may be ready for the new world whatever form it may take.

Optimism and Pessimism

You are quite right in taking an optimistic and not a pessimistic attitude in the sadhana — progressive sadhana is enormously helped by an assured faith and confidence. Such a confidence helps to realise, for it is dynamic and tends to fulfil itself.

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As for the sceptics — well, optimism even unjustified is still justifiable because it gives a chance and a force for getting things done, while pessimism even with all the grounds that appearances can give to it, is simply a clog and a “No going” affair. The right thing is to go ahead and get done all that can be, if possible all that ought to be, but at least do so much that all that ought will feel bound to come along on the heels of my doing. That is the prophets and the gospel.

Treating Difficulties as Opportunities

The attitude you have taken is the right one. It is this feeling and attitude which help you to overcome so rapidly the attacks that sometimes fall upon you and throw you out of the right consciousness. As you say, difficulties so taken become opportunities; the difficulty faced in the right spirit and conquered, one finds that an obstacle has disappeared, a fresh step forward has been taken. To question, to resist in some part of the being increases trouble and difficulties — that was why an unquestioning acceptance, an unfailing obedience to the directions of the Guru was laid down as indispensable in the old Indian Yogas — it was demanded not for the sake of the Guru, but for the sake of the disciple.

*

This kind of acute struggle comes very often to a sadhak when he wants to make a complete and decisive progress instead of the slow elimination which is the usual course of nature; the strong urge upward is resisted by a vehement pull-back from below.

But the advantage is that when one persists and conquers, much has been gained by the struggle and in that part of the being that resists a decisive advantage. Persevere therefore and do not grieve for occasional waverings or stumbles which can easily happen in so arduous a combat. It should always be the rule for the sadhak not to linger over such things but to pick oneself up again and go resolutely forward. Our help, our force, our blessings will be with you always aiding each step till the final victory.

*

Why get excited over these small things or let them disturb you? If you remain quiet, things will go much better and, if there is any difficulty, you are more likely to find out a way in a quiet mind open to the Peace and Power. That is the secret of going on, not to allow things and happenings, not even real mistakes, to upset you, but to remain very quiet, confiding in the Power to lead you and set things more and more right. If one does that, then things do get actually more and more right and even the difficulties and mistakes become means for learning and steps towards progress.

*

Do not allow yourself to be worried or upset by small things. Look at things from an inner point of view and try to get the benefit of all that happens. If you make a mistake, don't get distressed because you made a mistake — rather profit by it to see the reason so as to get the right movement in future. This you can do only if you look at it quietly from the inner being without sorrow or disturbance.

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Of course, one must not make a mistake for the purpose of bringing it out or accept the mistake once made, — but if it comes, one has to take advantage of it to change.

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An occurrence like that should always be taken as an opportunity of self-conquest. Put your pride and dignity in that — in not

being mastered by the passions, but their master.

*

It is indeed true that when one conquers a difficulty or goes forward, it creates a right current in the atmosphere. Moreover each time one gets an opening, it becomes more possible to make it permanent.

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It is true that if one has the true basis, then after every attack one finds oneself farther advanced in progress.

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Yes, a great progress should only spur one on to a greater progress beside which the first will appear as nothing.

*

Yes, that is so. Each victory gained over oneself means new strength to gain more victories.

The Certitude of Victory

You must make grow in you the peace that is born of the certitude of victory.

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If these things [*anger, desire etc.*] had disappeared already, there would be the victory already. What I mean [*by “the certitude of victory”*] is the certitude of the eventual victory which is a matter of faith and an inner reliance upon the Divine. The peace born of this certitude carries one through all persistence or return of difficulties.

*

Whatever resistance there is in the outer being will go, only it takes time. It is always best to take one's foundation on that certitude and remain quiet and steadfast with it in mind even

when one cannot react actively against the difficulty. For the quiet passive resistance will make it pass sooner, — even if one is disturbed and anxious.

Even when one cannot call in actively the Mother's Force, one must keep the reliance that it will come.

*

Do not let the difficulties you feel or meet from outside overcome or depress you. Keep this one thing in your mind that to come to the Divine is your spiritual destiny and since you have been here and been accepted by us that can be taken as the seal upon it. If it takes a little longer time than you could wish for it to materialise, this should not make you think of it otherwise — for these difficulties and external obstacles and incertitudes always come to the seeker. Neither the difficulties in yourself or the obstacles presented by life are as insurmountable as they seem to your physical mind when they are pressing upon it. Remember also that although here the conditions would be more favourable, yet even at a distance the grace and help can be there with you. Only fix yourself on the goal, make the inner choice once for all firmly and completely; it is there in your soul, fix it in your mind also. Once there, fixed and unalterable, it will prevail over the difficulties of your own vital nature and the physical world's opposition, misunderstanding or reluctance.

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The reaching is already assured, as it cannot but be when a sincere and abiding aspiration is supported by a sincere and abiding endeavour. With that and the Grace supporting, all difficulties can be and surely will be overcome.

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The victory is always sure — even when there is difficulty, never doubt that the victory will be there.

Chapter Two

Steps towards Overcoming Difficulties

Ways of Dealing with Difficulties

This sadhana is a Yoga of transformation of the human consciousness into the divine consciousness. The sadhaks who come here are human beings with all the human weaknesses, but with a possibility of the transformation and an aspiration for it. For getting rid of their human weaknesses — such as lust, greed, vanity, pride, falsehood — they must become conscious of them, must always reject them, must call in the Mother's presence, the divine Consciousness, the divine Force to help them in rejecting their defects and to transform them. If they do that, then all that is necessary for the change will be done.

*

When the old movements or suggestions or voices come, —

(1) Reject them always — do not listen, take no interest.

(2) If they persist, do not believe what they say or allow them to influence you — know that they are voices or movements of a false, confused and inferior consciousness. You have seen what the real Truth is and how great it is.

(3) Concentrate on something else, as firmly as possible.

(4) Aspire steadily for contact with the Mother's Light and Force.

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This is the right attitude, to have faith and not mind the difficulties. Difficulties — and serious ones — there cannot fail to be in the path of Yoga, because it is not easy to change all at once the ignorant human consciousness and make it a spiritual consciousness open to the Divine. But with faith one need not

mind the difficulties; the Divine Force is there and will overcome them.

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Whatever is difficult can indeed be made easy by truth in the heart and sincerity and faith in the endeavour, even what is impossible can become possible. It is often found too that after some amount of practice and faithful endeavour, there comes an intervention from within and what might have taken long is decisively and quickly done.

Your prayer will surely be answered, for it is to that you are moving.

Facing Circumstances

You should not be so dependent on outward things; it is this attitude that makes you give so excessive an importance to circumstances. I do not say that circumstances cannot help or hinder — but they are circumstances, not the fundamental thing which is in ourselves, and their help or their hindrance ought not to be of primary importance. In Yoga, as in every great or serious human effort, there is always bound to be an abundance of adverse interventions and unfavourable circumstances which have to be overcome. To give them too great an importance increases their importance and their power to multiply themselves, gives them, as it were, confidence in themselves and the habit of coming. To face them with equanimity — if one cannot manage a cheerful persistence against them of confident and resolute will — diminishes on the contrary their importance and effect and in the end, though not at once, gets rid of their persistence and recurrence. It is therefore a principle in Yoga to recognise the determining power of what is within us — for that is the deeper truth — to set that right and establish the inward strength as against the power of outward circumstances. The strength is there — even in the weakest; one has to find it, to unveil it and to keep it in front throughout the journey and the battle.

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It was inevitable that there should be difficulties once your husband has turned back from his favourable attitude. But as we told you the only way to face and overcome them is to remain firm with a confidence in the Divine that beyond all difficulties lies the realisation and to proceed either boldly or silently on your way in spite of all that people may do or say and in spite of all troubles and trials that may come in the course of the life or in the course of the sadhana. If one keeps this position the difficulties will either diminish or disappear or if for any reason they become acute for a while, will collapse after a time.

You are not at any time out of our minds. We are there with you in your difficulties and troubles — remain calm and assured and you will feel the inner help. Do not yield to depression for depression only gives the opposition and difficulties a hold upon you; call quietly and persistently for strength and the strength will come.

*

That is the inconvenience of going away from a difficulty, — it runs after one, — or rather one carries it with oneself, for the difficulty is truly inside, not outside. Outside circumstances only give it the occasion to manifest itself and so long as the inner difficulty is not conquered, the circumstances will always crop up one way or another.

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As for his difficulties and troubles, there is little hope of his overcoming them if he does not realise that they come from within him and not from outside. It is the weakness of his vital nature, the inefficient helplessness of his nervous being always weeping and complaining and lamenting instead of facing life and overcoming its difficulties, it is the sentimental lachrymose attitude it takes that keeps his troubles unsolved and alive. This is a temperament which the gods will not help because they know that help is useless, for it will either not be received or will be spilled and wasted; and all that is rajasic and Asuric in the world despises and tramples upon this kind of nature. If he had

learned a calm strength and quiet courage without weakness and without fuss and violence, founded on confidence in the help he could always have received from here and on openness to the Mother's force, things would have been favourably settled by this time. But he cannot take advantage of any help given him because his vital nature cherishes its weakness and is always indulging and rhetorically expressing it instead of throwing it away with contempt as a thing unworthy of manhood and unfit for a sadhaka. It is only if he so rejects it that he can receive strength from us and stand in life or progress in the sadhana.

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It is also well that you have reconciled yourself with the place [*Sylhet, Bengal*] and have the feeling of strength to deal with the situation there. A certain power of adaptation and harmonisation of the surroundings is necessary — you had it very strongly and were therefore successful wherever you went. The recoil from Sylhet made you nervous and depressed and spoiled for a time the action of this power in you. Now with your new attitude I hope it will return and bring the solution of all your difficulties.

We send you our blessings. Keep yourself always open to the Power from above and to our help from here and remain firm and strong against all difficulties that may yet remain either in the outer life or the sadhana. On these conditions victory is always sure.

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When the soul is meant to go forward and there is an external weakness like that, circumstances do come like that to help the external being against itself — which means that there must be a truly sincere aspiration behind; otherwise it does not happen.

Recognising One's Weaknesses

To recognise, as you have done, a fault in the nature does not indeed remove it altogether at once, but it is a great step towards

it. It does not remove it at once because of the force of habit in the nature, but still to be conscious and have the will to remove it helps to weaken its force and assists the Mother's working very greatly.

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To recognise one's weaknesses and false movements and draw back from them is the way towards liberation.

Not to judge anyone but oneself until one can see things from a calm mind and a calm vital is an excellent rule. Also, do not allow your mind to form hasty impressions on the strength of some outward appearance, nor your vital to act upon them.

There is a place in the inner being where one can always remain calm and from there look with poise and judgment on the perturbations of the surface consciousness and act upon it to change it. If you can learn to live in that calm of the inner being, you will have found your stable basis.

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If the imperfection is there, one has to see it. The thing to be done is to live in the true self and from there see the imperfection and change it.

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You must remain always aware of the self and the obscure nature must not be felt as the self but as an instrument which has to be put into tune with the self.

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You have to be conscious of the wrong movements, but not preoccupied with them only.

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The defects should be noticed and rejected, but the concentration should be positive — on what you are to be, i.e., on the development of the new consciousness rather than on this negative side.

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It is necessary to observe and know the wrong movements in you; for they are the source of your trouble and have to be persistently rejected if you are to be free.

But do not be always thinking of your defects and wrong movements. Concentrate more upon what you are to be, on the ideal, with the faith that, since it is the goal before you, it must and will come.

To be always observing faults and wrong movements brings depression and discourages the faith. Turn your eyes more to the coming Light and less to any immediate darkness. Faith, cheerfulness, confidence in the ultimate victory are the things that help, — they make the progress easier and swifter.

Make more of the good experiences that come to you; one experience of the kind is more important than the lapses and failures. When it ceases, do not repine or allow yourself to be discouraged, but be quiet within and aspire for its renewal in a stronger form leading to still deeper and fuller experience.

Aspire always, but with more quietude, opening yourself to the Divine simply and wholly.

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While the recognition of the Divine Power and the attunement of one's own nature to it cannot be done without the recognition of the imperfections in that nature, yet it is a wrong attitude to put too much stress either on them or on the difficulties they create, or to distrust the Divine working because of the difficulties one experiences, or to lay too continual an emphasis on the dark side of things. To do this increases the force of the difficulties, gives a greater right of continuance to the imperfections. I do not insist on a Couéistic optimism — although excessive optimism is more helpful than excessive pessimism; that (Couéism) tends to cover up difficulties and there is besides always a measure to be observed in things. But there is no danger of your covering them up and deluding yourself with too bright an outlook, quite the contrary; you always lay stress too much on the shadows and by so doing thicken them and obstruct your outlets of escape into the Light. Faith, more faith! Faith in your possibilities, faith in

the Power that is at work behind the veil, faith in the work that is to be done and the offered guidance.

There cannot be any high endeavour, least of all in the spiritual field, which does not raise or encounter grave obstacles of a very persistent character. These are both internal and external, and, although in the large they are fundamentally the same for all, there may be a great difference in the distribution of their stress or the outward form they take. But the one real difficulty is the attunement of the nature with the working of the Divine Light and Power. Get that solved and the others will either disappear or take a subordinate place; and even with those difficulties that are of a more general character, more lasting because they are inherent in the work of transformation, they will not weigh so heavily because the sense of the supporting Force and a greater power to follow its movement will be there.

*

Of course consciousness grows as the opening increases and one result of consciousness is to be able to see in oneself—but not to see the weaknesses only, to see the whole play of forces. Only in the right consciousness one does not regard the weaknesses even in a too personal way so as to get discouraged. One has to see them as the play of nature, mental nature, vital nature, physical nature, common to all human beings—to see them so and remain calm and detached, calling in the Mother's force and light for transformation of this defective play into the true nature—not getting impatient if it is not done at once, but going on steadily and giving time for the change. The full change indeed cannot come till all is ready for the descent of a greater, calmer, larger consciousness from above and that is only possible when the ordinary consciousness has been made thoroughly ready for it.

The intense love and bhakti does not come at once. It comes as the power of the psychic grows more and more in the being. But to aspire for it is right and the sincere aspiration is sure to fulfil itself. Always seek to progress in quietude, happiness and

confidence, that is the most helpful attitude. Do not listen to contrary suggestions from outside.

Stating One's Difficulties

There is no reason why you should stop writing letters—it is only one kind of letter that is in question and that is not a very good means of contact; you yourself felt the reaction was not favourable. I asked you to write because your need of unburdening the perilous matter in you was very great at the time and, although it did not relieve you at once, it kept me exactly informed of the turns of the fight and helped me to put a certain pressure on the attacking forces at a critical moment. But I do not believe any of these necessities now exists. It is rather a discouragement from within yourself of the source of these movements that is now the need; but putting them into words would tend, as I have said, to give them more body and substance.

It is an undoubted fact proved by hundreds of instances that for many the exact statement of their difficulties to us is the best and often, though not always, an immediate, even an instantaneous means of release. This has often been seen by sadhaks not only here, but far away, and not only for inner difficulties, but for illness and outer pressure of unfavourable circumstances. But for that a certain attitude is necessary—either a strong faith in the mind and vital or a habit of reception and response in the inner being. Where this habit has been established, I have seen it to be almost unfailingly effective, even when the faith was uncertain or the outer expression in the mind vague, ignorant or in its form mistaken or inaccurate. Moreover, this method succeeds most when the writer can write as a witness of his own movements and state them with an exact and almost impartial precision as a phenomenon of his nature or the movement of a force affecting him from which he seeks release. On the other hand if in writing his vital gets seized by the thing he is writing of, and takes up the pen for him,—expressing and often supporting doubt, revolt, depression, despair, it becomes a very different

matter. Even here sometimes the expression acts as a purge; but also the statement of the condition may lend energy to the attack at least for the moment and may seem to enhance and prolong it, exhausting it by its own violence perhaps for the time and so bringing in the end a relief, but at a heavy cost of upheaval and turmoil—and at the risk of the recurring decimal movement, because the release has come by temporary exhaustion of the attacking force, not by rejection and purification through the intervention of the Divine Force with the unquestioning assent and support of the sadhak. There has been a confused fight, an intervention in a hurly-burly, not a clear alignment of forces—and the intervention of the helping force is not felt in the confusion and the whirl. This is what used to happen in your crises; the vital in you was deeply affected and began supporting and expressing the reasonings of the attacking force—in place of a clear observation and expression of the difficulty by the vigilant mind laying the state of things in the Light for the higher Light and Force to act upon it, there was a vehement statement of the case for the Opposition. Many sadhaks (even “advanced”) had made a habit of this kind of expression of their difficulties and some still do it; they cannot even yet understand that it is not the way. At one time it was a sort of gospel in the Asram that this was the thing to be done,—I don’t know on what ground, for it was never part of my teaching about the Yoga,—but experience has shown that it does not work; it lands one in the recurring decimal notation, an unending round of struggle. It is quite different from the movement of self-opening that succeeds, (here too not necessarily in a moment, but still sensibly and progressively) and of which those are thinking who insist on everything being opened to the Guru so that the help may be more effectively there.

It is inevitable that doubts and difficulties should arise in so arduous an undertaking as the transformation of the normal nature of man into the spiritual nature, the replacement of his system of externalised values and surface experience into profounder inner values and experience. But the doubts and difficulties cannot be overcome by giving them their full force;

it can be rather done by learning to stand back from them and to refuse to be carried away; then there is a chance of the still small voice from within getting itself heard and pushing out these louder clamorous voices and movements from outside. It is the light from within that you have to make room for; the light of the outer mind is quite insufficient for the discovery of the inner values or to judge the truth of spiritual experience.

Detaching Oneself from Difficulties

Not to be touched or disturbed by the difficulties, to feel separate from them is the first step towards freedom.

*

If you cannot do anything else, you must at least remain detached — there is always a part of the being that can remain detached and go on persisting, calling down the Force from above.

*

When vital difficulties assail a sadhak, he has not to identify his consciousness with them, but to stand back and remaining quiet in the observing part of his being call down persistently the Divine Force. The help will then come through this steady and silent part of the being.

*

Knowledge in the mind is not sufficient by itself to prevent it [*obscurity*] so long as the whole consciousness is not liberated. What can be done is for the inner being to be always detached and separate so that it does not feel obscured by the obscurity or attacked by the attack and is able to see and deal with it as something of the surface. Your difficulty is that you are constantly identifying yourself with the outer parts and feel yourself submerged by the attacks on them.

*

Do not yield to the Tamas; the more you yield, the more it will stick.

For all these things, the way is detachment, to stand back; separate yourself from the desire, observe it, refuse sanction and put a quiet and persistent will for it to cease, calling on the Mother's force at the same time to dissolve and eliminate the greed, desire, attachment, obscurity and inertia. If sincerely, persistently and rightly done, it will succeed in the end, even though it may take time.

*

These things rise because either they are there in the conscious part of the being as habits of the nature or they are there lying concealed and able to rise at any moment or they are suggestions from the general or universal Nature outside to which the personal being makes a response. In any case they rise in order that they may be met and cast out and finally rejected so that they may trouble the nature no longer. The amount of trouble they give depends on the way they are met. The first principle is to detach oneself from them, not to identify, not to admit them any longer as part of one's real nature but to look on them as things imposed to which one says, "This is not I or mine — this is a thing I reject altogether." One begins to feel a part of the being inside which is not identified, which remains firm and says, "This may give trouble on the surface, but it shall not touch me." If this separate being within can be felt, then half the trouble is over — provided there is a will there not only to separate but to get rid of the imperfection from the surface nature also.

*

The difficulties of the character persist so long as one yields to them in action when they rise. One has to make a strict rule not to act according to the impulses of anger, ego or whatever the weakness may be that one wants to get rid of, or if one does act in the heat of the moment, not to justify or persist in the action. If one does that, after a time the difficulty abates or is confined

purely to a subjective movement which one can observe, detach oneself from and combat.

*

Do not allow yourself to be shaken or troubled by these things [*demands made by others*]. The one thing to do always is to remain firm in your aspiration to the Divine and to face with equanimity and detachment all difficulties and all oppositions. For those who wish to lead the spiritual life, the Divine must always come first, everything else must be secondary.

Keep yourself detached and look at these things from the calm inner vision of one who is inwardly dedicated to the Divine.

*

Well, that is right. The difficulty of the difficulties is self-created, a knot of the Ignorance; when a certain inner perception loosens the knot, the worst of the difficulty is over.

Rejecting Wrong Movements

It is simply a steady and quiet rejection [*of the lower forces*] that is needed and a quiet and steady calling down of the true Force. All this emotional excitability must be quieted down; it is that that makes the vital open itself to these forces. If it were not so, all the defects of the nature could be quietly observed and quietly mended.

*

If one part of you keeps its quietude — the inner being — then the rest can be dealt with. So not to allow the vital to be upset and the disturbance cover up the inner self, that is the most important thing. Keep up the rejection always.

*

It would be easier [*to get rid of wrong movements*] when you bring down a settled peace and equanimity into that part of the

being. There will then be more of an automatic rejection of such movements and less need of tapasya.

*

If you accept your weakness which means accepting the thing itself — some part of your nature accepts it and to that you yield — then what is the use of our telling you what to do? That part of your vital will always be able to say, “I was too weak to carry it out.” The only way out of it is for you to cease to be weak, to dismiss this sentimental and sensuous part of you, to call down strength to replace its weakness and to do it with a settled and serious purpose. If we cannot get you who have had some foundation in the sadhana to overcome this element in you, how do you expect us to get X to do it who says he has no firm foundation but is still floating?

*

It is always their [*the lower forces*'] endeavour to rise up and get the sanction of the mind and higher vital — or if they cannot do that, to cover them up so that the lower nature may act in its ordinary way without being pressed by the higher consciousness to change. The first thing necessary for the sadhak is not to give any consent of his mind or higher vital and to keep them from being covered. If that can be done, then it becomes possible to push the lower forces out of the lower vital and body and not allow them to return. It is the Mother's Force which you feel — for all the higher forces are hers.

Chapter Three

Vigilance, Resolution, Will and the Divine Help

The Need of Vigilance

One is always open [*to the surrounding atmosphere*] so long as there is not the final change. If things do not come in it is because the consciousness is vigilant or the psychic in front; but the least want of vigilance or relaxation can allow something to enter.

*

It [*the experience of liberation*] is likely to be fundamental and definite. But in these matters, even after the liberation one has to remain vigilant — for often these things go out and remain at a far distance waiting to see if under any circumstances, in any condition they can make a rush and recover their kingdom. If there has been an entire purification down to the depths and nothing is there to open the gate, then they cannot do it. But it is only after one has been a long time free that one can say, “Now it is all right for ever.”

*

As for your inner attitude, it must remain the same. Not to be excited or drawn outwards by these “incidents” of the outward life or by the coming in of new elements is the rule; they must come in like waves into an untroubled sea and mix in it and become themselves untroubled and serene.

Your present attitude and condition is all that it should be, — only you must remain vigilant always. For when the condition is good, the lower movements have a habit of subsiding and become quiescent, hiding as it were, — or they go out of the nature and remain at a distance. But if they see that the sadhak is losing his vigilance, then they slowly begin to rise or draw

near, most often unseen, and when he is quite off his guard, surge up suddenly or make a sudden irruption. This continues until the whole nature, mental, vital, physical down to the very subconscious is enlightened, conscious, full of the Divine. Till that happens, one must always remain watchful in a sleepless vigilance.

*

It is perhaps that the attitude you took of going on with the calm within and slowly changing what had to be changed, postponing certain things for the future, — though not a wrong attitude in itself, — made you somewhat lax, allowing things to play on the surface (desires etc.), which should have been kept in check. This relaxation may have opened the way for the old movements to rise through this part which was not yet ready to change at all and the hostile forces finding you off your guard took the opportunity to push the attack home. They are always vigilant for an opportunity and there must be a sufficient vigilance on the sadhak's side to refuse it to them. It is also possible that as the Force descending in the general atmosphere has carried in it some pressure on the consciousness of the sadhaks to be more ready, more awake, less engrossed in the movements of the ordinary nature than they are now, it fell upon this part and the resistance in it, which was mostly passive for a long time, became suddenly active under the pressure.

*

There is no reason for despondency; when one has progressed as far as you did, that is, so far as to feel and maintain the calm and have so much of the psychic discrimination and the psychic feeling, one has no right to despair of one's spiritual future. You could not yet carry out the discrimination into an entire psychic change, because a large part of the outer physical consciousness still took some pleasure in old movements and therefore their roots remained alive in the subconscious. When you were off your guard the whole thing rose up and there was a temporary and violent lapse. But this does not mean that the nature is not

changeable. Only the calm inner conscious poise, the psychic discrimination and above all a will to change, stronger and steadier than before, must be so established that no uprising or invasion will be able to cloud even partly the discrimination or suspend the will. You saw the truth but this part of the old nature which rose up did not want to acknowledge — it wanted its play and imposed that on you. This time you must insist on a complete truthfulness in the whole being which will refuse to accept any denial of what the psychic discrimination sees or any affirmation or consent anywhere to what it disapproves, spiritual humility and the removal of self-righteousness, self-justification and the wish to impose yourself, the tendency to judge others etc. All these defects you know are in you; to cast them out may take time, but if the will to be true to the inner self in all ways is strong and persistent and vigilant and always calls in the Mother's force, it can be done sooner than now seems possible.

*

That is all right [*not to worry about the recurrence of thought-movements*] — provided there is detachment and refusal of consent. One ought not to worry, but also one ought not to be negligent, i.e., one ought not to give the consent of the will or of the reason to these movements. For all consent prolongs their action or their recurrence. If they do not go when rejected by the mind and will, it is because of the habitual response in the less conscious parts of the nature. These have to become conscious by receiving the Light and Force until finally they refuse response to the calls of the lower nature.

*

This is quite right. If you keep this condition [*of trust and devotion*], not allowing it to be entirely obscured or long clouded, you can move rapidly towards a new birth of your nature and the foundation of your life and all your thoughts and acts and movements in your true being, the psychic being. Never consent to the ideas, suggestions, feelings that bring back the cloud, the

confusion and the revolt. It is the consent that makes them strong to recur. Refuse the consent and they will be obliged to retire either immediately or after a time.

Remain fixed in the sunlight of the true consciousness — for only there is happiness and peace. They do not depend upon outside happenings, but on this alone.

The Need of Resolution

There is no reason why you should abandon hope of success in the Yoga. The state of depression which you now feel is temporary and it comes even upon the strongest sadhaks at one time or another or even often recurs. The only thing needed is to hold firm with the awakened part of the being, to reject all contrary suggestions and wait, opening yourself as much as you can to the true Power, till the crisis or change of which this depression is a stage, is completed. The suggestions which come to your mind telling you that you are not fit and that you must go back to the ordinary life, are false tamasic promptings from a hostile source. Ideas of this kind must always be rejected as inventions of the lower nature; even if they are founded on appearances which seem convincing to the ignorant mind, they are false, because they exaggerate a passing movement and represent it as the decisive and definite truth. There is only one truth in you on which you have to lay constant hold, the truth of your divine possibilities and the call of the higher Light to your nature. If you hold to that always or, even if you are momentarily shaken from your hold, return constantly to it, it will justify itself in the end in spite of all difficulties and obstacles and stumblings. All in you that resists will disappear in time with the progressive unfolding of your spiritual nature.

The disabilities of your past character and mind and vital habits need not discourage you. Some of them are, no doubt, serious — especially the animal sexuality of the vital parts and the support which the mind has given to it; but others have had to face obstacles as serious in themselves and have surmounted them in the purifying and liberating process of the Yoga. It may

not be easy to get rid of them altogether and it may take time; but if you persist and refuse all justification and all possibility of return to these things, you are bound in the end to conquer.

When you came, the psychic call in you was true and sincere, but in your external nature the response was confused and mixed with foreign elements of a lower kind. What has sunk in you is not the pure psychic urge, even if that is temporarily veiled, but a vital flame that was not entirely pure. It is because these foreign elements have been discouraged, that the vital nature in you feels despondent and refuses its support to the belief of the mind and to the psychic call. This often happens in the process of purification; what is needed is the conversion and surrender of the vital part. It must learn to demand only the highest Truth and to forego all insistence on the satisfaction of its inferior impulses and desires. It is this adhesion of the vital being that brings the full satisfaction and joy of the whole nature in the spiritual life. When that is there, it will be impossible even to think of returning to the ordinary existence. Meanwhile the mental will and the psychic aspiration must be your support; if you insist, the vital will finally yield and be converted and surrender.

Fix upon your mind and heart the resolution to live for the Divine Truth and for that alone; reject all that is contrary and incompatible with it and turn away from all lower desires; aspire to open yourself to the Divine Power and to no other. Do this in all sincerity and the present and living help you need will not fail you.

*

The resolution, to be a real resolution, must be there always, fixed. If it is dependent on an urge, not self-dependent, it can also be knocked down by inertia.

The Need of Aspiration

It is good. When the external consciousness covers the inner being, then it is by a calm and patient aspiration — without

restlessness or disturbance — that the inner state must be called back until the external consciousness itself gets so habituated to the true condition that it is no longer willing to respond to anything else.

*

I have told you that if you feel quietness somewhere in your consciousness, even if a part is not quiet, that is sufficient to lean on and get the Force to act through it. The quietness is quite as much a fact as the outer confusion. You have to accept it, to stress it, to aspire to keep and increase it — to reject the confusion.

What “reason” do you need to aspire for peace, purity, freedom from the lower nature, light, strength, Ananda, divine love, divine service? These are things good in themselves and the highest possible aim of human endeavour.

*

If not a will, you have a wish in you or an aspiration; the word does not matter, the thing is there. If it gets clouded over, it is not the less there. There are the two things — the inner being with its aspiration, the physical and material with its obscurity and depressions. If you lay stress on the former instead of constantly denying its presence, that would make the progress easy; by laying stress on the outer obscurity and affirming that always and always thinking of it, you help it to last and delay the progress. Even so, if the inner aspiration is there, it must in the end conquer.

*

Yes, but it is an absence of the one-pointed aspiration more than of strength of will — they [*certain sadhaks*] left because some desire or other got hold of them which was incompatible with the steadfast single-minded aspiration to the Divine Realisation.

If Buddha had the will only after tapasya, how was it that he left everything without hesitation in the search for Truth and never once looked back, regretted nor had any struggle? The

only difficulty was how to find the Truth, his single will to find it never faltered; the intensity of his tapasya itself would have been impossible without that strength of will. People less strong than Buddha may have to develop it by endeavour. Those who cannot do that have to find their strength in their reliance on the Divine Mother.

The Need of Will

There must be a fixed will for the spiritual life — that alone can overcome all obstacles.

*

To be conscious is the first step towards overcoming [*lower movements*] — but for the overcoming strength is necessary and also detachment and the will to overcome.

*

There must first be the will to change firmly conceived and held — then to open the consciousness to the Force and let it work with the inner assent to its working. When there is the psychic opening, then even the things most obstinate in the nature can change.

*

Obviously what the Mother told you was the fact — but such missing of opportunities should not discourage, the recognition of it must be a spur to do better in future. Human nature is weak and is always missing the divine opportunities; but if the spirit is willing, the weakness of the nature is obliged eventually to yield to its will. Renew that will always, so that failure as well as success may become an opportunity and an incentive for farther progress.

*

Develop the will — the will grows by a steady use, like the muscles, and grows strong.

*

The only way to do it [*develop the true will-power*] is (1) to become aware of a conscious Force behind that uses the mind etc. (2) to learn by practice to direct that Force towards its object. I do not suppose you will find it easy to do either of these things at once — one must first learn to live more deeply in the inner consciousness than you have done hitherto.

*

I suppose it must be [*weakness of the will*] because you have not been in the habit of using the will to compel the other parts of the nature — so when you want it done, they refuse to obey a control to which they are not accustomed and it also has not any habitual hold upon them.

The will is a part of the consciousness and ought to be in human beings the chief agent in controlling the activities of the nature.

*

If there is a constant use of the will the rest of the being learns however slowly to obey the will and then the actions become in conformity with the will and not with the vital impulses and desires. As for the rest (the feelings and desires etc. themselves) if they are not indulged in action or imagination and not supported by the will, if they are merely looked at and rejected when they come, then after some struggle they begin to lose their force and dwindle away.

*

There is no process [*for using the will*]. The will acts of itself when the mind and vital agree as in the case of a desire. If the desire is not satisfied, it goes on hammering, trying to get it, insisting on it, repeating the demand, making use of this person or that person, this device or that device, getting the mind to support it with reasons, representing it as a need that must be satisfied etc. etc. till the desire is satisfied. All that is the evidence of a will in action. When you have to use the will for the sadhana, you have not the same persistence, the mind finds reasons for

not going on with the effort, as soon as the difficulty becomes strong it is dropped, there is no continuity, no keeping of the will fixed on its object.

*

There can be no persistence or insistence without will.

*

By development it [*the will*] becomes fit to merge into the Mother's will. A will that is not strong is a great hindrance to sadhana.

*

It is of course a fluctuation of the mental will that often prevents a knowledge gained from being put into steady practice. If the will is not strong enough, then the greater Will behind which is the will of the Mother, her conscious Force in which knowledge and will are united, must be called in to strengthen and support it. Very often, however, even if the will as well as the knowledge are there, the habit of the vital nature brings in the old reactions. This can only be overcome by a steady undiscouraged aspiration which will bring out more and more of the psychic and its true movements to push out and displace the wrong ones. The gradual and steady replacement of the old ignorant consciousness and its movements by the true psychic and spiritual consciousness is the nature of the transformation that is to be accomplished in the Yoga. But that takes time, it cannot be done easily or at once. Therefore one should not mind or be discouraged if meanwhile one finds the old movements recurring in spite of one's knowledge. Only one should try to keep more and more separate from them, so that even if they recur the consent of the being to them shall no longer be there.

*

It depends¹ — if the consciousness is developed only on the side

¹ *The correspondent asked whether the consciousness merely warns a person not to do something or whether it also has the power to prevent him from doing it. — Ed.*

of knowledge, it will warn only. If on the side of will or power, it will help to effectuate.

*

The will can make itself work — it is in its own nature a force or energy.

*

The energy which dictates the action or prevents a wrong action is the Will.

*

Peace is not a necessary precondition for the action of the will. When the being is troubled, it is often the business of the will to impose quiet on it.

*

There is no such thing as an inert passive will. Will is dynamic in its nature. Even if it does not struggle or endeavour its very presence is dynamic and acts dynamically on the resistance. What you are speaking of is a passive wish = I would like it to be like that, I want it to be like that. That is not will.

*

It [*a will without much energy*] simply means that your will is weak and not a true will. Queer kind of will! Perhaps it is like a motor car that won't go and you have to push from behind.

*

It is not the right kind of will-power then [*if it increases fatigue*] — probably they use some fighting or effortful will-power instead of the quiet but strong will that calls down the higher consciousness and force.

*

Will is will whether it is calm or restless, whether it acts in a Yogic or unyogic way, for a Yogic or an unyogic object. Do you

think Napoleon and Caesar had no will or that they were Yogis? You have strange ideas about things. You might just as well say that memory is memory only when it remembers the Divine and it is not memory when it remembers other things.

Lack of Will

Why cannot you see that this condition is not a true consciousness, but only a clouding of the truth, a clouding which you can always get rid of if you firmly choose to do so? What you express here is not a lack of understanding, but a lack of will — and this lack of will is not your own, but is forced upon you by a lower consciousness which overpowers you and forces you to reverse all the true values of feeling and knowledge. Your being does want to be free and at peace and happy in the light — it is this Falsehood seizing hold of your external mind that makes you want to be more dark and miserable and revolted and hate yourself and not to live. Such feelings, such a perverted will is entirely opposed to the normal feelings of the nature and cannot be “true” and right. There is nobody who asks you to pretend — what we ask you is to reject false perversions and wrong feelings and ignorance and not to go on supporting them as they want you to do. It is not courage and nobility to accept these things as the law of your nature, nor is it meanness and cowardice to aspire to a higher Truth and try to act according to it and make that the law of your nature.

*

In the indolence of the will which does not want to make a sustained effort for a long period [*lies the difficulty*]. It is like a person who moves slightly half a leg for a second and then wonders why he is not already a hundred miles away at the goal after making such a gigantic effort.

*

That [*the idea that one lacks will-power*] is the suggestion that has been enforced on you by the physical inertia. It has covered

up your will and persuaded you that there is no will left and no possibility of any will.

*

One can always use the will. The idea that you cannot is only a suggestion of the inertia.

Will and the Divine Force or Power

There are always two elements in spiritual success — one's own steady will and endeavour and the Power that in one way or another helps and gives the result of the endeavour.

*

The Force produces no definite and lasting fruit unless there is the will and the resolution to achieve in the sadhak.

*

The higher action does not preclude a use of the will — will is an element of the higher action.

*

These things [*the removal of vital demand and ego*] cannot be done in that way [*by a direct higher action*]. For transformation to be genuine, the difficulty has to be rejected by all the parts of the being. The Force can only help or enable them to do that, but it cannot replace this necessary action by a summary process. Your mind and inner being must impart their will to the whole.

*

Yes. So long as there is not a constant action of the Force from above or else of a deeper Will from within, the mental will is necessary.

*

You had written, "I need not bother about it — if peace is needed it will bring itself." Certainly the main stress should be on the

Force, but the active assent of the sadhak is needed; in certain things his will also may be needed as an instrument of the Force.

*

It is true that the Force can work effectively without any effort on your part. It is not the effort, it is the assent of the being that it needs for its work.

*

The Power can do everything, change everything and will do that but it can do it perfectly and easily and permanently only when your own will mental, vital and physical has been put on the side of the Truth. If you side with the vital ignorance and want to fight against your own spiritual change, it means a painful and difficult struggle before the work is done. That is why I insist on quietude at the very least and patient confidence with it, as far as you can — so that there may be a quiet and steady progress, not a painful and tormented movement full of relapse and struggle.

*

Hardly anyone is strong enough to overcome by his own unaided aspiration and will the forces of the lower nature; even those who do it get only a certain kind of control, but not a complete mastery. Will and aspiration are needed to bring down the aid of the Divine Force and to keep the being on its side in its dealings with the lower powers. The Divine Force fulfilling the spiritual will and the heart's psychic aspiration can alone bring about the conquest.

*

There is only one way if you cannot exert your will — it is to call the Force; even to call only with the mind or the mental word is better than being entirely passive and submitted to the attack, — for although it may not succeed instantaneously, the mental call even ends by bringing the Force and opening up the consciousness again. For everything depends upon that. In the

externalised consciousness obscurity and suffering can always be there; the more the internalised consciousness reigns, the more these things are pushed back and out and with the full internalised consciousness they cannot remain — if they come, it is as outside touches unable to lodge themselves in the being.

*

The Force can bring forward and use the will.

Personal Effort and the Divine Force or Power

If there is no personal effort, if the sadhak is too indolent and tamasic to try, why should the Grace act?

*

All that [*thinking one's efforts are useless*] is the physical mind refusing to take the trouble of the labour and struggle necessary for the spiritual achievement. It wants to get the highest, but desires a smooth course all the way. “Who the devil is going to face so much trouble for getting the Divine?” — that is the underlying feeling. The difficulty with the thoughts is a difficulty every Yogi has gone through — so is the phenomenon of a little result after some days of effort. It is only when one has cleared the field and ploughed and sown and watched over it that big harvests can be hoped for.

*

Of course — personal effort without the supporting Force can do only a little, slowly, with much labour.

*

One can either use effort [*to remove difficulties*], and then one must be patient and persevering, or one can rely on the Divine with a constant will and aspiration. But then the reliance has to be a true one, not insisting on immediate fruit.

*

The only truth in your other experience — which, you say, seems at the time so true to you, — is that it is hopeless for you or anyone to get out of the inferior consciousness by your or his unaided effort. That is why when you sink into this inferior consciousness, everything seems hopeless to you, because you lose hold for a time of the true consciousness. But the suggestion is untrue, because you have an opening to the Divine and are not bound to remain in the inferior consciousness.

When you are in the true consciousness, then you see that everything can be done, even if at present only a slight beginning has been made; but a beginning is enough, once the Force, the Power is there. For the truth is that it can do everything and only time and the soul's aspiration are needed for the entire change and the soul's fulfilment.

*

It does not matter what defects you may have in your nature. The one thing that matters is your keeping yourself open to the Force. Nobody can transform himself by his own unaided efforts; it is only the Divine Force that can transform him. If you keep yourself open, all the rest will be done for you.

*

As I have told you it is no longer useful to think of right understanding and wrong movements and get upset when they are felt to be not there or imperfect. Nobody can change himself — even the strongest sadhaks here recognise that. Their effort is to let the Peace, Force, Light, Ananda of the Mother come in, to let that grow — for that will change them, they know. So long as it is not there, has not yet touched, is not growing, they struggle with the mind and vital, because they cannot help doing so and it is necessary for preparing the consciousness a little to admit the Peace and Force. But once these have touched, the only thing to do is to lay all the stress on that, trust to it, surrender and give oneself to it — for the straight road is found and the true power and consciousness have been experienced.

Letting the Force Work

The way in which the pains went shows you how to deal with the whole nature, — for it is the same with the mental and vital as with the physical causes of ill-ease and disturbance. To remain quiet within, to hold on to the faith and experience that to be quiet and open and let the Force work is the one way. Naturally, to be wholly conscious is not possible yet, but to feel it, to open, to let it work, to observe its result, that is the first thing. It is the beginning of consciousness and the way to complete consciousness.

The Divine Help

Help is given in whatever way is necessary or possible. It is not limited to Force, Light, Knowledge.

*

Certainly, all the help possible will be given. As for the method, there are always the two ways possible — one to overcome the difficulty in its own field, the other to develop the inner realisation until it grows so strong that the roots you speak of have no longer any soil to hold by and come out easily by a spontaneous psychic change.

*

Cling to the help always, — when you cannot feel, call for it and remain quiet till you feel it again. It is only the covering you spoke of that comes between you and the sense of its presence — for it is always there.

*

It [*the need to call for help*] diminishes as one gets higher and higher or rather fuller and fuller, being replaced more and more by the automatic action of the Force.

The Divine Protection

The grace and protection are always with you. When in any

inner or outer difficulty or trouble do not allow it to oppress you; take refuge with the Divine Force that protects.

If you do that always with faith and sincerity, you will find something opening in you which will always remain calm and peaceful in spite of all superficial disturbances.

*

Yes, the Divine's Protection is surely with you, since it sustains you through all. The untoward physical happenings are transient and will certainly pass away leaving full room for a greater state.

*

One should not expect too much from the Divine Protection for, constituted as we are and the world is, the Divine Protection has to act within limits. Of course miracles happen, but we have no claim to it.

Chapter Four

Time and Change of the Nature

Time Needed for Change

The change of the nature cannot take place in a few days. It is a constant progressive movement.

*

The change of the lower consciousness (vital and physical) is a big work and takes a long time and much action of the higher forces to accomplish. Nobody has ever done it in a short time.

*

That is nonsense — no one can get free from the lower nature in such a short time [*eight or nine months*]. It takes years for even the greatest Yogis — it is the work of a life-time.

*

As I have constantly told you, you cannot expect all to be enlightened at once. Even the greatest Yogis can only proceed by stages and it is only at the end that the whole nature shares the true consciousness which they first establish in the heart or behind it or in the head or above it. It descends or expands slowly conquering each layer of the being one after the other, but each step takes time.

*

All comes in its time. One has to go on quietly and steadily increasing the higher consciousness till it takes possession of the vital and physical parts.

*

I want you to be open and in contact with the Peace and Presence and Force. All else will come if that is there and then one need not

be troubled by the time it takes in the *péripéties* of the sadhana.

*

It is no doubt the pressure of the psychic in you which you express in the letter. That is how the psychic being wants it to be. But it is a mistake to accept any suggestion of self-distrust or incapacity on the ground that it is not like that yet or is not always like that. These things always take time; even after they have begun, they always take time. It is impossible to expect from the mixed and confused nature of the human being that it should be constantly in a state of ardent aspiration, perfect faith and love or full and constant openness to the Divine Force. There is the mental with its limited knowledge and its hesitations, there is the vital with its desires, unwillingnesses and its struggles; there is the physical with its obscurity, slowness and inertia. Even to clear the field sufficiently for a beginning of experience is usually a very long labour. But afterwards if the peace begins or any other right condition, it comes and stays for a time — then what is left of the lower nature surges up on some excuse or with no excuse and veils the condition. Peace and opening may come so strongly that it seems all difficulties are gone and can never return — but that is only an indication, a promise. It shows that it will be so when the peace and opening are irrevocably settled in all the nature. For that what is needed is perseverance — to go on without discouragement, recognising that the process of the nature and the action of the Mother's force is working through the difficulty even and will do all that is needed. Our incapacity does not matter — there is no human being who is not in his parts of nature incapable — but the Divine Force also is there. If one puts one's trust in that, incapacity will be changed into capacity. Difficulty and struggle themselves then become a means towards the achievement.

*

I repeat what I wrote in the morning that the one thing to be seen is whether there is the true yearning for the Divine or, to put it more strongly, whether that is the one thing that really matters to

the being. If there is that, then all other considerations become minor or irrelevant: what is happening in the world or how others react to the search for the Divine or how long the search takes. One must be prepared to give one's whole lifetime and one's whole self to that and count all well spent for the one only and supreme object. When the Divine is a necessity of the being, what is the use of mental questionings as to whether He exists or what He is like, kind or cruel, slow or swift in response, easy to reach or hard to discover? He appears all or any of these things to different seekers, but to all He is the one necessity of their existence. If one finds Him quickly, so much the better; if it takes long, still one has to go on seeking till one finds. One may have hard moments of anguish or despair because the human vital is weak, but still one goes on because the soul insists. But there is no logic in the position that because my need of the Divine is entire and even in six years I have not got Him, therefore the proper thing to do is to despair and give up. The logical position is, my need for the Divine is entire, so I must go on till I find Him, however long it may take, whether one year or six or twelve; for if my need is entire and persists always, I cannot fail to arrive. That is the position that is taken by the spiritual seeker and it is the true and natural one. It is no use saying that you are unfit and cannot take it; you have to come to it, if your need is true and entire.

The misery of the world or the activity of the Asuras is also irrelevant. Nobody has ever contended that this is a happy and perfect world, nobody in India at least, or the best possible world or put that forth as a proof of the Divine Existence. It is known that it is a world of death, ignorance, suffering and that its pleasures are not enduring. The spiritual seeker takes that not as a disproof of the Divine Existence, but as a greater spur for seeking and finding it out. He may seek it as a means of escape from life and entry into Nirvana or moksha or Goloka, Brahmaloaka or Vaikuntha; he may seek the divine Self and its peace or Ananda behind existence and if he attains to that and is satisfied with it he can move through the world untouched by its vicissitudes and troubles; or he may seek it, as I have done, for the

base of a greater and happier life to be brought now or hereafter into the world-existence. But whatever be the aim, the actual state of the world is no argument at all against the seeking for the Divine or the truth of Yoga. Also the accidents of the search, that A is dead and will attain only in another body or B is ill or C misbehaves are side matters altogether. It makes no difference to one's own entire need of the Divine and the necessity of persevering in one's seeking till one finds and reaches.

My words about the great secret of sadhana¹ simply pointed out that that was the most effective way if one could get the things done by the Power behind, did not rule out mental effort so long as one could not do that. Ramakrishna's way of putting it was the image of the baby monkey and baby cat; I have only said the same thing in other words; both are permissible methods, only one is more easily effective. Any method sincerely and persistently followed can end by bringing the opening. You yourself chose the method of prayer and japa because you believed in that, and I acquiesced because it does prepare something in the consciousness and, if done with persistent faith and bhakti, it can open all the doors. Another method is concentration and aspiration in the heart which opens the inner emotional being. Another is the concentration in the head of which I spoke which opens the inner mind or opens the passage through the Brahmarandhra to the higher consciousness. These things are no fantastic invention of mine which one can dismiss as a new-fangled and untested absurdity; they are recognised methods which have succeeded in thousands of cases and here also there are plenty who have found their effect. But whatever method is used will not bring its effect at once; it must be done persistently, simply, directly till it succeeds. If it is done with a mind of doubt or watching it as an experiment to see if it succeeds or if it is continually crossed by a spirit of hasty despondency saying constantly, "You see it is all useless," then it ought to be obvious that the opening will be

¹ "That is a great secret of sadhana, to know how to get things done by the Power behind or above instead of doing all by the mind's effort." Letters on Yoga — II, volume 29 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 215.

very difficult, because there is that clogging it every time there is a pressure or a push to open. That is why I wanted you to get rid of these two things and have harped on that so much, because I know by my own experience and that of others how strongly they can stand in the way of what you seek. For you are not the only one who have been troubled by these two obstacles; most have had to struggle against them. If one can get rid of them in their central action, the survival of their activity in the circumference does not so much matter; for then the opening becomes possible, both to make and to keep and the rest can follow.

The six years of which you speak have been spent by you mainly in struggling with sex and doubt and vital difficulties — many take more than that time about it. What I have been wanting you to do now is to get the right positive attitude within at the centre free from these things. Its basis must be what I have said, “I want the Divine and the Divine only; since I want and need, I shall surely arrive, however long it takes, and till I do, I shall persist and endure with patience and courage.” I do not mean by that that you should have no activity but prayer and concentration; few can do that; but whatever is done should be done in that spirit.

Freedom from the Past

Do not let the things of the past trouble you. Leave them behind and prepare yourself for a new being.

*

To be no longer bound by the past or by surface formations is always a great step in advance.

*

There is no need to give up entirely what you had in the past. Spiritual truths are not warring enemies — they are parts of a single truth and complete each other. It is only the mind that turns them into disputants and wants one to bar out another. That is

the weakness of making something in the past the standard by which you judge the present — the mind takes advantage of its own limitations to declare that the two are incompatible. But it is not so in reality — between two truths of the Divine there is always a reconciliation when to the limiting mind they seem opposites; as one is realised after the other, their unity appears, it is not necessary to deny the past experience in order to go forward to the new realisation.

This will before long become apparent to you if you do not allow the mind to stand in the way of the heart's permanent opening. Let the doors of the heart swing open freely — allow yourself to enter into the stream without making any mental conditions before you plunge in; the stream itself will carry you to your goal.

*

So long as you have not learned the lesson the past had to teach you, it comes back on you. Notice carefully what kind of remembrances come, you will see that they are connected with some psychological movements in you that have to be got rid of. But you must be prepared to recognise all that was not right in you and is still not corrected, not allow any vanity or self-righteousness to cloud your vision.

*

The past actions do count so long as the man does not change.

*

It is not a question of pardon or punishment. The past can be effaced, but only if it is sincerely rejected from within and repaired and atoned for by a change which gets rid of the movements that caused it. A merely external submission, punishment or pardon are of no use. Otherwise the past prolongs itself into the present and the future. To get rid of the self-justifying mind and the mixture of motives in the vital is what would prevent that and give the psychic being a chance.

*

The past can be abolished — on condition that nothing of it is allowed to continue in the present.

*

You ask how you can repair the wrong you seem to have done. Admitting that it is as you say, it seems to me that the reparation lies precisely in this, in making yourself a vessel for the Divine Truth and the Divine Love. And the first steps towards that are a complete self-consecration and self-purification, a complete opening of oneself to the Divine, rejecting all in oneself that can stand in the way of the fulfilment. In the spiritual life there is no other reparation for any mistake, none that is wholly effective. At the beginning one should not ask for any other fruit or results than this internal growth and change — for otherwise one lays oneself open to severe disappointments. Only when one is free, can one free others and in Yoga it is out of the inner victory that there comes the outer conquest.

The Past and the Future

One cannot go back to the past, one has always to go in the future.

*

The past has not to be kept, — one has to go into the future realisation. All that is necessary in the past for the future will be taken up and given a new form.

*

It is always preferable to have one's face turned towards the future than towards the past.

*

Yes — one should always have one's look turned forwards to the future — retrospection is seldom healthy as it turns one towards a past consciousness.

*

Take with you the peace and quietude and joy and keep it by remembering always the Divine.

If the thoughts about the past and the future come merely as memories and imaginations, they are of no use and you should quietly turn away your mind from them back to the Divine and to the Yoga. If they are anything to the purpose, then refer them to the Divine, put them in the light of the Truth, so that you may have the truth about them or the right decision or formation for the future, if any decision is needed.

There is no harm in the tears of which you speak, — they come from the soul, the psychic being, and are a help and not a hindrance.

Chapter Five

Dealing with Depression and Despondency

Despondency over Difficulties

Mistakes are always possible, so long as any part of the mental (even the subconscious part of it) is not thoroughly transformed. There is no need to be disturbed by that.

*

Whatever you see, don't get disturbed or depressed. If one sees a defect, one must look at it with the utmost quietude and call down more force and light to get rid of it.

*

When some weakness comes up you should take it as an opportunity to know what is still to be done and call down the strength into that part. Despondency is not the right way to meet it.

*

Let the peace and self-giving increase till it takes hold also of the parts in which there are imperfections and gets rid of them. As for the imperfections, it is right not to be troubled by them — only one has to be conscious of them and have the steady and quiet will that they should go.

*

There was no true cause for the trouble. You have allowed it to come into you from outside. There are always forces moving about in the atmosphere trying to disturb the sadhana and the progress. You must be careful not to allow them to invade you with their suggestions whether of depression, despondency, discontent or of anger or desire or of any ego-movement, for it is

these things that they try to raise. When they come, instead of remaining in this way and trying to find an external cause for them, recognise them and reject at once.

*

When a habit of these moods (depression or revolt) has been formed, they cannot be got rid of at once. There are three ways of doing it — (1) to strengthen your own will, so that nothing can come or stay as *it* likes but only as *you* like; (2) to think of something else, plunge the mind in some healthy activity; (3) to turn to the Mother and call in her force. One can do any of these or all, but even in doing them, it will take a little time to get rid of the habit.

*

There are two golden rules. (1) Never be depressed or upset by difficulties or stumbles. (2) Press always quietly forward, then however long it seems to take, always progress will be made and one day you will be surprised to find yourself near the goal. It is like the curves followed by the train in the ascent of the mountain — they circle round but always nearer and nearer to the goal.

*

The experience is correct.¹ Everything is prepared above, then worked out through the inner being till the results are accomplished and perfected in the outer personality. Therefore the sadhak ought not to allow himself to be alarmed, upset or grieved or made despondent by any apparent difficulties of the moment. He must know that all has been prepared above and calmly and confidently watch and assist its working out here.

*

There is no need for sadness. Everyone has his difficulties and

¹ *In this experience the correspondent rose up into the infinite sky and saw the Mother, who, having prepared things on a higher plane, sent down her Force to work out the results on the planes below. — Ed.*

it is a mistake to desire the state of another. One must follow the movement of one's own heart and self and psychic without looking elsewhere.

*

The egoism, desires, faults of the nature are in everybody very much the same. But once one begins to be conscious of them and has the will to be free, then one has only to keep that will and there will be no real danger. For when one begins to be conscious in the way you have begun and something from within raises up all that was hidden, it means that the Mother's grace is on your nature and her force is working and your inner being is aiding the Mother's force to get rid of all these things. So you must not be sorrowful or discouraged or fear anything, but look steadily at all that comes out and have the will that it should go completely and for ever. With the Mother's force working and the psychic being supporting the force, all can be done and all will surely be done. This purification is made just in order that no trouble may occur in the future such as happened to some because they were not purified—in order that the higher consciousness may come into a purified nature and the inner transformation securely take place. Go on therefore with faith and courage putting your reliance on the Mother.

*

These questionings and depressions are very foolish movements of the mind. If you were not open to the Grace, you would not have had these descents or experiences and there would have been no such progress as you have made. You have not to put such questions but to take it as a settled fact, and with full faith in the Mother and her working in you go on with your sadhana. Whatever difficulties there may be, will be solved in time by the natural progress of the sadhana.

*

What you write is no doubt true and it is necessary to see it so as to be able to comprehend and grasp the true attitude necessary

for the sadhana. But, as I have said, one must not be distressed or depressed by perceiving the weaknesses inherent in human nature and the difficulty of getting them out. The difficulty is natural, for they have been there for thousands of lives and are the very nature of man's vital and mental ignorance. It is not surprising that they should have a power to stick and take time to disappear. But there is a true being and a true consciousness that is there in us hidden by these surface formations of nature and which can shake them off once it emerges. By taking the right attitude of selfless devotion within and persisting in it in spite of the surface nature's troublesome self-repetitions one enables this inner being and consciousness to emerge and with the Mother's Force working in it deliver the being from all return of the movements of the old nature.

*

Why do you indulge in these exaggerated feelings of remorse and despair when these things come up from the subconscious? They do not help and make it more, not less difficult to eliminate what comes. Such returns of an old nature that is long expelled from the conscious parts of the being always happen in sadhana. It does not at all mean that the nature is unchangeable. Try to recover the inner quietude, draw back from these movements and look at them calmly, reducing them to their true proportions. Your true nature is that in which you have peace and ananda and the love of the Divine. This other is only a fringe of the outer personality which in spite of these returns is destined to drop away as the true being extends and increases.

*

To be miserable may remind you of the defects of your external nature, but I do not see how it is going to cure them. I am not asking you to be frivolously happy, but to be quiet and quietly confident, rejecting these old movements, but for the rest trusting not in a restless self-torturing personal effort but to the Divine Force to change the external nature.

*

As to your going away for a time in order to get rid of your difficulty with X, a difficulty can never be overcome by your running away from it. And if you cannot overcome it with the direct and immediate help we can give you and have always been giving you and the support of our presence, I do not see how you are going to do it at a distance and without our immediate help and presence.

It seems to me that all this comes from your having taken a wrong way with yourself in meeting the consequences of your stumble. It is not by tormenting yourself with remorse and harassing thoughts and sleepless nights that you can overcome. It is by looking straight at yourself, very quietly, with a quiet and firm resolution and then going on cheerfully and bravely in full confidence and reliance, trusting in the grace, serenely and vigilantly, anchoring yourself on your psychic being, calling down more and more of the love and Ananda, turning more and more exclusively to the Mother. That is the true way — and there is no other.

*

There is no reason to be so much cut down or despair of your progress. Evidently you have had a surging up of the old movements, but that can always happen so long as there is not an entire change of the old nature both in the conscious and subconscious parts. Something came up that made you get out of poise and stray into a past round of feelings. The one thing to do is to quiet yourself and get back into the true consciousness and poise. Always keep within and do things without involving yourself in them, then nothing adverse will happen or, if it does, no serious reaction will come.

The idea of leaving for any reason is of course absurd and out of the question. Eight years is a very short time for transformation. Most people spend as much as that or more to get conscious of their defects and acquire the serious will to change — and after that it takes a long time to get the will turned into full and final accomplishment. Each time one stumbles, one has to get back onto the right footing and go on with fresh resolution; by doing that the full change comes.

Dwelling on One's Weaknesses or Difficulties

Of course it is necessary to see one's own weaknesses, but it is not good to dwell too much upon them, — it only brings sadness and restlessness and despondency. Fix your mind rather on what you want to be, for that concentration brings the power to become it — it is the best way also to get rid of the defects and weaknesses; for it is when something strong and positive fills the nature that it changes and its defects begin to disappear.

*

Mistakes of action and thought and feeling naturally bring these outward reactions [*of regret and sorrow*]; they are an obstinate part of human nature, but one has to outgrow them steadily. If they recur, one must not get upset and brood over them; the aim must be to keep quiet and recover as quickly as possible — so that the Force can at once resume its work and not be held suspended by the mind's preoccupation with mistakes and stumbles.

*

Difficulties and perplexities can never be got rid of by the mind brooding on them and trying in that way to get out of them; this habit of the mind only makes them recur without a solution and keeps up by brooding the persistent tangle. It is from something above and outside the perplexities that the solution must come. The difficulty of the physical mind — not the true thinking intelligence — is that it does not want to believe in this larger consciousness outside itself because it is not aware of it; and it remains shut like a box in itself, not admitting the light that is all round it and pressing to get in. It is a subtle law of the action of consciousness that if you stress difficulties — you have to observe them, of course, but not stress them, they will quite sufficiently do that for themselves — the difficulties tend to stick or even increase; on the contrary, if you put your whole stress on faith and aspiration and concentrate steadily on what you aspire to, that will sooner or later tend towards realisation. It is this change of stress, a change in the poise and attitude of

the mind, that will be the more helpful process.

As for details, the method of the mind concentrating on details and trying to put them right is a slow and tardy one; it has to be done, but as a subordinate process, not the chief one. If it succeeds at all, it is because after some period of struggle and stress, something is released and there is an opening and the larger consciousness of which I speak gets through and produces some general result. But the progress is much more rapid if one can make the opening the main thing and keep the dealing with details as something resultant and subordinate. When there is this opening, some essential (therefore general) progress can be made and, as you yourself say, “express and translate itself into details”. The mind is always trying to handle details and construct out of them some general result; but what is above mind and even the best powers of the higher ranges of mind tend rather to bring about some *essential* change and make it or let it express itself, translate itself in the necessary details.

I may add, however, that one can feel the essential change without its expressing itself in details; e.g., one can feel a wide silent peace or a state of freedom and joy and rest silent and secure in it without needing to translate it into sundry details in order to feel the progress made.

It is not a theory but a constant experience and very tangible when it comes that there is above us, above the consciousness in the physical body, a great supporting extension as it were of peace, light, power, joy — that we can become aware of it, and bring it down into the physical consciousness and that that, at first for a time, afterwards more frequently and for a longer time, in the end for good, can remain and change the whole basis of our daily consciousness. Even before we are aware of it above, we can suddenly feel it coming down and entering into us. The need is to have an aspiration towards it, make the mind quiet so that what we call the opening is rendered possible. A quieted mind (not necessarily motionless or silent, though it is good if one can have that at will) and a persistent aspiration in the heart are the two main keys of the Yoga. Activity of the mind is a much slower process and does not by

itself lead to these decisive results. It is the difference between a straight road and an approach through constant circles, spirals or meanders.

*

In your dealing with your difficulties and the wrong movements that assail you, you are probably making the mistake of identifying yourself with them too much and regarding them as part of your own nature. You should rather draw back from them, detach and dissociate yourself from them, regard them as movements of the universal lower imperfect and impure nature, forces that enter into you and try to make you their instrument for their self-expression. By so detaching and dissociating yourself it will be more possible for you to discover and to live more and more in a part of yourself, your inner or your psychic being, which is not attacked or troubled by these movements, finds them foreign to itself and automatically refuses assent to them and feels itself always turned to or in contact with the Divine Forces and the higher planes of consciousness. Find that part of your being and live in it; to be able to do so is the true foundation of the Yoga.

By so standing back it will be easier also for you to find a quiet poise in yourself, behind the surface struggle, from which you can more effectively call in our help to deliver you. The Divine presence, calm, peace, purity, force, light, joy, wideness are above, waiting to descend in you. Find this quietude behind and your mind also will become quieter and through the quiet mind you can call down the descent first of the purity and peace and then of the Divine Force. If you can feel this peace and purity descending into you, you can then call it down again and again till it begins to settle; you will feel too the Force working in you to change the movements and transform the consciousness. In this working you will be aware of the presence and power of the Mother. Once that is done, all the rest will be a question of time and of the progressive evolution in you of your true and divine nature.

*

The statement² is a general one and like all general statements subject to qualification according to circumstances. What I meant was to discourage what some do which is to be always dwelling on their difficulties and shortcomings only, for that makes them turn for ever like squirrels in a cage always in the same circle of difficulties without the least breaking of light through the clouds. The sentence would be more accurate or generally applicable if it were written “dwell too much” or “dwell solely”. Naturally, without rejection nothing can be done. And in hard periods or moments concentration on the difficulties is inevitable. Also in the early stages one has often to do a great amount of clearance work so that the road can be followed at all.

*

It [*the descent of the sadhana from the mind into the vital*] came by being preoccupied too much with the difficulties of the nature. It is always better to dwell on the good side of things in yourself—I do not mean in an egoistic way, but with faith and cheerful confidence, calling down the positive experience of which the nature is already capable so that a constant positive growth can help in the rejection of all that has to be rejected. But in fact one gets often projected into the vital difficulties at an early stage and then instead of going from the mind into the psychic (through the heart) one has to go through the disturbed vital.

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It [*retracing one's steps from the vital into the psychic*] can be done, if you refuse to be preoccupied with the idea of your difficulties and concentrate on really helpful and positive things. Be more cheerful and confident. Sex and Doubt and Co. are there,

² A statement of Sri Aurobindo which the correspondent wrongly quoted as follows: “It is a mistake to dwell on the lower nature and its obstacles, which is the negative side of the Sadhana. . . . The positive side of experience of the descent is the more important thing.” In transcribing this statement, the correspondent left out two words: Sri Aurobindo wrote “dwell too much”, not simply “dwell”. — Ed.

no doubt, but the Divine is there also inside you. Open your eyes and look and look till the veil is rent and you see Him or Her!

*

You are not asked to do anything that you are incapable of; it is something that you have done already and of which, therefore, you are capable—you are not asked to change your nature by your own effort but only to stand back from these ideas and thoughts, refuse to indulge them and remain quiet within and allow the Force you have repeatedly felt to change you. To repeat constantly, “I am weak, I am unfit, I am bad” will lead you nowhere.

Raising Up Difficulties

As to the obstacles, you should not do anything to call them up or increase their intensity or take pleasure in them. If they come of themselves, you have to surrender your being to the Mother and call in the Light and the psychic being to remove them.

*

The method you speak of is, I understand, that of raising up the difficulties in order to know and exhaust or destroy them. It is inevitable once one enters into Yoga that the difficulties should rise up and they go on rising up so long as anything of them is left in the system at all. It may be thought then that it is better to raise them oneself in a mass so as to get the thing done once for all. But though this may succeed in some cases, it is not even in the mental and vital a safe or certain method. Exhaustion, of course, is impossible; the things that create the difficulties are cosmic forces, forces of the cosmic Ignorance, and cannot be exhausted. People talk of their getting exhausted because after a time they lose strength and dwindle, but that is only by force of the constant rejection by the Purusha and by force of a divine intervention aiding this rejection and dissolving or destroying the difficulty each time it shows its face. Even so, the idea of getting rid of difficulties in a lump seldom works; something remains

and returns until suddenly there comes a divine intervention which is final or else a change of consciousness which makes the return of the difficulty impossible. Still, in the mental and vital it can be done.

In the physical it is much more dangerous, because here it is the physical adhar itself that is attacked and a too great mass of physical difficulties may destroy or disable or permanently injure. The only thing to do here is to get the physical consciousness (down to the most material parts) open to the Power, then to make it accustomed to respond and obey and to each physical difficulty as it arises, apply or call in the divine Power to throw out the attacking force. The physical nature is a thing of habits; it is out of habit that it responds to the forces of illness; one has to get into it the contrary habit of responding to the Divine Force only. This of course so long as a highest consciousness does not descend to which illness is impossible.

*

It is the old habit of the outer consciousness from which it refuses to be delivered. Until this will to repeat the old movements is thrown away, the Force works but under difficulties and behind instead of taking up the frontal consciousness as it would if the assent of the external nature were there. There is also the old persistent habit of raising up and stressing the difficulties instead of rejecting them—the wrong idea that accepting, approving and insisting on their presence is the only way of getting rid of them. I have told you that that is not the way and only prolongs the struggle.

Struggling with Difficulties

There can be no doubt that you can go through—everyone has these struggles; what is needed to pass through is sincerity and perseverance.

There is no use in inviting these struggles, as many do, or even in accepting them when they come for the sake of fighting them out, for they always repeat themselves. When they cannot

be avoided then they must be faced — one cannot be altogether without them, especially in the earlier part of the Yoga; but if you can quietly evade them, that is already an advance. To become quiet and quietly to call back the true psychic state until it becomes normal and either eliminates or minimises the struggle, that is the best way to progress.

*

It is better [*in dealing with the hostile forces*] to proceed by a quiet rejection and growth in consciousness — and not invite battle — though, if a struggle is forced on you, you must meet it with calm and courage.

*

No objection — it is a very good thing to keep working in the higher consciousness. It is more effective than struggling all the time down below with the lower forces.

*

There is no objection to doing the sadhana, but it must be done quietly without this constant struggle and disquietude — not minding if it takes time, not getting into a constant rhythm of struggling against difficulties. That is my point.

*

One must get a knack of remaining quiet and bringing into the quietude the play of the Presence, Force, Light, etc. which is the action of the Sadhana. A struggling effort brings only a minimum result at the price of much confusion and disorder.

*

From your last letter it is clear that it is not your own will that pushes you to go but something that has taken hold of your mind, a clutch of some Force which is using old movements of the outward mind and vital to drive the action. All the more reason to reject this action as contrary to the soul's and heart's true feeling. The pride that says, "I am one of those who can

break but will not bend”, is a poor thing and conceals the fact that one is bending before forces and impulses that are ignorant and obscure. Its result is, as you yourself have seen at the end of your letter, that one bends to the lower forces of nature but refuses to bend to the Divine.

If sadhana is a struggle between the higher will and the old forces of nature bringing suffering and inner torment, we do not want you to do that kind of sadhana. That is not the spirit of our Yoga. What we want you to do is to recover your quietude and go on in that. To have the basis of quietude and allow the Divine Force to work in you firmly and quietly is always the best method — it is not necessary to proceed through a big personal effort, disturbance and struggle. Come back to this — open yourself once more, as you did before — then you could get back sleep or health in a day or two and were growing inwardly without excessive trouble — and let the Mother’s Power and Grace lead you.

I shall do all to help you and pull you out, but that which has closed itself in you must open for the help to work quickly as it did before. Otherwise too it can pull you out, but if there is this strong obstruction that has to be undone, time is needed. A central change of attitude in your mind would, I believe, make all the difference — it has done so before.

*

He can continue his endeavour and let us know if there is any result. The difficulties that have risen in him are quite normal and a natural reaction to the effort he is making. It is usual for these resistances to rise up, for they have to manifest themselves in order that they may be dealt with and thrown out. If he perseveres, that should happen sooner or later. But it is best not to struggle with the resistances but to stand back from them, observe as a witness, reject these movements and call on the Divine Power to remove them. Surrender of the nature is not an easy thing and may take a long time; surrender of the self, if one can do it, is easier and once that is done, that of the nature will come about sooner or later. But for that it is necessary to detach oneself from the action of the Prakriti and see oneself as separate.

That is why I asked whether he had any (major) realisation from his previous sadhana. To observe the movements as a witness without being discouraged or disturbed is the best way to effect the necessary detachment and separation. This also would help to increase the receptivity to any aid that may be given to him and to bring about the reliance, *nirbhara*.

If he turns to us, we will of course give him whatever help he can just now consciously or subconsciously receive.

The Absurdity of Suicide

Suicide is an absurd solution; he is quite mistaken in thinking that it will give him peace. He will only carry his difficulties with him, enter into a more miserable condition of existence beyond and bring them back to another life on earth. The only remedy is to shake off these morbid ideas and face life with a clear will for some definite work to be done as the life's aim and with a quiet and active courage.

*

That is absurd! Dropping the body because of a difficulty does not enable one to come back with a better body. One comes back with the same difficulty to solve.

People do not come here in order to throw off the body. If everybody here dropped his body because of acute difficulties, three quarters of the Asram would be dead by this time.

*

That is not right. Throwing away the life does not improve the chances for the next time. It is in this life and body that one must get things done.

*

Sadhana has to be done in the body, it cannot be done by the soul without the body. When the body drops, the soul goes wandering in other worlds — and finally it comes back to another life and another body. Then all the difficulties it had not solved meet it

again in the new life. So what is the use of leaving the body?

Moreover if one throws away the body wilfully, one suffers much in the other worlds, and when one is born again, it is in worse, not in better conditions.

The only sensible thing is to face the difficulties in this life and this body and conquer them.

*

Death is not a way to succeed in sadhana. If you die in that way [*suicide*], you will only have the same difficulties again with probably less favourable circumstances.

The way to succeed in sadhana is to refuse to be discouraged, to aspire simply and sincerely so that the Mother's force may work in you and bring down what is above. No man ever succeeded in this sadhana by his own merit. To become open and plastic to the Mother is the one thing needed.

*

Despair is absurd and talking of suicide quite out of place. However a man may stumble, the Divine Grace will be there so long as he aspires for it and in the end lead him through.

*

If she remains firm and calm and keeps an unshaken faith in the Divine Power, that will carry her through every trial. Suicide is no solution; it only injures the life of the soul and the problems and difficulties one tries to evade by it seize one again in another form in another life.

*

It [*an impulse to commit suicide*] can come from two sources. (1) An old impression in the subconscious, usually from a past suicide in the family or surroundings. (2) An invasion from one of those around you. Many sadhaks have this suggestion and in some it takes the form of a periodic attack. One must never allow the suggestion to stick or in the least entertain it, otherwise it may fasten in the subconscious and give trouble.

*

It [*the thought of committing suicide*] seems to me an excessive reaction considering that all that is in question is some habitual movements of the external being which do not affect the inner realisation. These external habits have to be changed, but you can do it quietly without allowing their presence to throw you into despondency and despair. It is best done by detaching yourself from them and calling in the Mother's Force to act there and spread the deeper realisation into the outward parts. Your reasoning about violently getting rid of the body in order to get a better one hereafter is entirely wrong. For when one throws away the present life in that way instead of facing its difficulties one not only gets into blacker difficulties after death but in the next life all becomes not better but worse — an inferior embodiment with all the former difficulty from which you fled renewed with less favourable circumstances. There is no way out there. Instead of indulging such feelings, you should put them away from you and turn to the Mother's Grace which has not failed and which is not going to fail you for strength and succour. Recover your balance and develop the psychic progress you were already making so rapidly up to now.

*

Suicide is the worst way that anyone could take to get out of a spiritual difficulty. It only increases and prolongs the difficulty; for it continues it after death, the struggle, the suffering in an exaggerated form and it has to be faced again in another life. The dissolution of the physical elements into Nature would leave the mind and vital as they are, with all their problems present and unsolved. Surely you are not so ignorant as to think that you will cease to be merely by leaving the body?

When the Mother said that by doing that you would bring trouble to the Asram, it is not merely the entry of the police into the Asram, the inquiry and the immediate local scandal that she meant. It would bring a general discredit on the Asram, the Yoga, myself and my work, arm all the numerous enemies here and outside against me, shake the whole Asram and create a terrible example and perhaps make the fulfilment of my work impossible

for some years together. Nothing written by you could prevent that from happening — for it would be the natural, logical and inevitable result and it is what the hostile Influences intend when they put this suggestion into your mind or the mind of others. I write plainly because you must realise what would be the natural consequences of doing what is suggested to you by these Powers in your fits of irrational despair.

In view of what it would mean for yourself and for me and the Divine Work, I ask you to give me your promise never again to yield to this suggestion or contemplate seriously its fulfilment.

I have promised you that, if you keep on, the transformation shall take place and it is not an idle promise that I have made. If once you threw off this Influence, the one that gives you fits like this, the transformation would not only be certain but swift and easy. But in any case, if you keep on aspiring for transformation and not for escape, as you wrote today, the transformation is bound to come.

P. S. I have written in the last paragraph above what I wanted to say in brief. I ask you to react more decisively against the old influence of vital darkness and confusion — to decide firmly not to let it prevail ever again to this extent. It is not even transformation, but a chance that is needed for the true being that is in you, the being of love and radiance and harmony to come out from the clouds in a lasting way. Once it can do that, all trouble would be over.

*

I must remind you of your promise not to yield to sorrow and despair and to face your difficulties with fortitude and patience. Suicide is not only a weak and unmanly evasion, but it is worse than useless since the same misery continues after death intensified in the consciousness which can think of nothing else and one has to come back to earth and face the same difficulties under worse conditions. The Gita has never said that suicide can under any circumstances lead to Nirvana; the death spoken of is a natural or a Yogic death with the mind concentrated with faith and absorption in the Divine. I am sure that Ramakrishna

also never meant such a thing as that anyone dying under any circumstances would have his last wish satisfied. There is no escape by that kind of exit. I do not know either how you can say that you love me and at the same time deliberately decide to deal such a blow to me as your suicide would be. I do not speak of X and others to whom you have still some obligations and what it would mean for them. It is also strange that you should think I could be willing to receive your property or any money offered at such a price or ask Y to aid in such an arrangement. You must have been very much clouded by your fit of despair not to see that. All that apart, I must press on you not to allow these dark attacks with their morbid suggestions to carry you away. If you have the true yearning for the Divine, as you have undoubtedly in your soul, it is not by yielding to vital weakness that you will show it but by persisting, whatever the time and the difficulties, till it is achieved. You have promised to do that and I again recall you to your promise. Nirvana itself cannot be so achieved, but only by rising above all other desires and attachments until one has the supreme liberation and peace. Ramana Maharshi himself would tell you that and I suppose you can believe him if you cannot believe me.

It is difficult for me to say anything else since you have told me that no words of mine have any truth or value and that all my experiences also are subjective delusions without any truth or value. I suppose all spiritual or inner experiences can be denounced as merely subjective and delusive. But to the spiritual seeker even the smallest inner experience is a thing of value. I stand for the Truth I hold in me and I would still stand for it even if it had no chance whatever of outward fulfilment in this life. I should go on with it even if all here abandoned and repudiated me and denounced it to the world as a delusion and a folly. I have never disguised from myself the difficulties of what I have undertaken, it is not difficulties or the threat of failure that can deter me.

I hope however that you will get over this attack and see things one day as all the past seekers of the Divine have seen it, viz. that what one seeks is so precious and such a supreme thing

that a whole lifetime of effort however arduous or painful is not by any means too much to give to it. I say nothing else since you say that words of encouragement from me can have no value for you. But this at least is a thing that is true and that others whose spiritual experience and greatness cannot be disputed would tell you.

If you have the love for me you speak of — I will say nothing of mine for you, since you do not seem to believe much in it — you will listen to what I say and renew and carry out your promise to go through with your quest to the end with patience and courage.

*

To characterise suicide as a willed withdrawal from life is the most astounding statement that would not bear a moment's scrutiny. Suicide is accompanied in most cases by a morbid feeling of disappointment with life, a violent revolt against what is considered the imposition of an unjust providence or an adverse malignant fate. It has nothing of the sense of freedom behind it, no knowledge of the play of forces behind the exterior life, no means of mastering them or using them as stepping-stones to a higher freedom, a greater destiny. The calm poise of the soul, the peace that surpasseth understanding are not his. He is moved by dark forces who hold him completely in their grip. The sense of freedom of which he vaunts is the conjuring trick of the black magician by which he is deluded and dragged to a greater degradation. That is why it is said in the Upanishads that those who slay themselves enter into blind worlds of darkness. A violent exit by suicide is an act of excessive egoism, not of freedom.

The true freedom is found in unity with God and in the abiding sense of immortality, when the soul has risen above the bondage of his lower nature, and from the spirit heights of his being can survey his actions seated in a calm, untouched, unmoved by happenings in Time.

*

Suicide is never the right thing to do, but its psychic consequences can be mitigated by the spirit in which it is done or if some feeling of sacrifice or self-offering enters into it as in the case of the Sati. It is always possible to help departed souls in their passage if one has the necessary psychic feeling towards them and the psychic force to make it effective. Contact can also be maintained so long as this passage does not carry them beyond the borders of the communication possible or into the region of psychic sleep or trance in which they remain within themselves and prepare their new birth in future.

The experiences related are of a high character and show an advanced state of the consciousness. The overhead station especially is not common and is usually attained only after a considerable psychic and spiritual growth. It is always possible indeed to ascend and descend in the consciousness reaching very high in planes above the head but usually one does not stay there.

There are always two things possible for the spiritual seeker, remain among others and then they can act, as she puts it, as a ferment, the other to congregate together and even to form a separate body for a common sadhana or for a common work or both as in this Ashram. Which is to be done depends on the urge of the spirit within or on a call from above.

*

Well, that [*the quietude of death*] is not the right kind of quietude. The peace of Nirvana would have some meaning in it, but death into the quietness of exhausted Prakriti is no release at all.

*

The real rest³ is in the inner life founded in peace and silence and absence of desire. There is no other rest — for without that the machine goes on whether one is interested in it or not. The inner mukti is the only remedy.

³ *The correspondent expressed a desire for “the long rest that is one’s due after death”.*
—Ed.

Section Three

The Opposition of the Hostile Forces

Chapter One

The Hostile Forces and the Difficulties of Yoga

The Existence of the Hostile Forces

Whenever anything has to be done, there are always forces that want to interfere. I suppose they want to show that smooth walking and the “wide unbarred and thornless path” belong only to the Vedic Ritam satyam brihat and we must get up there — if we can.

*

What occult secret? It is a fact always known to all Yogis and occultists since the beginning of time, in Europe and Africa as in India, that wherever Yoga or Yajna is done, there the hostile forces gather together to stop it by any means. It is known that there is a lower nature and a higher spiritual nature — it is known that they pull different ways and the lower is strongest at first and the higher afterwards. It is known that the hostile forces take advantage of the movements of the lower nature and try to spoil through them, smash or retard the siddhi. It has been said as long ago as the Upanishads, “Hard is this path to tread, sharp like a razor’s edge”; it was said later by Christ, “Hard is the way and narrow the gate by which one enters into the kingdom of heaven” and also “Many are called, few chosen” — because of these difficulties. But it has also always been known that those who are sincere and faithful in heart and remain so and those who rely on the Divine will arrive in spite of all difficulties, stumbles or falls.

*

Yes, certainly [*there are hostile forces active in the outside world*]. Men are being constantly invaded by the hostiles and

there are great numbers of men who are partly or entirely under their influence. Some are possessed by them, others (a few) are incarnations of hostile beings. At the present moment they are very active all over the earth. Of course in the outside world there is no consciousness such as is developed in Yoga, by which they can either become aware of or consciously repel the attacks — the struggle in them between the psychic and the hostile force goes on mostly behind the veil or so far as it is on the surface is not understood by the mind.

*

Yes, of course, there is always a fight between the forces of Light and Darkness.

In sadhana it becomes concentrated and conscious to us.

As for the hostile beings, they are always in battle with each other; but they make common cause against the Truth and Light.

The Function of the Hostile Forces

The hostile forces have a certain self-chosen function: it is to test the condition of the individual, of the work, of the earth itself and their readiness for the spiritual descent and fulfilment. At every step of the journey, they are there attacking furiously, criticising, suggesting, imposing despondency or inciting to revolt, raising unbelief, amassing difficulties. No doubt, they put a very exaggerated interpretation on the rights given them by their function, making mountains even out of what seems to us a mole-hill. A little trifling false step or mistake and they appear on the road and clap a whole Himalaya as a barrier across it. But this opposition has been permitted from of old not merely as a test or ordeal, but as a compulsion on us to seek a greater strength, a more perfect self-knowledge, an intenser purity and force of aspiration, a faith that nothing can crush, a more powerful descent of the Divine Grace.

*

The purpose they [*the hostile forces*] serve *in the world* is to

give a full chance to the possibilities of the Inconscience and Ignorance — for this world was meant to be a working out of these possibilities with the supramental harmonisation as its eventual outcome. The life, the work developing here in the Asram has to deal with the world problem and had therefore to meet, it could not avoid, the conflict with the working of the hostile Powers in the human being.

*

The hostile forces make it their function to attack and disturb the sadhaks, but if there were no wrong movement and no imperfection and weakness, they would not be disturbed.

*

It happens so with everybody [*that the external nature responds to lower vibrations*] so long as there is not the positive siddhi of transformation by which it becomes contrary to the very nature of the instrument to respond to these vibrations — because they have become foreign to it. Till then all depends on the vigilance of the consciousness and its will. The repetition of the response does not increase the difficulty — it only retards the clearing out of the invading forces.

*

Whatever point the adverse forces choose for attack, however small it may seem to the external human mind, becomes a crucial point and to yield it up may be to yield to them one of the keys of the fortress. Even if it is a small postern door, it is enough for them if they can enter.

Nothing is really small and unimportant in the Great Path. Especially when the struggle has come down to the physical level, these distinctions cease to have any value; for there “small” things have a not easily calculable index value and are of great importance. On that level to lose a small post may be to make certain the loss of the big battle.

All have had to pass through the ordeal and test through which you are passing. We would have avoided it for you if

it had been possible, but since it has come we look to you to persist and conquer. Patience, quiet endurance, calm resolution to go through to the end and triumph, these are the qualities now required of you — the less spectacular but more substantial of the warrior virtues.

Also perspicacity and vigilance. Do not shut your eyes to the difficulty in you or turn away from it, but also let it not discourage you. Victory is certain if we persevere and what price of difficulty and endeavour can be too great for such a conquest?

*

Hostile forces attack every sadhak; some are conscious, others are not. Their object is either to influence the person or to use him or to spoil the sadhana or the work or any other motive of the kind. Their object is not to test — but their attack may be used by the guiding Power as a test.

*

Your description [*of recent tests in sadhana*] is too vague. From what you write it may just as well be the reaction that frequently follows an experience; the adverse Force coming in with a contrary movement. Tests come sometimes from the hostile forces, sometimes in the course of Nature. I suppose they must be necessary, since they always come in sadhana.

*

The method of the Divine Manifestation is through calm and harmony, not through a catastrophic upheaval. The latter is the sign of a struggle, generally of conflicting vital forces, but at any rate a struggle on the inferior plane.

You think too much of adverse forces. That kind of preoccupation causes much unnecessary struggle. Fix your mind on the positive side — open to the Mother's power, concentrate on her protection, call for light, calm and peace and purity and growth into the divine consciousness and knowledge.

This idea of tests also is not a healthy idea and ought not

to be pushed too far. Tests are applied not by the Divine but by the forces of the lower planes — mental, vital, physical — and allowed by the Divine because that is part of the soul's training and helps it to know itself, its powers and the limitations it has to outgrow. The Mother is not testing you at every moment, but rather helping you at every moment to rise beyond the necessity of tests and difficulties which belong to the inferior consciousness. To be always conscious of that help will be your best safeguard against all attacks whether of adverse powers or of your own lower nature.

Testing Oneself against the Hostile Forces

If one knows how to profit by experience, even the Hostile Forces and their attacks can be useful — although of course that does not mean that the attacks should be invited. What they do is to press with all their force upon some weak point of our nature and if we are vigilant, we can see and throw away that weakness. Only the attack method of these Forces is too violent and upheaving and endangers the good things in one also, faith and peace etc. — so one has to be careful to keep these against all attacks.

*

There is no use of testing [*one's capacity*] at all — whatever test is needed, comes of itself in the ordinary way in the very use of the capacity and in the very steps of the progress — no other is needed. Beyond that the tests that come are from the hostile forces — but their way of testing is to take advantage of any point of weakness and push with all their force at that point to break down the sadhana or else to hurl all the adverse forces on the consciousness while it is still in process of transition and not yet mature so as to shatter all that has been done. It is not a true test but mere destruction replacing the constructive method. By unnecessary “testing” one dangerously invites this hostile pressure and raises up things which one has to banish. To be conscious is necessary, but quiet self-examination is sufficient

for that — raising up difficulties under plan of testing is quite the wrong method.

The Divine Force and the Adverse Force

Do you not know the story of the Elephant Brahman? All is Brahman, but in action you have to treat the elephant as the Elephant Brahman and the Asura as the Asura Brahman and neither as merely Brahman pure and simple. One has either to avoid the Rakshasa or overcome him; otherwise the Rakshasa may eat up the man, all Brahman though both be. The Brahman realisation is an inner static realisation, until one has become the dynamic instrument of the Divine Consciousness and Force — then the problem of the elephant and the Rakshasa won't arise, for the Divine Consciousness will know and the Divine Force will execute what is to be done in each case. There is no need to have *vaira* inside, but to be friendly with the Rakshasa is not prudent, as the Rakshasa is impervious to that kind of thing — he will take advantage of it to farther his own purpose.

*

Your description of the “Golden One” was the description of an Asura — how can that be the Divine? — “efficiently cruel” etc. etc. And, taken in that way, submission to such a Power so conceived would justify a yielding to anything coming with sufficient force from the lower Nature on the ground that it is *He* who is making you do it.

There is a right and discriminating use of the Vedantic Knowledge that all is One and there is a wrong and indiscriminating use. The latter is more dangerous than complete ignorance. Especially at this moment sadhaks must be on their guard against the subtle intrusion of this error (the indiscriminating acceptance of all as coming from the Divine) — for more than one has fallen a victim to it and got badly hurt.

*

Your statement about the Shakti. The mere intensity of the force

does not show that it is a bad power; the Divine Force often works with a great intensity. Everything depends on the nature of the force and its working; what does it do, what seems to be its purpose? If it works to purify or open the system, or brings with it light or peace or prepares the change of the thoughts, ideas, feelings, character in the sense of a turning towards a higher consciousness, then it is the right force. If it is dark or obscure, or perturbs the being with rajasic or egoistic suggestions or excites the lower nature, then it is an adverse Force.

The Forces of the Lower Nature and the Hostile Forces

There are [*at work in the world*] the higher forces of the Divine Nature — the forces of Light, Truth, divine Power, Peace, Ananda — there are the forces of the lower nature which belong either to a lower truth or to ignorance and error — there are also the hostile forces whose whole aim is to maintain the reign of Darkness, Falsehood, Death and Suffering as the law of life.

*

The lower nature is ignorant and undivine, not in itself hostile but shut to the Light and Truth. The hostile forces are anti-divine, not merely undivine; they make use of the lower nature, pervert it, fill it with distorted movements and by that means influence man and even try to enter and possess or at least entirely control him.

Free yourself from all exaggerated self-depreciation and the habit of getting depressed by the sense of sin, difficulty or failure. These feelings do not really help, on the contrary, they are an immense obstacle and hamper the progress. They belong to the religious, not to the Yogic mentality. The Yogin should look on all the defects of the nature as movements of the lower prakriti common to all and reject them calmly, firmly and persistently with full confidence in the Divine Power — without weakness or depression or negligence and without excitement, impatience or violence.

*

No, [*the vital ego is*] certainly not [*a hostile power*] — it is part of the ordinary human nature, everybody has it. It has to be purified and transformed, the ego being replaced by the true vital being of which it is a distorted shadow. The forces of the lower nature are often rebellious and resist transformation out of attachment to the familiar movements of the Ignorance, desire, vanity, pride, lust, self-will etc., but they are not in their nature hostile. The hostile Forces are those whose very *raison d'être* is revolt against the Divine, against the Light and Truth and enmity to the Divine Work.

*

Normal human defects are one thing — they are the working of the lower nature of the Ignorance. The action of the hostile forces is a special intervention creating violent inner conflicts, abnormal depressions, thoughts and impulses of a kind which can be easily recognised as suggestions, e.g. leaving the Asram, abandoning the Yoga, revolt against the Divine, suggestions of calamity and catastrophe apparently irresistible, irrational impulses and so on. It is a different order from the usual human weaknesses.

*

The defects of the nature are nothing, they can be dealt with progressively. It is these outward attacks, these suggestions and throwing in of wrong forces to which the sadhak must shut himself altogether.

*

To have weaknesses of the lower nature is one thing — to call in the hostile forces is quite another. Whoever does the latter, takes his risk. He is going towards the opposite camp — for the marks of the hostile Force are contempt of the Divine, revolt and hatred against the Mother, disbelief in the Yoga, assertion of ego against the Divine Being, preference of falsehood to Truth, seeking after false gods and rejection of the Eternal.

*

There are some who are never touched by the hostile forces.

The normal resistance of the lower Nature in human beings and the action of the Hostiles are two quite different things. The former is natural and occurs in everybody; the latter is an intervention from the non-human world. But this intervention can come in two forms. (1) They use and press on the lower Nature forces making them resist where they would otherwise be quiescent, making the resistance strong or violent where it would be otherwise slight or moderate, exaggerating its violence when it is violent. There is besides a malignant cleverness, a conscious plan and combination when the Hostiles act on these forces which is not evident in the normal resistance of the forces. (2) They sometimes invade with their own forces. When this happens there is often a temporary possession or at least an irresistible influence which makes the thoughts, feelings, actions of the person abnormal — a black clouding of the brain, a whirl in the vital, all acts as if the person could not help himself and were driven by an overmastering force. On the other hand instead of a possession there may be only a strong influence; there the symptoms are less marked, but it is easy for anyone acquainted with the ways of these forces to see what has happened. Finally it may be only an attack, not possession or influence; the person then is separate, is not overcome, resists.

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It is difficult to observe the difference between the action of the hostile Force and the pressure of the lower Nature because it is the latter that the Force takes hold of for its purpose. But there is in the Force a suggestive character, a conscious arrangement of the attack so as to upset or destroy the sadhana which there is not in the ordinary movement of the lower Nature — for that only comes to satisfy itself and then ceases. In your case the tactical use of a suggestion, the sudden rush clouding the knowledge, the rhythmic character of the periodic return, the attempt to bring despondency and hopelessness and push to departure — all these are clear signs of the hostile attack. People like X and Y who are moving forward in a leisurely way, are not usually subjected

to the hostile pressure. One with an intense and sensitive vital nature is more open; also those who have some vital proclivity in a very developed or exaggerated form e.g. pride, ambition, jealousy, sexuality etc. A complete surrender from the beginning does protect — suggestions may come, but they have no power to develop into a crisis.

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There is a natural movement of the ordinary human nature in the material consciousness which takes time to get rid of. Of course we call them forces of the lower nature but one must not regard them as hostile, but only ordinary. They have to be changed but it usually takes time and it can be done quietly. One must be more occupied with the positive side of the sadhana than with them. If one is always thinking of them as hostile things, getting disturbed when they come, considering as hostile possessions, then it is not good.

The things that are really hostile are few and must be distinguished from the ordinary movements of the nature. The first must be repelled, the second dealt with quietly and without getting troubled or discouraged by their appearance.

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They [*certain lower forces*] are not hostile forces, they are simply the forces of the ordinary Nature. The hostile forces are those which try to pervert everything and are in revolt against the Divine and opposed to the Yoga.

*

The forces of the Ignorance are a perversion of the earth-nature and the adverse Powers make use of them. They do not give up their control of men without a struggle.

*

There is a pressure on the forces of the lower nature to change — through that the pressure is felt by the hostiles; but whether they change or are destroyed seems to be left very much to them to choose.

Vital Resistance, Physical Inertia and the Hostile Forces

There are almost always some parts of the being that are either unwilling or feel an incapacity for the effort demanded of them. It is the psychic and the mind and the higher vital usually that join together for the Yoga — for if these three do not join, it is difficult to do any Yoga at all beyond getting a few experiences from time to time. But in the lower vital there is almost always something recalcitrant and there is much of the physical that is too obscure. If the sadhak were left to himself this could be remedied without much difficulty, but it is here that the hostility in the universal (lower) forces comes in — they want to keep their reign over the being. The result is an exacerbation of the resistance of the lower vital and an exaggeration of the obstruction (inertia, passive resistance) in the physical which then admit these suggestions of self-destruction, depression or despair.

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It is more the lack of sleep that is responsible [*for the physical weakness*], I think; also the excess of struggle which the constant pressure of the vital disturbances and the physical *tamas* bring in and by that weaken the nerves.

Like the vital disturbance the physical inertia with all its symptoms is an attack of the hostile forces intended to cut short and prevent the higher opening. The ideas that arise to justify it are of no value — it is not true that physical work is of an inferior value to mental culture, it is the arrogance of the intellect that makes the claim. All work done for the Divine is equally divine, manual labour done for the Divine is more divine than mental culture done for one's own development, fame or mental satisfaction.

This inertia, numbness, pain should be thrown off with the same resolution as the vital disturbances. The only peculiarity of it in your case is the persistent violence of the attack as in the case of the vital — otherwise it is what others get also; but each time they reject, call on the Mother and get free, after a little time if the attack is violent, at once if it is of a lesser character.

If there is temporary physical inability, one can take rest, but solely for the purpose of recovering the physical energy. The idea of giving up physical work for mental self-development is a creation of the mental ego.

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The inertia gives room and power for the hostile forces to act.

The Hostile Forces and Universal Forces

No, they [*the hostile forces*] do not create universal forces; they are themselves moved by them and move them.

The Hostile Forces and the Spiritual Consciousness

From the higher mind upwards, all is free from the action of the hostile forces. For they [*the higher planes*] all belong to the spiritual consciousness though with varying degrees of light and power and completeness.

Chapter Two

Attacks by the Hostile Forces

Attacks Not Uncommon

I do not see how I could say that you were not fit for this Yoga when you had and still get the experiences that are characteristic of the Yoga. The obstacles in the consciousness and the attacks are no proof that a man is not fit for Yoga. There is no one practising Yoga who does not get them. Even those who have become great siddha Yogis had them during their time of sadhana.

There is not only yourself or X who have been touched, but others have been violently affected. The attack has been extremely serious this time — as these attacks always are at the moment when something is about to be effected in the individual or the general consciousness.

*

There are always hostile forces that try to stop or break the experience. If they come in, it is a sign that there is something in the being, vital or physical, that either responds or is too inert to oppose.

*

The hostile forces do not need a cause for attacking — they attack whenever and whoever they can. What one has to see is that nothing responds or admits them.

*

There is always this critical hostile voice in everybody's nature, questioning, reasoning, denying the experience itself, suggesting doubt of oneself and doubt of the Divine. One has to recognise it as the voice of the Adversary trying to prevent the progress and refuse credence to it altogether.

*

It is not a fact that the Rajayogin or others are not attacked by environmental forces. Whether moksha or transformation be the aim, all are attacked — because the vital forces want neither liberation nor transformation. Only the Yogins speak of it in general terms as Rakshasi Maya or the attacks of *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, — they don't trace these things to their sources or watch how they come in — but the thing itself is known to all.

*

Naturally, the hostile forces are always on the watch to rob what they can of the things received by the sadhak — not that they profit by them, but they prevent them from being used to build up the divine in life.

Attacks Often Follow a Progress

It often happens like that. When a progress has been made (here it is the opening of the inner vision) the hostiles attack in a fury. You must be especially on your guard when you are making a progress — so as to check the attack before it can get in.

*

It is a fact that the lower forces always attack when they see that a sadhak is making too much progress for their taste. But they can do nothing against a clear and steady will and a faithful perseverance.

*

A progress made often stirs the adverse forces to activity, they want to diminish its effect as much as possible. When you get a decisive experience of this kind, you should remain concentrated and assimilate it — avoiding self-dispersion and all externalising of the consciousness.

*

It is very often after a good experience or a decisive progress that the beings of the vital world try to attack and threaten.

The being who took the form of *X* was one of these. They have always the hope that they can turn back the sadhak from his path by attacks and menaces.

*

About the attacks and the action of the cosmic forces — these attacks very ordinarily become violent when the progress is becoming rapid and on the way to be definite — especially if they find they cannot carry out an effective aggression into the inner being, they try to shake by outside assaults. One must take it as a trial of strength, a call for gathering all one's capacities of calm and openness to the Light and Power so as to make oneself an instrument for the victory of the Divine over the undivine, of the Light over the darkness in the world tangle. It is in this spirit that you must face these difficulties till the higher things are so confirmed in you that these forces can attack no longer.

*

There is always a struggle going on between the forces of Light and the opposing forces — when there is a true movement and progress the latter try to throw a wrong movement across to stop or delay the progress. Sometimes they do this by raising up old movements in yourself that have still the power to recur; sometimes they use movements or thoughts in the atmosphere, things said by others to disturb the consciousness. When a settled peace and working of the Power and self-giving of the being can be fixed in the physical, then there comes a secure basis — there are no more fluctuations of this kind, though superficial difficulties may continue.

*

That is right [*to remain confident, cheerful and hopeful*]. The rest is the remnant of the attack — such an attack, sudden and violent, as sometimes, indeed often comes when one is making full progress to the straight and open way. It cannot permanently deflect the progress and, when it disappears, there is usually a chance of going on more firmly and swiftly towards the goal.

That is what we must do now.

*

Krishnaprem's letter is admirable from start to finish and every sentence hits the truth with great point and force. He has evidently an accurate knowledge both of the psychological and the occult forces that act in Yoga; all he says is in agreement with my own experience and I concur. His account of the rationale of your present difficulties is quite correct and no other explanation is needed — except what I was writing in my unfinished letter about the descent of the sadhana into the plane of the physical consciousness and that does not disaccord with but only completes what he says. He is quite right in saying that the heaviness of these attacks was due to the fact that you had taken up the sadhana in earnest and were approaching, as one might say, the gates of the Kingdom of Light. That always makes these forces rage and they strain every nerve and use or create every opportunity to turn the sadhak back or, if possible, drive him out of the path altogether by their suggestions, their violent influences and their exploitation of all kinds of incidents that always crop up more and more when these conditions prevail, so that he may not reach the gates. I have written to you more than once alluding to these forces, but I did not press the point because I saw that like most people whose minds have been rationalised by a modern European education you were not inclined to believe in or at least to attach any importance to this knowledge. People nowadays seek the explanation for everything in their ignorant reason, their surface experience and in outside happenings. They do not see the hidden forces and inner causes which were well-known and visualised in the traditional Indian and Yogic knowledge. Of course, these forces find their *point d'appui* in the sadhak himself, in the ignorant parts of his consciousness and its assent to their suggestions and influences; otherwise they could not act or at least could not act with any success. In your case the chief *points d'appui* have been the extreme sensitiveness of the lower vital ego and now also the physical consciousness with all its fixed or standing opinions, prejudices, prejudgments, habitual

reactions, personal preferences, clinging to old ideas and associations, its obstinate doubts and its maintaining these things as a wall of obstruction and opposition to the larger light. This activity of the physical mind is what people call intellect and reason, although it is only the turning of a machine in a circle of mental habits and is very different from the true and free reason, the higher *Buddhi* which is capable of enlightenment and still more from the higher spiritual light or that insight and tact of the psychic consciousness which sees at once what is true and right and distinguishes it from what is wrong and false. This insight you had very constantly whenever you were in a good condition and especially whenever *Bhakti* became strong in you. When the *sadhak* comes down into the physical consciousness, leaving the mental and higher vital ranges on which he had first turned towards the Divine, these opposite things become very strong and sticky and, as one's more helpful states and experiences draw back behind the veil and one can hardly realise that one ever had them, it becomes difficult to get out of this condition. The only thing then, as *Krishnaprem* has told you and I also have insisted, is to stick it out. If once one can get and keep the resolution to refuse to accept the suggestions of these forces, however plausible they may seem, then either quickly or gradually this condition can diminish and will be overpassed and cease. To give up *Yoga* is no solution; you could not successfully do it as both *Krishnaprem* and I have told you and as your own mind tells you when it is clear. A temporary absence from the *Asram* for relief from the struggle is a different matter. I do not think, however, that residence in the *Ramana Asram* would be eventually helpful except for bringing back some peace of mind; *Ramana Maharshi* is a great *Yogi* and his realisation very high on its own line; but it does not seem to me that it is a line which you could successfully follow as you certainly can follow the path of *Bhakti* if you stick to it, and there might then be the danger of your falling between two stools, losing your own path and not being able to follow the path of another nature.

The main obstacle in your sadhana has been a weak part in the vital which does not know how to bear suffering or disappointment or delay or temporary failure. When these things come, it winces away from them, revolts, cries out, makes a scene within, calls in despondency, despair, unbelief, darkness of the mind, denial — begins to think of abandonment of the effort or death as the only way out of its trouble. It is the very opposite of that equanimity, fortitude, self-mastery which is always recommended as the proper attitude of the Yogi. This has been seized upon by the forces adverse to the sadhana with their usual cleverness to prevent you from making the steady and finally decisive progress which would put all the trouble behind you. Their method is very simple. You make the effort and get perhaps some of these experiences which are not decisive but which if continued and followed up may lead to something decisive or at least you begin to have that peace, poise and hopefulness which are the favourable condition for progress — provided they can be kept steady. Immediately they give a blow to that part of the vital — or arrange things so that it shall get a blow or what it thinks to be a blow and sets it in motion with its round of sadness, suffering, outcry and despair. It clouds the mind with its sorrow and then gets that clouded mind to find justifications for its attitude — it has established a fixed formation, a certain round of ideas, arguments, feelings which it always repeats like a mechanism that once set in motion goes its round till it stops or something intervenes to stop it. This justification by the mind gives it strength to assert itself and remain or, when thrown back, to recur. For if these reasonings were not there, you would at once see the situation and disengage yourself from it or at any rate would perceive that such a course of feeling and conduct is not worthy of you and draw back from it at its very inception. But as it is you have to spend days getting out of the phase and getting back into your normal self. Then when you are back to your right walk and stature they wait a little and strike again and the whole thing repeats itself with a mechanical regularity. It takes time, steadfast endeavour, long continued aspiration and a calm perseverance to get anywhere in Yoga; that time you do

not give yourself because of these recurrent swingings away from the right attitude. It is not vanity or intellectual questioning that is the real obstacle — they are only impedimenta, — but they could well be overcome or one could pass beyond in spite of them if this part of the vital were not there or were not so strong to intervene. If I have many times urged upon you equanimity, steadfast patience, cheerfulness or whatever is contrary to this spirit, it is because I wanted you to recover your true inner vital self and get rid of this intruder. If you give it rein, it is extremely difficult to get on to anywhere. It must go, — its going is much more urgently required than the going of the intellectual doubt.

How you got to this condition is another matter. When you came it was not apparent and for a long time did not manifest itself. When Mother first saw you in the verandah of the old house she said, “That is a man with a large and strong vital” and it was true, nor do I think it has at all gone, but you have pushed it to the back and it turns up only when you are in good condition. The other, this small vital which is taking so much space now, must have been there but latent, perhaps because you had had a strong and successful life and it had no occasion to be active. But at a certain moment here it began to be impatient for immediate results, to fret at the amount of tapasya or effort to control its habits and indulgences and the absence of immediate return for the trouble. At a later stage it has tried to justify and prolong itself by appealing to your penchant for the Vaishnava attitude. But the emotional outbreaks of the Vaishnava — or such impulses as Vivekananda’s *prāyopaveśana* — spring from a tremendous one-minded, one-hearted passion for the Divine or for the goal which tries to throw itself headlong forward at any cost. It was another part of your vital that would have liked to take that attitude, but this smaller part prevented it and brought in a confusion and a mixture which was rather used by the adverse forces to turn you away from belief in or hope of the goal. This confusion of mind and vital you must get rid of — you must call in the true reason and the higher vital to cast out these movements. A higher reason must refuse to listen to its self-justifications and tell it that nothing, however plausible, can

justify these motives in a sadhak; your higher vital must refuse to accept them, telling it, “I do not want these alien things; I do not recognise them as part of myself or my nature.”

Positive and Negative Means of Attack

The hostiles when they cannot break the Yoga by positive means, by positive temptations or vital outbreaks, are quite willing to do it negatively; first by depression, then by refusal at once of ordinary life and of sadhana.

Attacks through Suggestions

Indirect attacks are not of this kind, a violent rush and covering by hostile forces — they are done through covert suggestions, half-truth, half-falsehood, attempts to represent the falsehood in the garb of the Divine Truth or to mix the lower consciousness cleverly with the higher. Their attempt is to mislead by guile rather than to conquer by force.

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When the vital forces or beings throw an influence, they give it certain forms of thought-action and put them in the minds and vital of people so that they feel, think, act, speak in a particular way. Whoever opens to the influence acts according to this formation, perhaps with variations due to his own vital temperament.

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Always refuse your assent to these forces and their suggestions and movements — that is the one imperative rule. It is not that you cannot understand the Truth, you understand the Truth perfectly well — but once you begin listening they confuse your mind, cover up the understanding and then torment you with their false suggestions. Always remain quiet, always open to the help of the Force, always call for the peace.

*

Do not allow these suggestions to prevail. Each time these powers attack, if you hold them at bay, you gain an added force for progress. They attack and suggest to you a wrong understanding in the hope that, if you accept, their power to return on you will last a little longer. Do not allow them to prevail for however short a time.

*

I do not see what reasons can be so subtle as to justify or even appear to justify something that opposes and tries to destroy the sadhana. Whatever stands in the way of spiritual progress, must be a falsehood whatever reasons it gives in its own favour. The best thing is not to listen to its reasons.

*

There is no issue out in such persistence in a wrong mood and a false attitude. It is the old foolish idea that the ignorance is the truth for you because you are still ignorant in your external consciousness and that if the divine Light and Truth are not perfectly established in the ignorance, then the Light and Truth are false and the ignorance is the only truth and that to believe in the Truth and the Divine is a pretence. Nothing can be more irrational than these arguments of the dark Forces to which your external vital so foolishly lends its adherence. The Truth remains the Truth in spite of all denial and it is to that you will have to give your assent and allegiance, not to confusion and darkness.

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But when the suggestions come, surely it is possible to know from their very character what they are and that itself shows that they must come from wrong vital Forces. The only thing is that they must be at once rejected and the entry into your own mind and vital refused to them — i.e. they must not be accepted or allowed to influence. Very few have the direct occult perception of the Forces behind the suggestion — at least until the cosmic consciousness fully opens, for then direct perception

becomes more easily possible, — but the mental understanding can be used with good effect.

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Vital forces can attack the mind and do. Many receive suggestions from them through the brain, so it is quite possible that it may be felt as coming in through the head from above. That does not mean that it came from regions above the mind (higher Mind, intuition or Overmind). Correct reasoning means no more than coherent argument from a certain standpoint and does not validate a fit of anger or indicate for it a non-adverse source.

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It [*a vibration of anger which entered the body from behind the shoulder blades*] must have been an indication of the source and location of the suggestion or influence. Either thoughts or vibrations or some pressure of wrong force can be felt being thrown or sent in a very concrete way when the consciousness is open. When it is not, they come in without being noticed, only the result is felt.

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There has been progress in all these parts [*of the being*], but they seem to be subject still to a response to the suggestions of the hostile forces. Everybody gets these suggestions, but they ought not to be allowed to enter inside, especially in the heart, or to be accepted by the vital. Evidently, they enter through the physical mind (from the throat upwards means that) and affect the surface vital and emotional being. You must get the power to reject them from there by a constant and steady denial and refusal of their suggestions. So long as anything in you says “yes” or accepts, there is always the possibility of a return.

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These [*thoughts of unfitness for Yoga*] are the usual suggestions that come when there is the attack of the hostile forces. You should know that they have no value and reject. The spiritual

perfection, the full transformation of the nature is not a thing that can come without long and steady endeavour. Movements like these have many refuges in different parts of the being and it is not till they are driven out of all and out of the environmental consciousness that one can be free from their recurrence. One must learn to be inflexible, fixed in one's aim and not discouraged by the recurring difficulties of the nature, for they have been long ingrained in the vital and physical of the human being and they are also in the play of the universal forces — so if it takes long to get them out, as it does even with the best sadhaks, that is no proof that one is not fit for the sadhana. Reject all that and go on steadily — aim always at getting more of the higher consciousness down, that is the cure for all these things.

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What is there in you is the capacity for response to these suggestions [*of unfitness for Yoga*] that still remains owing to the stamp of the past habit on the physical, especially the subconscious physical. I have explained to you what happens — that these things when rejected by the mind and vital descend into the subconscious or else go out into the environmental consciousness and from there they can return when pushed by the hostile forces. It is in these two ways that the hostiles try to recover their hold. But the rising from the subconscious is not so important except for its long persistence — it comes up in dream or it is, in the waking consciousness, fragmentary. But when it comes from the environmental consciousness then it can be a strong attack and it is evidently that which is taking place now.

I think what lends force to these attacks and tends to upset you, is a feeling of impatience somewhere that things are not going forward, progress of a definite kind is not being made and that these things are not done with already for ever. A period of apparent halt is not necessarily an adverse thing, it can be a preparation for a fresh progress of a more decisive character — that often happens in the sadhana — but you have to keep vigilantly the advance gained in spite of attacks. The next progress ought to be the descent of the full spiritual calm

and peace from above — an opening of the consciousness into wideness. Till it comes, keep yourself firm and do not allow these attacks to shake your basis.

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They [*hostile attacks on the outer being*] are felt as suggestions, or a touch on the surface mind, vital, physical or as movements in the atmosphere (the personal or the general environmental consciousness) — but for the inner being it is like gusts or storms outside. If they penetrate by chance into the house, they are immediately ejected and the doors and windows banged on them — there is nothing that accepts or tolerates them inside.

Attacks through Others

All these difficulties [*in dealing with others*] should be faced in a more quiet and less egoistic spirit.

This Yoga is a spiritual battle; its very attempt raises all sorts of adverse forces and one must be ready to face difficulties, sufferings, reverses of all sorts in a calm unflinching spirit.

The difficulties that come are ordeals and tests and if one meets them in the right spirit, one comes out stronger and spiritually purer and greater.

No misfortune can come, the adverse forces cannot touch or be victorious unless there is some defect in oneself, some impurity, weakness or at the very least ignorance. One should then seek out this weakness in oneself and correct it.

When there is an attack from the human instruments of adverse forces, one should try to overcome it not in a spirit of personal hatred or anger or wounded egoism, but with a calm spirit of strength and equanimity and a call to the Divine Force to act. Success or failure lies with the Divine.

In dealing with others there is a way of speaking and doing which gives most offence and opens one most to misunderstanding and there is also a way which is quiet and firm but conciliatory to those who can be conciliated — all who are not absolutely of bad will. It is better to use the latter than the

former. No weakness, no arrogance or violence, this should be the spirit.

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The attack of illness after seeing the woman is very evidently the result of an adverse Force leaping upon you. There are men and women who are the vehicles of these adverse Forces and if you come in contact with them when you are off your guard and have a movement (in this case a sexual movement) which gives them an opportunity for a grip, then some adverse Force can leap upon you and hold, and the attack takes either the form of a mental unsettling, a moral disturbance (loss of character etc.), a vital upheaval or nervous breakdown or, as in this case, a physical illness. These things are well known to all who are acquainted with the working of occult forces and the details in the letter are quite unmistakable signs; such attacks are always happening to people, but most are unconscious and feel only the results but not the movements that attended the attack or their causes. When the consciousness has opened by Yoga one becomes aware and it is easy to fix the source of the attack and its nature. The illness can only be cured for good by the throwing out or the departure of the force that causes it; a certain quiet will has to be exercised or else a calling in of the Yoga-force or the Divine Sanction for the removal; there should be no struggle but a very tranquil pressure. The greater the faith, the easier it is for the action to be successful.

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Yes, it was an attack — the hostile forces often take the form of this or that person so as to get through the physical associations a more concrete grip on the physical consciousness.

Chapter Three

Dealing with Hostile Attacks

Fear of Attacks

Yes, the adverse forces take advantage of any perturbation of that kind [*mental anxiety and fear when something bad happens*]—for it opens as it were a passage to their action. Fear is the one thing that one must never feel in face of them, for it makes them bold and aggressive. Moreover fear, as you justly say, calls the thing feared—it must therefore be thrown out altogether.

*

If you are afraid of the hostile forces when they try to come, you expose yourself to their power.

Thinking Too Much about Attacks

The worst thing for sadhana is to get into a morbid condition, always thinking of “lower forces, attacks” etc. If the sadhana has stopped for a time, then let it stop, remain quiet, do ordinary things, rest when rest is needed—wait till the physical consciousness is ready. My own sadhana when it was far more advanced than yours used to stop for half a year together. I did not make a fuss about it, but remained quiet till the empty or dull period was over.

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How can you have peace and quiet when you are always thinking of “lower forces” and “attacks” and “possessions” etc.? If you can look at things naturally and quietly, then only you can have quiet and peace.

*

Do not think too much of the hostile Force. The only thing you have to do with it is to dismiss it and even the suggestion of it when it comes.

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It is quite true. To talk of one's experiences to others tends to diminish the power of the experience. Also to think too much of the hostile Powers is to bring in their atmosphere. One has to recognise them when they come and repel them, but to think much about them, to fear, to be expecting or looking out for them is a mistake.

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It is so that they [*hostile suggestions*] must be regarded — without interest, with indifference. That removes the necessity for constant struggle which is itself a form of interest, and it is as discouraging and more to these suggestions.

*

It is better not to trouble about the hostile forces. Keep your aspiration strong and sincere and call in the Divine in each thing and at each moment for support and in all that you feel keep yourself open to us. That is the easiest way to the Divine. If you begin to concern yourself about the hostile forces, you will only make the path more difficult.

*

Write to X that if he indulges these ideas about hostile beings etc., it will be a serious hindrance to his sadhana. It only puts him and others around him in undesirably close relations with the adverse vital world and its forces. These beings can have no "important part" to play in the life and sadhana. The only part they can play is to attack and interfere with the sadhana. When that happens, their suggestions and approaches have to be rejected, at once and summarily, and the power of the Mother called on to clear the nature or the atmosphere. But they must not be dwelt upon by the mind or any kind of relation admitted or

any imaginations about themselves that they suggest entertained or encouraged.

Discouragement about Attacks

These attacks should not discourage you. There are always moments — so long as there is not the complete basis in the physical when old movements seem to revive. But so long as it is only a rush of an outside force churning up the subconscious and it does not last, it does not at all mean that the progress is not there. We have to deal with all the complexity of the human consciousness in its hidden parts as well as on its surface — and there are layers on layers of the consciousness in which something may lurk of the old reactions, but each conquest makes the control stronger and brings the full purification nearer.

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You need not be upset about the matter; it is sufficient if you note movements like these and are vigilant that they should find no ground in you again. The cause is probably to be found in the contact with the outside world renewing some possibilities of the old Adam in you. When there is some lowering or diminution of the consciousness or some impairing of it at one place or another, the Adversary — or the Censor — who is always on the watch presses with all his might wherever there is a weak point lying covered from your own view, and suddenly a wrong movement leaps up with unexpected force. Become conscious and cast out the possibility of its renewal, that is all that is to be done.

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It is certainly the force hostile to the Yoga and the divine realisation upon earth that is acting upon you at the present moment. It is the force (one force and not many) which is here in the Asram and has been going about from one to another. With some as with X, Y and Z it has succeeded; others have cast it from them and have been able to liberate the light of their soul; open in that light to the nearness and constant presence of the Mother, feel

her working in them and move forward in a constant spiritual progress. Some are still struggling, but in spite of the bitterness of the struggle have been able to keep faithfully to the divine call that brought them here.

That it is the same hostile force would be shown, even if its presence were not for us visible and palpable, by the fact that the suggestions it makes to the minds of its victims are always the same. Its one master sign is always this impulse to get away from the Asram, away from myself and the Mother, out of this atmosphere, and *at once*. For the force does not want to give time for reflection, for resistance, for the saving Power to be felt and act. Its other signs are doubt; tamasic depression; an exaggerated sense of impurity and unfitness; the idea that the Mother is remote, does not care for one, is not giving what she ought to give, is not divine, with other similar suggestions accompanied by an inability to feel her presence or her help; a feeling that the Yoga is not possible or is not going to be done in this life; the desire to go away and do something in the ordinary world—the thing itself suggested varying according to the personal mind. If it were not this one invariable hostile force acting, there would not be this exact similarity in all the cases. In each case it is the same obscurities thrown on the intelligence, the same subconscious movements of the vital brought to the surface, the same irrational impulses pushing to the same action,—departure, renunciation of the soul's truth, refusal of the Divine Love and the Divine Call.

It is the vital crisis, the test, the ordeal for you as for others—a test and ordeal which we would willingly spare to those who are with us but which they call on themselves by persistence in some wrong line of movement or some falsification of the inner attitude. If you reject entirely the falsehood that this force casts upon the sadhaka, if you remain faithful to the Light that called you here, you conquer and, even if serious difficulties still remain, the final victory is sure and the divine triumph of the soul over the Ignorance and the darkness.

The opportunity for these forces is given when the sadhaka descends in the inevitable course of the sadhana from the mental

or higher vital plane to the physical consciousness. Always this is accompanied by a fading of the first deep experiences and a descent to the neutral obscure inertia which is the bedrock of the unredeemed physical nature. It is there that the Light, the Power, the Ananda of the Divine has to descend and transform everything, driving away for ever all obscurity and all inertia and establishing the radiant Energy, the perfect Light and the unchanging Bliss. There and not in the mind or the higher vital is all the difficulty, but there too must be the victory and the foundation of the new world. I do not wish to disguise from you the difficulty of this great and tremendous change or the possibility that you may have a long and hard work before you; but are you really unwilling to face it and take your share in the great work? Will you reject the greatness of this endeavour to follow a mad irrational impulse towards some more exciting work of the hour or the moment for which you have no true call in any part of your nature?

There is no true reason for despondency; in nothing that has passed in you or which you have written do I find any good ground for it. The difficulties you experience are nothing to those that others have felt and yet conquered them, others who were not stronger than you. All that has happened is that by this descent into the physical consciousness, the ordinary external human nature has come to the front with its elementary imperfections and subconscious unsatisfied impulses and it is to these that the contrary force is appealing. The mind and the higher vital have put away from them the ideas and illusions which gave them a sanction and an illusion of legitimacy and even nobility in their satisfaction. But the root of them, their inherent irrational push for satisfaction, has not yet gone — this for instance is the reason for the sexual movements which you have recently felt in sleep or in waking. This was inevitable. All that is needed is for your psychic being to come forward and open you to the direct and real and constant inner contact of myself and the Mother. Hitherto your soul has expressed itself through the mind and its ideals and admirations or through the vital and its higher joys and aspirations; but that is not sufficient

to conquer the physical difficulty and enlighten and transform Matter. It is your soul in itself, your psychic being that must come in front, awaken entirely and make the fundamental change. The psychic being will not need the support of intellectual ideas or outer signs and helps. It is that alone that can give you the direct feeling of the Divine, the constant nearness, the inner support and aid. You will not then feel the Mother remote or have any farther doubt about the realisation; for the mind thinks and the vital craves, but the soul feels and knows the Divine.

Cast away from you these movements of doubt, depression and the rest which are no part of your true and higher nature. Reject these suggestions of inability, unfitness and all these irrational movements of an alien force. Remain faithful to the Light of your soul even when it is hidden by clouds. My help and the Mother's will be there working behind even in the moments when you cannot feel it. The one need for you and for all is to be, even in the darkness of the powers of obscurity of the physical consciousness, stubbornly faithful to your soul and to the remembrance of the Divine Call.

Be faithful and you will conquer.

Rejection of Attacks

They [*the vital forces*] come because they were freely permitted in the past — so they want to renew and continue their action. An entire rejection and a complete turning to the Divine are the way to meet them.

*

It is sufficient if you can keep in touch with the Force and reject any strong attack of the confusion. The rest will be done by the Force itself — for no one is really strong enough to change himself, it is the Divine Force called down that does it.

*

This kind of attack is always possible. What one has to have is an inner condition which at once throws them off and a faith

in the Mother's power and name which is quite sufficient to dissolve these Rakshasi Maya formations.

*

This state which tries to come upon you and seize is not part of your true self, but a foreign influence. To yield to it and to express it would therefore be not sincerity, but the expression of something false to your true being, something that will grow more and more foreign to you as you progress. Always reject it, when it comes, even if you feel strongly its touch; open in your mind and soul to the Mother, keep your will and faith and you will find it receding. Even if it returns obstinately, be equally and more obstinate against it, firm in rejection — that will discourage and wear it out and finally it will grow weak, a shadow of itself and disappear.

Be true to your true self always — that is the real sincerity. Persist and conquer.

*

You ought to realise that these things [*negative thoughts and feelings*] are attacks which come on you from an adverse Force to which your nature was responsive because of vital desire and the vital ego — what you call selfishness. When it comes, you have to realise that it is an attack and refuse instead of accepting it — and in order to be able to do that you must always discourage desire and selfishness in you and all that comes from them such as jealousy, claim, anger etc. It is no use alleging that there are good reasons for their rising — even if all the alleged reasons were true, they would not justify your indulging them, for in a sadhak nothing can justify that. There is no need to understand — for there is only one thing that it is necessary to understand — that, reason or no reason, desire, selfishness, jealousy, demand, anger have no place in the spiritual life.

If you keep to what you have resolved, then all will be right — and the right knowledge will come not from the mind and its reasonings but from the soul and its true vision of things.

*

You must throw this black poison [*of dissatisfaction and revolt*] out of you at once instead of dallying with it and giving it expression as if it were your own feelings and as if such an attitude could ever be justifiable. It is that weakness in the vital which enables them [*the hostile forces*] to keep up their attack. Instead of allowing the weakness, revive your will and aspiration and love and let them throw out this egoistic darkness.

*

All these things, feelings, suggestions etc. [*depression, wanting to die*], are the workings of an adverse Force which wants to break up the Asram, upset or drive away the workers and prevent the Truth and Light which are descending from having any fruition. There is no truth behind it, it is a Force of the Devil or Falsehood — there is no rational ground for the feelings of despair it suggests, but it throws itself with fury on the mind and vital and tries to possess them, ousting the Truth and the Divine Presence. Even the strongest have felt its attacks. You must understand what it is and, the moment it comes, oppose it with a resolute No. For the more the Truth descends, the more furious this adverse Force becomes. It is making desperate attacks and putting out all its force in the hope of snatching the victory before the full Truth can come down. Remain firm, understand what it is and give it no admission — to reject it, to drive it out of his atmosphere is the greatest help any sadhak can give to the Mother.

*

All naturally in these difficulties has its original roots in the vital and its expectations of all kinds. When one wants to get rid of them, the vital resists and is unwilling to part with them, but this by itself would not be anything more than a work of change, adjustment, rearrangement which might take time but not cause serious conflicts and upheavals. For once the mind and inner will are settled to be rid of these movements, the will of the higher vital would also come into line and the rest which is more obstinate against change because it is a thing of habitual

movements, supported on the subconscious and not governed by reason or knowledge, would yet be unable to resist permanently or vehemently the pressure from the higher will of the being. Its force of resistance would diminish and the habitual reactions wear out or fall away. But the prolongation of the difficulty and its acuteness come from the fact that there are Forces in Nature, not personal or individual but universal, which live upon these movements and through them have long controlled the individual nature. These do not want to lose their rule and so when these movements are thrown out, they throw them back on the sadhak in strong waves or with great violence. Or they create in the vital a great depression, discouragement, despair — that is their favourite weapon — because it is losing its former field of desires and has not yet in any continuity something that would replace it, the assured continuous psychic or spiritual condition or experience. To prevent that is the whole effort of these Forces. So they create these upheavals and the vital admits them because of its old habit of response to the lower Forces. At the same time they put in suggestions to the mind so as to make it also accept the disturbance, discouragement and depression. That is what I meant by saying that these are attacks from outside and must be rejected. If they cannot be rejected altogether, yet one must try to keep a part of the mind conscious which will refuse to admit the suggestions or share in the depression and trouble, — which will say firmly, “I know what this is and I know that it will pass and I shall resume my way to the goal which nothing can prevent me from reaching, since my soul’s will is and will always be for that.” You have to reach the point where you can do that always; then the power of the Forces to disturb will begin to diminish and fall away. Our Force is there with you and will not fail to support and strengthen you. The suggestion that we are indifferent is obviously nothing but a suggestion, intended to help and fortify the depression. As such you should regard it and not accept it as true or as your own thought; for it could not possibly be true. Your success in reaching peace and light is as much our concern as yours and even more so.

In your letter you write that you are very tired, restlessness and *tamas* prevail in the physical, there is a constant struggle more or less intense between the psychic being and the physical nature. Now this was exactly your condition in the last months when you were here. Then you wanted to go because the pressure was too great, because the struggle with the restless and *tamasic* physical nature and the *Asuric* influence was too hard and continuous, because you felt very tired and needed to go away for a rest, for respite, to recover.

How then can you come back in the same condition? The pressure will be still greater than before, the struggle constant; you are likely to be still more tired and depressed than you were. And it will be harder for you to bear because the personal position will entirely be changed. You will have no special place, no authority delegated, no work entrusted to you; you will not be near the Mother but at a distance among the others. The *Asuric* nature in you which had become an intolerable hindrance to the work and dangerous to yourself and to others will be given no kind of indulgence. It is clear that you would find the conditions unbearable unless you had undergone in the meantime a fundamental change. Therefore you must not ask to come here until you have acquired a stable quiet and peace both within you and in your external atmosphere.

Wherever you are, we shall always be near to your psychic being and ready to help it to conquer. As things are with you now, that help is likely to act better at a distance than when you were near and were at every moment repelling it by your wrong inner movements and reactions and your wrong speech and acts. But to profit by our help you will have to do what you have never yet really done, at least in your external being. You will have in your physical nature itself resolutely to turn from the *Asura* and his ways and refuse to indulge him on any pretext in any thought, feeling, speech or action which would help him still to possess your instruments and determine or influence your attitude and your acts. To become quiet and quietly and simply to maintain this persistent and patient rejection with our help, without *rajasic* struggle, sincerely and in fact and in every detail,

not merely in wish and idea, is what you need to do. To be divided, to aspire in one part of your being and to indulge and justify and cherish the wrong movements with another part can lead to nothing but endless struggle and fatigue. Only by this turn and change will the struggle and fatigue pass away and purity come.

*

Either to reject by dynamic means¹ or to remain unaffected and let it pass are the two usual ways of dealing with these attacks.

Detachment

Yes, the difficulty is always that something in the nature gives a hold to the attack. It either still indulges it and likes it or even, if wanting to be free, is too accustomed to receive and respond to the old feelings, thoughts, suggestions and does not yet know how *not* to respond. The first thing is for the mental being to stand back, refuse to accept, say “This is no longer mine.” Then, even if the vital feeling responds to the attack, one part of the nature can be free and observe and discourage it. The next thing is for this free part to impose the same will of detachment on the vital so that after a time this also when the attack comes feels that it is something foreign, not its own, — as if a stranger had come into the room and was trying to impose his ideas or his will on the inmates. After that it becomes more easy to get rid of it altogether. Of course, there is the Mother’s Force working, but this kind of assent from the mind and vital makes the result quick and easy — otherwise it takes time and more labour and struggle.

Dissolution

You can dissolve a thought formation which is made of subtle mental stuff — why not then a mental Asura? There are Asuras

¹ *In his letter the correspondent mentioned “a dynamic will and aspiration”. — Ed.*

who are *predominantly* mental — who live in the false Idea and can even be vitally ascetic and appear to men as great Tapaswis. All the same there is a stern and violent vital as the effective instrument of their nature.

Steadiness and Persistence

The one thing wrong [*when attacked by hostile forces*] would be to allow yourself to be overcome by them. If you remain steady in yourself, you can repel the attack or else it will exhaust itself and pass. In such circumstances you have to be like a cliff attacked by a stormy sea but never submerged by it.

*

Very glad to know that you are able to keep up your wicket so well. These bodyline attacks are always a nasty trick of the retiring hostiles and they go on with it as long as they just can, for they are unrelenting and obstinate even in defeat; but one has only to be as stiff to them as possible and their action will get more and more tired until it stops altogether.

*

They [*the hostile forces*] hope by persistence to tire you out or to get in by sheer obstinacy — or at least to delay the realisation by their attacks. That is always their method. If they can shake the faith, the peace and *samatā*, they think themselves richly recompensed.

Peace and Purity

If you can feel even in these attacks that part in you in which there is constant Peace even amidst the pains and darkness, and if you can keep it always, that is an immense gain. The something in you which does not always feel it, which remains half way, undecided, must also now take the step of complete surrender. It is only a part of your physical mind that does not understand, that receives back the old ideas — that must be converted. It does

not matter about the weakness and incapacities — when the full peace and Power is there in the physical, they will be removed. The new birth in you is certain to come — the first touch of it is already there in the awakened psychic — the rest cannot fail to come.

*

Vital purity is very necessary, but it is not easy to make it immune from attack unless the wideness is there along with a solid *spiritual* purity and peace descending in the wideness. Of course, wideness *by itself* is not sufficient.

Faith and Surrender

If the faith and surrender are complete in all parts of the being then there can be no attack. If there is a strong central faith and surrender at all times, then there can be attacks but the attacks will have no chance of success.

*

There are no sadhaks who are never attacked by wrong forces — but if one has a complete faith and self-consecration, one can throw off the attack without too much difficulty.

*

It is those who are of a highly sattvic nature, especially if strongly surrendered to the Mother, who escape the invasion or attacks of the hostile Forces on the mind and vital. That does not mean that they escape the difficulties of the lower human nature or of the sadhana, but these are not complicated by the effective support given to them by the hostiles. It is not that there is no point in them that might be pressed upon by the hostiles but in actual fact they cannot get at these points because of the build of the nature which is fortified against them owing to the large proportion of *prakāśa* and *sukha* which the sattvic brings with it. But otherwise there is an internal clarity, a balance, a happy composition in the being reflecting sunlight easily, less amenable

to the touch of cloud and tempest, which gives no handle to the hostile forces. The nature refuses to be violently agitated or darkened or upset. At most it is the body that the hostiles can attack and there too because the nervous being is calm and it is only through the most material that it can be done.

Psychic Openness

The experience you write of in today's letter shows clearly the only way of safety against these attacks, to get back to the close and happy connection, the psychic openness to the Mother which has been so long the foundation of your sadhana and the cause of the great progress you were making.

Do not listen to the clamour of the adverse vital Force which has been attacking you, its reasonings or its wrong emotional suggestions — it only wants you to fall from happiness, to suffer and to descend into a lower consciousness and lose your progress.

Get back into the true spirit of love and closeness, surrender and confidence and Ananda and remain there — then in due time all problems and difficulties will solve themselves as the light and power of the Truth descend into the still weak and obscure parts of the nature.

*

If the attacks of the hostile forces have been made less strong by concentrating in the heart (or if they have become less frequent) then you must continue that concentration until you are able to join the head and the heart, the psychic and the higher consciousness. It all depends on that. The psychic must be strong enough to compel the vital and physical to give themselves to the Divine — or the higher consciousness must so descend and occupy everything that the old movements can only at most move on the surface without being able to enter in or touch the inner calm — or the two together, psychic and higher consciousness, must occupy the whole being. These are the three ways in which the Yoga moves. If the concentration in the heart, which

means the awakening of the psychic, is most effective against the attacks, then it is that you must follow.

*

There are two things that make it impossible for them [*the hostile forces*] to succeed even temporarily in any attack on the mind or the vital — first, an entire love, devotion and confidence that nothing can shake, secondly, a calm and equality in the vital as well as in the mind which has become the fundamental character of the inner nature. Suggestions then may still come, things go wrong outside, but the being remains invulnerable. Either of these two things is sufficient in itself — and in proportion as they grow, even the existence of the hostile forces becomes less and less of a phenomenon of the inner life — though they may still be there in the outer atmosphere.

Reliance on the Power or Force

About the contact with the world and the hostile forces, that is of course always one of the sadhak's chief difficulties, but to transform the world and the hostile powers is too big a task and the personal transformation cannot wait for it. What has to be done is to come to live in the Power that these things, these disturbing elements cannot penetrate, or, if they penetrate, cannot disturb, and to be so purified and strengthened by it that there is in oneself no response to anything hostile. If there is a protecting envelopment, an inner purifying descent and, as a result, a settling of the higher consciousness in the inner being and finally, its substitution even in the most external outwardly active parts in place of the old ignorant consciousness, then the world and the hostile forces will no longer matter — for one's own soul at least; for there is a larger work not personal in which of course they will have to be dealt with; but that need not be a main preoccupation at the present stage.

*

Yes, the Power with its help and inner working is always there

with you and always will be. In the strongest attacks and darkest hours it was covered up and hidden, but it was never absent or withdrawn and never will be.

*

Evil forces can always attack in moments of unconsciousness or half-consciousness or through the subconscious or external physical — so long as all is not supramentally transformed. Only if the force is there, they can at once be pushed back.

Reliance on the Mother

Attacks are always going about and it is a period when they have fallen on many. But with a strong faith founded in the Mother and a whole-hearted aspiration, no attack can leave any lasting result.

*

When there is an attack or obstruction the call or the thinking of the Mother may not succeed at once; even the will to get rid of the attack or obstruction may not succeed at once, but one must persevere till the result comes and if one perseveres the result is bound to come.

One sees the negative side only during the attack, because the first thing the attack or obstruction does is to try to cloud the mind's intelligence. If it cannot do that, it is difficult for it to prevail altogether for the time being. For if the mind remains alert and clings to the truth, then the attack can only upheave the vital and, though this may be painful enough, yet the right attitude of the mind acts as a corrective and makes it easier to recover the balance and the true condition of the vital comes back more quickly. If the vital keeps its balance, then the attack touches the physical consciousness only with its suggestions and is much more superficial or even it can do no more than create a temporary restlessness, uneasiness or ill-health in the body — the rest of the consciousness remaining unaffected. It is therefore very important to accustom oneself to keep the right mental

attitude even in the midst of an attack, however strong it is. To keep faith is the best help for that — the faith that the Divine is there always and I shall pass to Him through whatever trials. That helps to look at other things also in the true light.

By tamasic ego is meant the ego of weakness, self-depreciation, despondency, unbelief. The rajasic ego is puffed up with pride and self-esteem or stubbornly asserts itself at every step or else wherever it can; the tamasic ego on the contrary is always feeling, “I am weak, I am miserable, I have no capacity, I am not loved or chosen by the Divine, I am so bad and incapable — what can the Divine do for me?” or else, “I am specially chosen out for misfortune and suffering, all are preferred to me, all are progressing, I only am left behind, all abandons me, I have nothing before me but flight, death or disaster” etc., etc., or something or all of these things mixed together. Sometimes the rajasic and tamasic ahankar mix together and subtly support each other. In both cases it is the “I” that is making a row about itself and clouding the true vision. The true spiritual or psychic vision is this, “Whatever I may be, my soul is a child of the Divine and must reach the Divine sooner or later. I am imperfect but seek after the perfection of the Divine in me and that not I but the Divine Grace will bring about; if I keep to that, the Divine Grace itself will do all.” The “I” has to take its proper place here as a small portion and instrument of the Divine, something that is nothing without the Divine but with the Grace can be everything that the Divine wishes it to be.

The Mother’s help is always there but you are not conscious of it except when the psychic is active and the consciousness not clouded. The coming of suggestions is not a proof that the help is not there. Suggestions come to all, even to the greatest sadhaks or to the Avatars — as they came to Christ or Buddha. Obstacles are there — they are part of Nature and they have to be overcome. What has to be attained is not to accept the suggestions, not to admit them as the truth or as one’s own thoughts, to see them for what they are and keep oneself separate. Obstacles have to be looked at as something wrong in the machinery of human nature which has to be changed — they should not be regarded

as sins or wrongdoings which make one despair of oneself and of the sadhana.

*

You ask whether the adverse Force is stronger than the Divine Force. The implication is that a man has no responsibility for his action and whatever he does or however he errs and falls in consequence, the Divine Force is to blame. It may be so, but in that case there is no need or utility in doing sadhana. One has only to sit still and let the adverse Force or the Divine Force do what they like! According to that theory the Devil was quite right in telling Christ, "Cast thyself down from this mountain and let His angels come and upbear thee" and Christ was quite wrong in rejecting the suggestion and saying, "It is written 'Thou shalt not tempt (put to a test) the Lord thy God.'" He ought to have jumped and if he got smashed, it would only have proved that the adverse forces were greater than the Divine Force!

If an adverse Force comes, one has not to accept and welcome its suggestions, but to turn to the Mother and refuse to turn away from her. Whether one can open or not, one has to be loyal and faithful. Loyalty and fidelity are not qualities for which one has to do Yoga; they are very simple things which any man or woman who aspires to the Truth ought to be able to accomplish.

It is what everybody should realise. It is the psychic fidelity that brings the power to stand against the Asuras and enables the Protection to work.

Chapter Four

Accidents, Possession, Madness

Accidents

There is no such thing as a mere accident. There is some — perhaps a very slight — unconsciousness in the physical and it is taken advantage of by these small beings of the vital physical plane — who are more mischievous than consciously hostile.

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It is not a bad shakti that gets inside you and from there does these things — it is small forces from outside that amuse themselves by creating small accidents of that kind, taking advantage of some inattention or forgetfulness etc.

*

You are right about the accidents. It is chiefly the physical mind's unconsciousness that makes these accidents or interventions of mischievous forces easy.

*

It has often been seen that when an accident takes place at a particular spot, there is a tendency for some time for other accidents to happen there. It was so with a place near Villianur some years ago. There is the same tendency with suicides at a particular place. It is a sort of powerful formation that remains there with or without a vital being (spirit) in charge of the formation.

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It sometimes happens that by a carefully formed formation like this and through the instrumentality of a third person whose movements they control, the hostile forces get through the conscious guard and bring about an accident like this.¹ It is through

¹ *The correspondent was cycling down the road when an approaching cyclist collided with him; he fell to the ground and injured his legs. — Ed.*

the subconscious that they manage to do it, for the subconscious has not yet either the mass of force descended from above which could have repelled the arriving cycle and turned its movement away or the instinctive sureness which would have felt beforehand what the cyclist was going to do and done just the thing to avoid it. However when the protection is there such accidents even when grave in character are usually reduced to something minor in their results.

*

That is right. These accidents happen only to disturb you. You must not allow yourself to be disturbed.

Yes — it is because they [*the hostile forces*] know that Peace is the basis and if that is there in full, all the rest will come. So they want anyhow to prevent it.

Possession by Vital Forces

It is one thing to see things and quite another to let them enter into you. One has to experience many things, to see and observe, to bring them into the field of the consciousness and know what they are. But there is no reason why you should allow them to enter into you and possess you. It is only the Divine or what comes from the Divine that can be admitted to enter you.

To say that all light is good is as if you said that all water is good — or even that all clear or transparent water is good: it would not be true. One must see what is the nature of the light or where it comes from or what is in it, before one can say that it is the true Light. False lights exist and misleading lustres, lower lights too that belong to the being's inferior reaches. One must therefore be on one's guard and distinguish; the true discrimination has to come by growth of the psychic feeling and a purified mind and experience.

*

The first attempt of the possessing entity is to separate the person from his psychic, and it is that that creates the struggle. All

depends on the extent and persistence of the possession — how much of the being it occupies and whether it is constant or not.

*

That is very interesting — for it agrees with the Mother's constant insistence that to feel sympathy or any emotion of the weak philanthropic kind with those possessed by vital forces is most dangerous as it may bring an attack upon oneself which may take any form. One must do what is to be done but abstain from all such weakness.

Neurasthenia

It is not, certainly, your own vital that engenders these movements, but its revolts seem to have made it subject to the suggestions of a hostile force from outside. If the suggestions had been confined to mental thoughts, that would have been normal, but it seems to have taken power enough to hold your mind and to push you to action. That means either an acute state of neurasthenia due to some wrong movements (the sexual habit you speak of, if you have been indulging, that would explain it) or a vital inability to bear the pressure of a spiritual struggle. The Asuric idea of self-destruction or of a solution through violence on yourself is entirely false and a suggestion of the hostile force, as are too the imaginations against the Mother. If the neurasthenic condition has gone so far or if there is so acute a vital inability to bear the pressure of your inner struggle, the one immediate remedy would be a rest and relief from the struggle. A change of air and surroundings, the restoration of contact with ordinary life and the cessation of a constant preoccupation with your difficulties would seem to be urgent and imperative. An appeasement of the nervous system is needed and, at the moment, this seems to be the only way. I am not suggesting a permanent departure or giving up of the spiritual endeavour. It is quiet and repose that you need, a temporary relief and release from the inner struggle. It is better to do this than to go on in the condition you describe in your letter. Consider what I

have written and reply to me in the morning, so that something may be immediately decided; for the sooner you get the relief you need from these suggestions and their nervous pressure, the better.

*

Neurasthenia in the sense it is now given is not nervous debility — that is an antiquated definition. Nervous debility is a special thing, an illness of the physical nervous; — neurasthenia proper is a weakness of the vital nervous. One may be as strong as a bull and hardy as an evergreen, yet have neurasthenia. Its mark is depression, gloom, reiteration of melancholy slogans, broodings on darkness, death, despair. The bull indulges in a sorrowful lowing; the evergreen moans, “Sunshine? sunshine? it is a fable — there is only cloud, mist, rain and tears!” That’s neurasthenia! Of course there are other and more exaggerated forms, but those are not in question. One can get rid of this kind, if the will is determined to do so.

*

If you want to get back your faith and keep it, you must first quiet your mind and make it open and obedient to the Mother’s force. If you have an excited mind at the mercy of every influence and impulse, you will remain a field of conflicting and contrary forces and cannot progress. You will begin to listen to your own ignorance instead of the Mother’s knowledge and your faith will naturally disappear and you will get into a wrong condition and a wrong attitude.

Your ailment is evidently in its foundation an illness of the nerves, not an ordinary physical disease. These maladies are a creation of the pressure of hostile forces; they increase if anything in you assents to them and accepts, and the more the mind gives value to them and dwells on them, the more they grow. The only way is to remain quiet, dissociate yourself and refuse to accept it or make much of it, allow the calm and strength that the Mother has been putting around you to enter your mind and permeate your nervous system. To do otherwise

is to place yourself on the side of the hostile forces that are afflicting you. The cure may take time because your nervous system has been long subjected to these influences and, when they are evicted, they return with violence to re-establish their hold. But if you can acquire and keep patience and fortitude and the right consciousness and right attitude with regard to these things, the hold they have will progressively disappear.

There are defects in your vital nature which stand in the way of a settled spiritual progress: but they can be eliminated if, dropping all exaggerated ideas of “sin” and unfitness, you look quietly at them and recognise and reject them. Tranquillise in yourself all over-eager demands and desires, all excitement and exaggeration of opposite feelings and impulses; seek first intensity of devotion but also calm strength, purity and peace. Allow a quiet and steady will to progress to be settled in you; learn the habit of a silent, persistent and thorough assimilation of what the Mother puts into you. This is the sound way to advance.

Hysteria

The attacks you speak of can come anywhere. It is an attack of the nervous centres and on the nervous being by contrary vital forces. The fact that it was not allowing you to come here and that it began to go when you steeped yourself in the atmosphere and ideas of *The Yoga and Its Objects* is significant of its origin. As for the other symptoms they were amassing to a height of the restlessness of the nervous being and are quite familiar in such cases. The desire to run away somewhere is a very usual symptom. Hysteria is also an attack by similar forces; but it is only one form; the attack need not take the appearance of any illness. The Doctors usually consider it as a type of what they call neurasthenia, nerve-weakness; but that simply locates the thing without explaining its real nature and cause. In both cases, here and there, it was an attempt to come across your spiritual life by creating a disability and state of disturbance in the vital-physical part of the being. Anyhow the fact that you could not go from

here and that the whole thing could be removed by us at once as soon as you opened somewhere by this feeling of sorrow at going shows that the spiritual life is stronger deep within you, even when covered over, than the opposite forces at their height. That is the main thing.

*

In these cases of hysteria usually nothing is gained by humouring or indulgence — firmness generally pays better, because most often there is something there that wants to be interesting and get sympathy and have a fuss made over the person. As for cure, that is a different matter, the subjective cause has to be got rid of and it is not easy.

Epilepsy

It is epilepsy. I had surmised from the beginning — the first attack and fall; but the acute condition must have been developed by the shock of the fall on the head — otherwise it might have taken a longer time to develop.

Epilepsy is itself a sign of vital attack, even if there is a physical cause for it — the attacking force not being able to disturb the mental and vital (proper) falls on the body and uses some physical cause (latent or growing) for the base of its action. For everything manifested in the physical must have a physical support or means for its expression.

*

I don't think — I know it is so [*that epilepsy and insanity are due to the influence of evil spirits*]. Epilepsy however is not possession — it is an attack or at most a temporary seizure. Insanity always indicates possession. The hereditary conditions create a predisposition. It is not possible for a vital Force or Being to invade or take possession unless there are doors open for it to enter. The door may be a vital consent or affinity or a physical defect in the being.

Madness

Insanity is always due to a vital attack, or rather possession although there is often a physical reason as well. Hysteria is due to a pressure from the vital world and there may be momentary possessions also. The same thing cannot be said of ordinary delirium, the cause of which is physical only — except in so far as all illness is an attack of lower forces of Nature, but these lower forces are not vital beings or what we call specifically hostile forces. They are simply performing their role in nature and of course there may be and probably is a being of some kind presiding over each kind of illness — in Bengal they give a special name to some of them and worship them as goddesses to avert the visitation. But as I say these are really Forces, not vital hostiles.

As for the interest of vital beings in possessing men — beings of the vital world are not constituted like men — they take a delight in struggle and suffering and disorder — it is their natural atmosphere. They want besides to get the taste of the physical world without being under the obligation of taking on birth and developing the psychic being and evolving towards the Divine. They wish to remain what they are and yet amuse themselves with the physical world and physical body.

*

Loss of balance produces disorder in the consciousness and the adverse forces use that loss of balance for attacking and wholly upsetting the system and doing their work. That is why people become hysterical or mad or filled with the desire to die or go away.

*

More easily [*a loss of balance*] occurs in the women than in the men but in some of the latter also. What produces the loss of balance is an inability to control the vital movements by the reason and an instability of the vital itself so that it sways from one feeling to another, one impulse to another without harmony or order.

*

Loss of mental balance is due to exaggerated ego, exaggerated sex, acceptance of a hostile force etc.

*

I may observe that X does not seem to me to be mad — there is no sign of a dislocation of the thinking mind due to lesion or accident or illness. What there is is a fixed idea and what is called *folie de persécution*, but that is not due to insanity — people have it who have otherwise an acute and perfectly well-ordered intelligence. X from his photograph appears to have had a mediumistic element in him and to have by some ill-chance entered into contact with powers of the vital plane which were able to put their suggestions in him — in that part of the consciousness which we call the vital mind — so that he is unable to ascertain things in their proper light and is tormented by the suggestions that have driven their furrows there in the form of habitual ideas that tyrannise over him and which he is unable to embrace or refuse. Unfortunately this is a malady of the consciousness, which it is very difficult to cure because the patient himself gives no assistance, as he clings to his fixed idea and even when the influence is taken away, calls it back upon him. Certainly he could be told from here that he is not mad and is not cursed of God — but that of itself might not be sufficient to cure him.

*

Usually there is some predisposition [*to madness*] behind, hereditary, natal (due to some circumstances of birth) or founded in insufficient nervous balance. Often there is in the vital excessive ambition, lust or some other violent Ripu. But these though they might distort or break the sadhana by opening it to undesirable Forces could not bring madness (megalomania, erotic mania, or what is called religious mania) — only if there is some taint or want of nervous balance. Anxiety or excessive stress of meditation would not bring it either except by acting upon some such predisposing weakness. In some cases possession by beings of the vital worlds without any such predisposing cause may be

possible, but that will be more easily curable. There are however cases of people who break down their nervous balance by wrong practices — there the madness has nothing really to do with the sadhana.

*

It is quite impossible for the descent of the Divine Grace to produce nausea and nervousness and a general disturbance like that — to think so is self-contradictory and foolish. Sometimes when one has pulled or strained, there is a headache or sensation as if of headache or if one pulls down too much force, then there may be a giddiness but one has only to remain quiet and that sets itself right by an assimilation of what has come down or otherwise. There is never any adverse or troublesome after-consequence. What seems to have happened is that X's finding the Force he had called down much more than what he was accustomed to, got nervous and went from nervousness into a panic — with the result of an upsetting of his stomach and circulation. If it is not that, then it must have been an attack of illness which he associated with the descent, but the attack seems to be of a nervous character. Probably if he had had the experience of this increased descent some time ago, he would not have been frightened and nothing would have happened, but the madness of Y following on the death of Z has created a panic and at the least thing each person thinks he is going to go mad or die. As nothing upsets the organism more than fear, they create by this general atmosphere of panic danger where there was none.

The idea that Y was sent mad by a descent of Divine Force is an absurdity and an irrational superstition. People go mad because they have a physical predisposition due either to heredity (as in the case of Y and A) or to some kind of organic cause or secret illness, like syphilis gone to the head or colon bacillus similarly misdirected or brain lesion or other material cause, the action being often brought up by some psychological factor (ambition turning to megalomania, hypochondria, melancholia etc.) or on the contrary itself bringing these to the surface. All

that happens in ordinary life and not only in Yoga; the same causes work here. The one thing is that there may be an invasion of an alien Force bringing about the upsetting, but it is not the Divine Force, it is a vital Force that invades. The Divine Force cannot by its descent be the cause of madness any more than it can be of apoplexy or any other physical illness. If there is no predisposition one may have all kinds of attacks from vital or other forces or from one's own movements of the lower nature, as violent as possible, but there will be no madness.

*

As to X's collapse, I did not intend to say anything about it just now, — for mental discussion of causes and consequences is not of much help at this juncture. I must say however that it is not the push for union with the Divine nor is it the Divine Force that leads to madness — it is the way in which people themselves act with regard to their claim for these things. To be more precise, I have never known a case of collapse in Yoga — as opposed to mere difficulty or negative failure, — a case of dramatic disaster in which there was not one of three causes, or more than one of the three at work. First, some sexual aberration — I am not speaking of mere sexuality which can be very strong in the nature without leading to collapse — or an attempt to sexualise spiritual experience on an animal or gross material basis; second, an exaggerated ambition, pride or vanity trying to seize on spiritual force or experience and turn it to one's own glorification — ending in megalomania; third, an unbalanced vital and a weak nervous system apt to follow its own imaginations and unruly impulses without any true mental will or strong vital will to steady or restrain it, and so at the mercy of the imaginations and suggestions of the adverse vital world when carried over the border into the intermediate zone of which I spoke in a recent message.² All the cases of collapse in this Asram have been due to these three causes — to the first two mostly. Only three or

² *This message is reproduced in Letters on Yoga — III, volume 30 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 296–303. — Ed.*

four of them have ended in madness — and in these the sexual aberration was invariably present; usually a violent fall from the Way is the consequence. X's is no exception to the rule. It is not because she pushed for union with the Divine that she went mad, but because she misused what came down for a mystic sexuality and the satisfaction of megalomaniac pride, in spite of my repeated and insistent warnings. For the moment that is all the light I can give on the matter — naturally I generalise and avoid details.

*

Those who fall into insanity have lost the true touch and got into the wrong contact. It is due either to some impurity and unspiritual desire with which the seeker enters into the way or some insincerity, egoism and false attitude or to some weakness in the brain or nervous system which cannot bear the Power it has called down into it.

The safest way is to follow the guidance of someone who has himself attained to mastery in the path. Only that guidance should be implicitly and sincerely followed; one's own mind and its ideas and fancies must not be allowed to interfere. It goes without saying that it must be a true guidance, not the leading of a tyro or an impostor.

*

I am not aware that anyone who has made a true surrender [*to his Guru*], loses his balance. Those who allow ego to come in naturally may, whether they follow a Guru as most Yogis have done, or try to go on their own individual strength.

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

LETTERS ON YOGA — IV, the last of four volumes, contains letters in which Sri Aurobindo speaks about the transformation of human nature that is attempted in the practice of his system of Yoga. The letters have been arranged in four parts dealing with these broad subject areas:

1. Sadhana on the Level of the Mind
2. Sadhana on the Level of the Vital
3. Sadhana on the Physical, Subconscient and Inconscient Levels
4. Difficulties in the Practice of the Integral Yoga

The letters in this volume have been selected from the extensive correspondence Sri Aurobindo carried on with his disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Letters from this corpus appear in seven volumes of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO: *Letters on Poetry and Art* (Volume 27), *Letters on Yoga* (Volumes 28–31), *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* (Volume 32), and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (Volume 35). The titles of these works specify the nature of the letters included in the volumes, but there is some overlap. For example, a number of letters in the present volume are also published in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. Another volume, *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest* (Volume 36), contains letters written by Sri Aurobindo before 1927, as well as some written after that date, mainly to persons living outside the Ashram.

The Writing of the Letters

Between 1927 and 1950, Sri Aurobindo replied to hundreds of correspondents in tens of thousands of letters, some of them many pages in length, others only a few words long. Most of his replies, however, were sent to just a few dozen disciples, almost all of them resident members of his Ashram; of these disciples, about a dozen received more than half

the replies. Sri Aurobindo wrote most of these letters between 1931 and 1937, the prime period of his correspondence. Letters before and after this period were written on a more restricted scale and confined to a few persons for special reasons.

Disciples in the Ashram wrote to Sri Aurobindo on loose sheets or sent him the notebooks in which they kept diaries as a record of their spiritual endeavour and as a means of communicating with him. These notebooks and loose sheets reached Sri Aurobindo via an internal “post” once or twice a day. Letters from outside which his secretary thought he might like to see were sent at the same time. Correspondents wrote in English if they knew the language well enough, but a good number wrote in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi or French, all of which Sri Aurobindo read fluently, or in other languages that were translated into English for him. The disciples usually addressed their letters to the Mother, since Sri Aurobindo had asked them to do so, but most assumed that he would answer them. He generally replied in the notebook or on the sheets sent by the correspondent, writing beneath the correspondent’s remarks or in the margin or between the lines; sometimes, however, he wrote his reply on a separate sheet of paper. In some cases he had his secretary prepare a typed copy of his letter, which he revised before it was sent. For correspondents living outside the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo sometimes addressed his reply not to the correspondent but to his secretary, who quoted, paraphrased or translated the reply and signed the letter himself. In these indirect replies, Sri Aurobindo often referred to himself in the third person.

While going through Sri Aurobindo’s letters, the reader should keep in mind that each letter was written to a specific person at a specific time, in specific circumstances and for a specific purpose. The subjects taken up arose in regard to the needs of the person. Sri Aurobindo varied the style and tone of his replies according to his relationship with the correspondent; to those with whom he was close, he sometimes employed humour, irony and even sarcasm.

Although written to specific recipients, these letters contain much of general interest, which justifies their inclusion in a volume destined for the general public. For the reasons mentioned above, however, the advice in them does not always apply equally to everyone. Aware of

this, Sri Aurobindo himself made some cautionary remarks about the proper use of his letters:

I should like to say, in passing, that it is not always safe to apply practically to oneself what has been written for another. Each sadhak is a case by himself and one cannot always or often take a mental rule and apply it rigidly to all who are practising the Yoga.

The tendency to take what I lay down for one and apply it without discrimination to another is responsible for much misunderstanding. A general statement, too, true in itself, cannot be applied to everyone alike or applied now and immediately without consideration of condition or circumstance or person or time.

It is not a fact that all I write is meant equally for everybody. That assumes that everybody is alike and there is no difference between sadhak and sadhak. If it were so everybody would advance alike and have the same experiences and take the same time to progress by the same steps and stages. It is not so at all.¹

The Typing and Revision of the Letters

Most of the shorter items in this volume, and many of the longer ones, were not typed or revised during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime and are reproduced here directly from his handwritten manuscripts. A good number of the letters, however, as mentioned above, were typed for Sri Aurobindo and revised by him before sending. Other letters were typed by the recipients for their own use or for circulation within the Ashram. At first, circulation of the letters was restricted to members of the Ashram and others whom Sri Aurobindo had accepted as disciples. When these letters were circulated, personal references were removed. Persons mentioned by Sri Aurobindo were indicated by their initials or

¹ First and third passages: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 473 and 475. Second passage: *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, volume 32, p. 349.

by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. Copies of these typed letters were kept by Sri Aurobindo's secretary and sometimes presented to Sri Aurobindo for revision before publication. These typed copies sometimes contained errors, most of which were corrected by him while revising.

Sri Aurobindo's revision sometimes amounted merely to making minor changes here and there, sometimes to a complete rewriting of the letter. He generally removed personal references if this had not already been done by the typist. When necessary, he also rewrote the openings or other parts of the replies in order to free them from dependence on the correspondent's question. As a result, some of these letters have an impersonal tone and read more like brief essays than personal communications.

The Publication of the Letters

Around 1933, Sri Aurobindo's secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta began to compile selections from the growing body of letters in order to publish them. During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, four small books of letters were published: *The Riddle of This World* (1933), *Lights on Yoga* (1935), *Bases of Yoga* (1936) and *More Lights on Yoga* (1948). Sri Aurobindo revised the typescripts of most of the letters in these books. During this revision, he continued the process of removing personal references. A letter he wrote in August 1937 alludes to his approach to the revision:

I had no idea of the book being published as a collection of personal letters — if that were done, they would have to be published whole as such without a word of alteration. I understood the book was meant like the others [*i.e., like Bases of Yoga, etc.*] where only what was helpful for an understanding of things Yogic was kept with necessary alterations and modifications. . . . With that idea I have been not only omitting but recasting and adding freely. Otherwise as a book it would be too scrappy and random for public interest. In the other books things too personal were omitted — it seems to me the same rule must hold here — except very sparingly where unavoidable.

A number of letters not included in the four books mentioned above were published in the mid and late 1940s in several journals associated with the Ashram: *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, *The Advent* and *Mother India*. Many letters in these journals were revised by Sri Aurobindo before publication.

By the mid-1940s a significant body of letters had been collected, typed and revised. In 1945 plans were made, with Sri Aurobindo's approval, to publish a collection of his letters. The work of compiling and editing these letters was done under his guidance. At that time, many typed or printed copies of letters, some revised, some not, were presented to Sri Aurobindo for approval or revision. The resulting material was arranged and published in a four-volume series entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*. Series One appeared in 1947, Series Two and Three in 1949 and Series Four in 1951. The first, second and fourth series contained letters on Yoga, the third letters on poetry and literature. In 1958, most of these letters on Yoga, along with many additional ones, were published under the titles *On Yoga II: Tome One* and *On Yoga II: Tome Two*, as Volumes VI and VII of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre collection. The first tome, with further additions, was reissued in 1969. In 1970 a new edition of the letters was published under the title *Letters on Yoga*; this edition contained many new letters not included in *On Yoga II*. The three volumes of the enlarged edition constituted volumes 22, 23 and 24 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library.

The present edition, also titled *Letters on Yoga*, incorporates most of the Centenary Library letters, but also contains a large number of letters that have come to light in the four decades between the two editions. One source of new letters is the correspondences of several disciples which were published in books after the Centenary Library edition had been issued. Govindbhai Patel's correspondence was published in 1974 in a book entitled *My Pilgrimage to the Spirit*; an enlarged edition appeared in 1977. Nagin Doshi's correspondence, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo: Letters to a Young Disciple*, was brought out in three volumes in 1974, 1976 and 1987. *Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* came out in two volumes in 1983 and 1984. Sahana Devi's correspondence came out in 1985 in a book entitled *At the Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*. Prithwi Singh's correspondence

came out in 1988 as *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to Prithwi Singh*. Dilip Kumar Roy's correspondence was issued in four volumes in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2011 under the title *Sri Aurobindo to Dilip*. A second source of new material is individual letters and small collections of letters published in Ashram journals and elsewhere after the Centenary Library had been issued. A third source is letters transcribed from manuscripts or from early typed copies. Many unpublished letters were discovered while reviewing correspondences long held by the Ashram; some of these had never been assessed to find letters for publication; others had been assessed, but relatively few letters were selected at the time. Additional letters were received by the Ashram upon the passing away of disciples. From the three sources mentioned above, many letters have been found that are worthy of publication. The present edition contains about one-third more letters than appear in the Centenary Library.

The Selection, Arrangement and Editing of the Letters

In compiling the present edition, all known manuscripts, typed copies or photographic copies of manuscripts and printed texts of letters were checked. From these sources, letters that seemed to be of general interest were selected. Electronic texts of the letters were then made and carefully checked at least twice against the handwritten, typed, photocopied, and printed versions of the texts.

The selected letters have been arranged according to subject and placed in the four volumes of the present edition. Each volume is divided and subdivided into parts, sections, chapters and groups with descriptive headings; each group, the lowest unit of division, contains one or more letters devoted to the specific subject of the group.

The present volume consists of 2147 separate items, an "item" being defined as what is published between one heading or asterisk and another heading or asterisk. Many items correspond exactly to individual letters; a good number, however, contain only part of the individual letters; a small number consist of two or more letters (or parts of them) that were joined together by early typists or editors and then revised in that form by Sri Aurobindo.

Whenever possible, the letters are reproduced to their full extent.

In some cases, however, portions of the letters have been omitted because they are not of general interest. A number of letters, for example, begin with personal remarks by Sri Aurobindo unrelated to the more substantial remarks which follow; these personal openings have often been removed. In some letters, Sri Aurobindo marked the transition from one part of a letter to another with a phrase such as “As to”; these transitional phrases have often been retained and stand at the beginning of abbreviated letters — that is, letters in which the first part of the letter has been omitted or placed elsewhere.

A number of letters, or portions of them, have been published in more than one volume of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Most of this doubling of letters occurs between *Letters on Yoga* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. The form of these letters is not always the same in both places. In *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, the manuscript version of a given letter has often been used because it contains Sri Aurobindo’s remarks on himself or the Mother or members of the Ashram. These personal remarks, as noted above, were usually removed by Sri Aurobindo when he revised the letter for publication as a letter on Yoga. This revised form of the letter has generally been reproduced in *Letters on Yoga*. Thus, a number of letters are available both in their original form and their revised form.

As in previous collections of Sri Aurobindo’s letters, the names of Ashram members and others have often been replaced by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. In any given letter, X stands for the first name replaced, Y for the second, Z for the third, A for the fourth, and so on. An X in a given letter has no necessary relation to an X in another letter. Names of Ashram members to whom Sri Aurobindo referred not as sadhaks but as holders of a certain position — notably Nolini Kanta Gupta in his position as Sri Aurobindo’s secretary — are given in full. Sometimes the names of people who played a role in the history of the period are also given.

In his letters Sri Aurobindo sometimes wrote Sanskrit words in the devanagari script; these words have been transliterated into roman script in this edition. Words in Bengali script have likewise been transliterated. This policy is in accord with the practice followed in Sri Aurobindo’s lifetime.

The reader may note that Sri Aurobindo almost always spelled

the word “Asram” without an “h” in his manuscripts. Around 1945, due to failing eyesight, he began dictating most of his writings to his amanuensis Nirodbaran; Nirodbaran sometimes spelled the word without an “h”, sometimes with one. In the present edition, the word is always spelled as it occurs in the manuscripts, both those of Sri Aurobindo and of Nirodbaran. In headings and other editorial matter, the spelling “Ashram” has been used, since this is now the official spelling of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.