

MOTHER INDIA

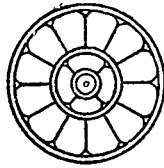
SPECIAL NUMBER. A TRUE NATIONAL EDUCATION

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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XVII

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

IN THIS NUMBER WE ARE REPRODUCING THE BROCHURE JUST PUBLISHED BY THE
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION, PONDICHERRY.

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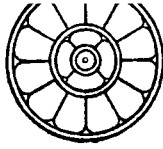
THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE A JOINT ONE
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India has or rather had the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it.

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

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

Blissings



*The Mother's Answers on Basic Issues of Indian Education**

1. *In view of the present and the future of national and international living, what is it that India should aim at in education?*

Prepare her children for the rejection of falsehood and the manifestation of Truth.

2. *By what steps could the country proceed to realise this high aim? How can a beginning in that direction be made?*

Make matter ready to manifest the Spirit.

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

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

4. *How does The Mother view the progress of Science and Technology in India? What contribution can they make to the growth of the Spirit in man?*

Its only use is to make the material basis stronger, completer and more effective for the manifestation of the Spirit.

* We sought The Mother's insights regarding some basic aspects of Indian education now being seriously reconsidered under the impact of the Education Commission. A few questions were formulated and posed to The Mother. And She was pleased to answer them. These are those questions and the answers.

5. *The country feels much concerned about national unity. What is The Mother's vision of things? How will India do her duty by herself and by the world?*

The unity of all the nations is the compelling future of the world. But for the unity of all nations to be possible, each nation must first realise its own unity.

6. *The language problem harasses India a good deal. What would be our correct attitude in this matter?*

Unity must be a living fact and not the imposition of an arbitrary rule. When India will be one, she will have spontaneously a language understood by all.

7. *Education has normally become literacy and a social status. Is it not an unhealthy trend? But how to give to education its inner worth and intrinsic enjoyability?*

Get out of conventions and insist on the growth of the soul.

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

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

(b) Insist on the paramount importance of the contact with the Spirit and the growth and manifestation of the Truth of the being.

5-8-1965

Section I

SRI AUROBINDO

A True National Education

First it is necessary to disengage from all ambiguities what we understand by a true education, its essential sense, its fundamental aim and significance. For we can then be sure of our beginnings and proceed securely to fix the just place and whole bearing of the epithet we seek to attach to the word. I must be sure what education itself is or should be before I can be sure what a national education is or should be. Let us begin then with our initial statement, as to which I think there can be no great dispute that there are three things which have to be taken into account in a true and living education, the man, the individual in his commonness and in his uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity. It follows that that alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member. It is by considering the whole question in the light of this large and entire principle that we can best arrive at a clear idea of what we would have our education to be and what we shall strive to accomplish by a national education. Most is this largeness of view and foundation needed here and now in India, the whole energy of whose life purpose must be at this critical turning of her destinies directed to her one great need, to find and rebuild her true self in individual and in people and to take again, thus repossessed of her inner greatness, her due and natural portion and station in the life of the human race.

There are however very different conceptions possible of man and his life, of the nation and its life and of humanity and the life of the human race, and our idea and endeavour in education may well vary considerably according to that difference. India has always had her own peculiar conception and vision of these things and we must see whether it is not really, as it is likely to be, that which will be or ought to be at the very root of our education and the one thing that will give it its truly national character. Man has not been seen by the thought of India as a living body developed by physical Nature which has evolved certain vital propensities, an ego, a

mind and a reason, an animal of the genus homo and in our case of the species *homo indicus*, whose whole life and education must be turned towards a satisfaction of these propensities under the government of a trained mind and reason and for the best advantage of the personal and the national ego. It has not been either the turn of her mind to regard man pre-eminently as a reasoning animal, or let us say, widening the familiar definition, a thinking, feeling and willing natural existence, a mental son of physical Nature, and his education as a culture of the mental capacities, or to define him as a political, social and economic being and his education as a training that will fit him to be an efficient, productive and well disciplined member of the society and the State. All these are no doubt aspects of the human being and she has given them a considerable prominence subject to her larger vision, but they are outward things, parts of the instrumentation of his mind, life and action, not the whole of the real man.

India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this that she has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, his *paramārtha* and highest *puruṣārtha*. And similarly India has not understood by the nation or people an organised State or an armed and efficient community well prepared for the struggle of life and putting all at the service of the national ego,—that is only the disguise of iron armour which masks and encumbers the national Purusha,—but a great communal soul and life that has appeared in the whole and has manifested a nature of its own and a law of that nature, a Swabhava and Swadharma, and embodied it in its intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, dynamic, social and political forms and culture. And equally then our cultural conception of humanity must be in accordance with her ancient vision of the universal manifesting in the human race, evolving through life and mind but with a high ultimate spiritual aim,—it must be the idea of the spirit, the soul of humanity advancing through struggle and concert towards oneness, increasing its experience and maintaining a needed diversity through the varied culture and life

motives of its many peoples, searching for perfection through the development of the powers of the individual and his progress towards a diviner being and life, but feeling out too though more slowly after a similar perfectibility in the life of the race. It may be disputed whether this is a true account of the human or the national being, but if it is once admitted as a true description, then it should be clear that the only true education will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation. That is the principle on which we must build, that the central motive and the guiding ideal. It must be an education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its dharma and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humaniy. And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being.¹

¹ From "A Preface on National Education" in the philosophic monthly *Arya*, January, 1921. Reprinted in the *Bulletin of Physical Education*, Vol. III, No. 1 (Feb. 1951), pp. 2 *et seq*

Principles of True Teaching

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine. Child or man, boy or girl, there is only one sound principle of good teaching. Difference of age only serves to diminish or increase the amount of help and guidance necessary; it does not change its nature.

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a pre-arranged career. To force the nature to abandon its own *dharma* is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common. Every one has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it and use it. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.

The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be. The basis of a man's nature is almost always, in addition to his soul's past, his heredity, his surroundings,

his nationality, his country, the soil from which he draws sustenance, the air which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed. They mould him not the less powerfully because insensibly, and from that then we must begin. We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life which is alien to that in which it must physically move. If anything has to be brought in from outside, it must be offered, not forced on the mind. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development. There are souls which naturally revolt from their surroundings and seem to belong to another age and clime. Let them be free to follow their bent; but the majority languish, become empty, become artificial, if artificially moulded into an alien form. It is God's arrangement that they should belong to a particular nation, age, society, that they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education.¹

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education (Some Preliminary Ideas)*, Calcutta : Arya Publishing House, 4th ed. 1953, pp. 3-6. Appeared for the first time in the weekly *Karmayogin* in 1910 (Vol. I, Nos 32-39), when Sri Aurobindo was a leader of the National (Swadeshi) Movement in Bengal.

Multiplication of Subjects —an Error

The first attention of the teacher must be given to the medium and the instruments, and, until these are perfected, to multiply subjects of regular instruction is to waste time and energy. When the mental instruments are sufficiently developed to acquire a language easily and swiftly, that is the time to introduce him to many languages, not when he can only partially understand what he is taught and masters it laboriously and imperfectly. Moreover, one who has mastered his own language, has one very necessary facility for mastering another. With the linguistic faculty unsatisfactorily developed in one's own tongue, to master others is impossible. To study science with the faculties of observation, judgment, reasoning and comparison only slightly developed is to undertake a useless and thankless labour. So it is with all other subjects.

The mother-tongue is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium. Almost every child has an imagination, an instinct for words, a dramatic faculty, a wealth of idea and fancy. These should be interested in the literature and history of the nation. Instead of stupid and dry spelling and reading books, looked on as a dreary and ungrateful task, he should be introduced by rapidly progressive stages to the most interesting parts of his own literature and the life around him and behind him, and they should be put before him in such a way as to attract and appeal to the qualities of which I have spoken. All other study at this period should be devoted to the perfection of the mental functions and the moral character. A foundation should be laid at this time for the study of history, science, philosophy, art, but not in an obtrusive and formal manner. Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him and through them let him master without knowing it the living and human parts of his nation's history. Every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to those qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiry. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the

gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the groundwork of the faculty of the artist.

It is by allowing Nature to work that we get the benefit of the gifts she has bestowed on us. Humanity in its education of children has chosen to thwart and hamper her processes and, by so doing, has done much to thwart and hamper the rapidity of its onward march. Happily, saner ideas are now beginning to prevail. But the way has not yet been found. The past hangs about our necks with all its prejudices and errors and will not leave us; it enters into our most radical attempts to return to the guidance of the all-wise Mother. We must have the courage to take up clearer knowledge and apply it fearlessly in the interests of posterity. Teaching by snippets must be relegated to the lumber-room of dead sorrows. The first work is to interest the child in life, work and knowledge, to develop his instruments of knowledge with the utmost thoroughness, to give him mastery of the medium he must use. Afterwards, the rapidity with which he will learn will make up for any delay in taking up regular studies, and it will be found that, where now he learns a few things badly, then he will learn many things thoroughly well.¹

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education (Some Preliminary Ideas)*, pp 26-30 (See footnote on p. 7)

The Phenomena of Genius

The powers peculiar to this highest stratum of knowledge are chiefly known to us from the phenomena of genius,—sovereign discernment, intuitive perception of truth, plenary inspiration of speech, direct vision of knowledge to an extent often amounting to revelation, making a man a prophet of truth. These powers are rare in their higher development, though many possess them imperfectly or by flashes. They are still greatly distrusted by the critical reason of mankind because of the admixture of error, caprice and a biassed imagination which obstructs and distorts their perfect workings. Yet it is clear that humanity could not have advanced to its present stage if it had not been for the help of these faculties, and it is a question with which educationists have not yet grappled, what is to be done with this mighty and baffling element, the element of genius in the pupil. The mere instructor does his best to discourage and stifle genius, the more liberal teacher welcomes it. Faculties so important to humanity cannot be left out of our consideration. It is foolish to neglect them. Their imperfect development must be perfected, the admixture of error, caprice and biassed fancifulness must be carefully and wisely removed. But the teacher cannot do it; he would eradicate the good corn as well as the tares if he interfered. Here, as in all educational operations, he can only put the growing soul into the way of its own perfection.¹

¹ Śri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education (Some Preliminary Ideas)*, pp 11, 12. (See foot-note on p. 7)

The Moral Nature

In the economy of man the mental nature rests upon the moral, and the education of the intellect divorced from the perfection of the moral and emotional nature is injurious to human progress. Yet, while it is easy to arrange some kind of curriculum or syllabus which will do well enough for the training of the mind, it has not yet been found possible to provide under modern conditions a suitable moral training for the school and college. The attempt to make boys moral and religious by the teaching of moral and religious text-books is a vanity and a delusion, precisely because the heart is not the mind and to instruct the mind does not necessarily improve the heart. It would be an error to say that it has no effect. It throws certain seeds of thought into the *antaḥkaraṇa* and, if these thoughts become habitual, they influence the conduct. But the danger of moral text-books is that they make the thinking of high things mechanical and artificial, and whatever is mechanical and artificial is inoperative for good.

There are three things which are of the utmost importance in dealing with a man's moral nature, the emotions, the *saṁskāras* or formed habits and associations, and the *svabhāva* or nature. The only way for him to train himself morally is to habituate himself to the right emotions, the noblest associations, the best mental, emotional and physical habits and the following out in right action of the fundamental impulses of his essential nature. You can impose a certain discipline on children, dress them into a certain mould, lash them into a desired path, but unless you can get their hearts and natures on your side, the conformity to this imposed rule becomes a hypocritical and heartless, a conventional, often a cowardly compliance. . . .

As in the education of the mind, so in the education of the heart, the best way is to put the child into the right road to his own perfection and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, helping, but not interfering. The one excellent element in the English boarding school is that the master at his best stands there as a moral guide and example, leaving the boys largely to influence and help each other in following the path silently shown to them. . . . The old Indian system of the *Guru* commanding by his knowledge and sanctity the implicit obedience, perfect

admiration, reverent emulation of the student was a far superior method of moral discipline....

The first rule of moral training is to suggest and invite, not command or impose. The best method of suggestion is by personal example, daily converse and the books read from day to day. These books should contain, for the younger student, the lofty examples of the past given, not as moral lessons, but as things of supreme human interest, and, for the elder student, the great thoughts of great souls, the passages of literature which set fire to the highest emotions and prompt the highest ideals and aspirations, the records of history and biography which exemplify the living of those great thoughts, noble emotions and aspiring ideals. This is a kind of good company, *satsaṅga*, which can seldom fail to have effect so long as sententious sermonising is avoided, and becomes of the highest effect if the personal life of the teacher is itself moulded by the great things he places before his pupils. It cannot, however, have full force unless the young life is given an opportunity, within its limited sphere, of embodying in action the moral impulses which rise within it....

Every boy should, therefore, be given practical opportunity as well as intellectual encouragement to develop all that is best in the nature. If he has bad qualities, bad habits, bad *samskāras*, whether of mind or body, he should not be treated harshly as a delinquent, but encouraged to get rid of them by the Rajayogic method of *samīyama*, rejection and substitution. He should be encouraged to think of them, not as sins or offences, but as symptoms of a curable disease, alterable by a steady and sustained effort of the will,—falsehood being rejected whenever it rises into the mind and replaced by truth, fear by courage, selfishness by sacrifice and renunciation, malice by love. Great care will have to be taken that unformed virtues are not rejected as faults. The wildness and recklessness of many young natures are only the overflowings of an excessive strength, greatness and nobility. They should be purified, not discouraged.

I have spoken of morality; it is necessary to speak a word of religious teaching. There is a strange idea prevalent that by merely teaching the dogmas of religion children can be made pious and moral.... No religious teaching is of any value unless it is lived, and the use of various kinds of *sādhanā*, spiritual self-training and exercise, is the only effective preparation for religious living. The ritual of prayer, homage, ceremony is craved for by many minds as an essential preparation and, if not made an end in itself, is a great help to spiritual progress; if it is withheld, some

other form of meditation, devotion or religious duty must be put in its place....

But whether distinct teaching in any form of religion is imparted or not, the essence of religion, to live for God, for humanity, for country, for others and for oneself in these, must be made the ideal in every school....¹

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education (Some Preliminary Ideas)*, pp. 13-22 (See footnote on p. 7)

The National Value of Sports

In their more superficial aspect they appear merely as games and amusements which people take up for entertainment or as a field for the outlet of the body's energy and natural instinct of activity or for a means of the development and maintenance of the health and strength of the body; but they are or can be much more than that: they are also fields for the development of habits, capacities and qualities which are greatly needed and of the utmost service to a people in war or in peace, and in its political and social activities, in most indeed of the provinces of a combined human endeavour. It is to this which we may call the national aspect of the subject that I would wish to give especial prominence.

In our own time these sports, games and athletics have assumed a place and command a general interest such as was seen only in earlier times in countries like Greece, Greece where all sides of human activity were equally developed and the gymnasium, chariot-racing and other sports and athletics had the same importance on the physical side as on the mental side the Arts and poetry and the drama, and were especially stimulated and attended to by the civic authorities of the City State. It was Greece that made an institution of the Olympiad and the recent re-establishment of the Olympiad as an international institution is a significant sign of the revival of the ancient spirit. This kind of interest has spread to a certain extent to our own country and India has begun to take a place in international contests such as the Olympiad. The newly founded State in liberated India is also beginning to be interested in developing all sides of the life of the nation and is likely to take an active part and a habit of direction in fields which were formerly left to private initiative. It is taking up, for instance, the question of the foundation and preservation of health and physical fitness in the nation and in the spreading of a general recognition of its importance. It is in this connection that the encouragement of sports and associations for athletics and all activities of this kind would be an incalculable assistance. A generalisation of the habit of taking part in such exercises in childhood and youth and early manhood would help greatly towards the creation of physically fit and energetic people.

But of a higher import than the foundation, however necessary,

of health, strength and fitness of the body is the development of discipline and morale and sound and strong character towards which these activities can help. There are many sports which are of the utmost value towards this end, because they help to form and even necessitate the qualities of courage, hardihood, energetic action and initiative or call for skill, steadiness of will or rapid decision and action, the perception of what is to be done in an emergency and dexterity in doing it. One development of the utmost value is the awakening of the essential and instinctive body consciousness which can see and do what is necessary without any indication from mental thought and which is equivalent in the body to swift insight in the mind and spontaneous and rapid decision in the will. One may add the formation of a capacity for harmonious and right movements of the body, especially in a combined action, economic of physical effort and discouraging waste of energy, which result from such exercises as marches or drill and which displace the loose and straggling, the inharmonious or disorderly or wasteful movements common to the untrained individual body. Another invaluable result of these activities is the growth of what has been called the sporting spirit. That includes good humour and tolerance and consideration for all, a right attitude and friendliness to competitors and rivals, self-control and scrupulous observance of the laws of the game, fair play and avoidance of the use of foul means, an equal acceptance of victory or defeat without bad humour, resentment or ill-will towards successful competitors, loyal acceptance of the decisions of the appointed judge, umpire or referee. These qualities have their value for life in general and not only for sport, but the help that sport can give to their development is direct and invaluable. If they could be made more common not only in the life of the individual but in the national life and in the international where at the present day the opposite tendencies have become too rampant, existence in this troubled world of ours would be smoother and might open to a greater chance of concord and amity of which it stands very much in need. More important still is the custom of discipline, obedience, order, habit of team-work, which certain games necessitate. For without them success is uncertain or impossible. Innumerable are the activities in life, especially in national life, in which leadership and obedience to leadership in combined action are necessary for success, victory in combat or fulfilment of a purpose. The role of the leader, the captain, the power and skill of his leadership, his ability to command, the confidence and ready obedience of his followers is of the utmost importance in all kinds of combined action or

enterprise; but few can develop these things without having learnt themselves to obey and to act as one mind or as one body with others. This strictness of training, this habit of discipline and obedience is not inconsistent with individual freedom; it is often the necessary condition for its right use, just as order is not inconsistent with liberty but rather the condition for the right use of liberty and even for its preservation and survival. In all kinds of concerted action this rule is indispensable : orchestration becomes necessary and there could be no success for an orchestra in which individual musicians played according to their own fancy and refused to follow the indications of the conductor. In spiritual things also the same rule holds; a sadhak who disregarded the guidance of the Guru and preferred the untrained inspirations of the novice could hardly escape the stumbles or even the disasters which so often lie thick around the path to spiritual realisation. I need not enumerate the other benefits which can be drawn from the training that sport can give or dwell on their use in the national life; what I have said is sufficient. At any rate, in schools like ours and in universities sports have now a recognised and indispensable place; for even a highest and completest education of the mind is not enough without the education of the body. Where the qualities I have enumerated are absent or insufficiently present, a strong individual will or a national will may build them up, but the aid given by sports to their development is direct and in no way negligible. This would be a sufficient reason for the attention given to them in our Ashram, though there are others which I need not mention here. I am concerned here with their importance and the necessity of the qualities they create or stimulate for our national life. The nation which possesses them in the highest degree is likely to be the strongest for victory, success and greatness, but also for the contribution it can make towards the bringing about of unity and a more harmonious world order towards which we look as our hope for humanity's future.¹

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram 1952), pp. 1-7 The present extract appeared originally as a part of the Message that Sri Aurobindo gave for the inaugural number of the Ashram Quarterly, *Bulletin of Physical Education* (Vol. I, No. 1; Feb 1949).

The True Foundation of Education

What was the secret of that gigantic intellectuality, spirituality and super-human moral force which we see pulsating in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, in the ancient philosophy, in the supreme poetry, art, sculpture and architecture of India ? What was at the basis of the incomparable public works and engineering achievements, the opulent and exquisite industries, the great triumphs of science, scholarship, jurisprudence, logic, metaphysics, the unique social structure ?...

...The first necessity for the building up of a great intellectual superstructure is to provide a foundation strong enough to bear it. Those systems of education which start from an insufficient knowledge of man, think they have provided a satisfactory foundation when they have supplied the student with a large or well-selected mass of information on the various subjects which comprise the best part of human culture at the time. The school gives the materials, it is for the student to use them,—this is the formula. But the error here is fundamental. Information cannot be the foundation of intelligence, it can only be part of the material out of which the knower builds knowledge, the starting-point, the nucleus of fresh discovery and enlarged creation. An education that confines itself to imparting knowledge, is no education. The various faculties of memory, judgment, imagination, perception, reasoning, which build the edifice of thought and knowledge for the knower, must not only be equipped with their fit and sufficient tools and materials, but trained to bring fresh materials and use more skilfully those of which they are in possession. And the foundation of the structure they have to build, can only be the provision of a fund of force and energy sufficient to bear the demands of a continually growing activity of the memory, judgment and creative power. Where is that energy to be found ?

...An infinite energy, *prakṛti*, *māyā* or *śakti*, pervades the world, pours itself into every name and form, and the clod, the plant, the insect, the animal, the man are, in their phenomenal existence, merely more or less efficient *ādhāras* of this Energy. We are each of us a dynamo into which waves of that energy have been generated and stored, and are being perpetually conserved, used up and replenished. The same force which moves in the star and the planet, moves in us, and all our thought and

action are merely its play and born of the complexity of its functionings. There are processes by which man can increase his capacity as an *ādhāra*. There are other processes by which he can clear of obstructions the channel of communication between himself and the universal energy and bring greater and greater stores of it pouring into his soul and brain and body. This continual improvement of the *ādhāra* and increase in quantity and complexiy of action of the informing energy, is the whole aim of evolution....

If this theory be correct, the energy at the basis of the operation of intelligence must be in ourselves and it must be capable of greater expansion and richer use to an extent practically unlimited. And this also must be a sound principle, that the more we can increase and enrich the energy, the greater will be potentially the range, power and activity of the functions of our mind and the consequent vigour of our intellectuality and the greatness of our achievement....

The practice of *brahmacarya* is the first and most necessary condition of increasing the force within and turning it to such uses as may benefit the possessor or mankind. All human energy has a physical basis. The mistake made by European materialism is to suppose the basis to be everything and confuse it with the source. The source of life and energy is not material but spiritual, but the basis, the foundation on which the life and energy stand and work, is physical...To raise up the physical to the spiritual is *brahmacarya*, for by the meeting of the two the energy which starts from one and produces the other is enhanced and fulfils itself.

...All passion, lust, desire wastes the energy by pouring it, either in the gross form or a sublimated subtler form, out of the body. Immorality in act throws it out in the gross form; immorality of thought in the subtle form. In either case there is waste, and unchastity is of the mind and speech as well as of the body.¹

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Brain of India* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 5th ed. 1955), pp. 9-15. First published in the weekly *Karmayogin* from 9th October to 13th November, 1909 (Vol. I, Nos. 16-19).

The Right Object of Education

Formerly, education was merely a mechanical forcing of child's nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge in which his individual subjectivity was the last thing considered, and his family upbringing was a constant repression and compulsory shaping of his habits, his thoughts, his character into the mould fixed for them by the conventional ideas or individual interests and ideals of the teachers and parents. The discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child's own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system; but it still fell short because it still regarded him as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated. But at least there was a glimmering of the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as "the leader of the march set in our front," will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being.¹

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (Pondicherry · Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1949), pp. 36, 37. First published serially in the philosophic monthly *Arya*, under the title "The Psychology of Social Development", from August, 1916 to July, 1918.

Aesthetic Education

The system of education which, instead of keeping artistic training apart as a privilege for a few specialists, frankly introduces it as a part of culture no less necessary than literature or science, will have taken a great step forward in the perfection of national education and the general diffusion of a broad-based human culture. It is not necessary that every man should be an artist. It is necessary that every man should have his artistic faculty developed, his taste trained, his sense of beauty and insight into form and colour and that which is expressed in form and colour, made habitually active, correct and sensitive. It is necessary that those who create, whether in great things or small, whether in the unusual masterpieces of art and genius or in the small common things of use that surround a man's daily life, should be habituated to produce and the nation habituated to expect the beautiful in preference to the ugly, the noble in preference to the vulgar, the fine in preference to the crude, the harmonious in preference to the gaudy. A nation surrounded daily by the beautiful, noble, fine and harmonious becomes that which it is habituated to contemplate and realises the fullness of the expanding Spirit in itself.¹

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The National Value of Art* (Pondicherry . Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 4th ed. 1953), pp. 56-58. First published serially in the weekly *Karmayogin* in November-December, 1909 (Vol. I, Nos 20-25)

Section II
THE MOTHER

The Psychic and the Spiritual Education

Till now we have dealt with the education which can be given to all children born upon earth; it is concerned with purely human faculties. But one need not stop there. Every human being carries hidden within him the possibility of a greater consciousness beyond the frame of his normal life through which he can participate in a higher and vaster life. Indeed, in all exceptional beings it is always this consciousness that governs their life, and organises both the circumstances of their life and their individual reaction to these circumstances. What the human mind does not know and cannot do, this consciousness knows and does. It is like a light that shines at the centre of the being radiating through the thick coverings of the external consciousness. Some have a vague perception of its presence; a good many children are under its influence which shows itself very distinctly at times in their spontaneous reactions and even in their words. Unfortunately parents most often do not know what it is and do not understand what is happening in their children; therefore their reaction with regard to these phenomena is not happy, and all their education consists in making the child as unconscious as possible in this domain, concentrate all its attention upon external things and thus form the habit of looking upon those alone as important. This concentration upon external things is very useful; but it must be done in the proper way. The three lines of education—physical, vital and mental—deal with that which may be defined as the means of building up the personality, raising the individual out of the amorphous subconscious mass, making it a well-defined self-conscious entity. With psychic education we come to the problem of the true motive of life, the reason of our existence upon earth, the very discovery to which life must lead and the result of that discovery, the consecration of the individual to his eternal principle. This discovery very generally is associated with a mystic feeling, a religious life, because it is religions particularly that have been occupied with this aspect of life. But it need not be necessarily so : the mystic notion of God may be replaced by the more philosophical notion of truth and still the discovery will remain essentially the same, only the road leading to it may be taken even by the most intransigent positivist. For mental notions and ideas possess a very secondary importance in preparing for the psychic life. The

important thing is to live the experience; for it carries its own reality and force apart from any theory that may precede or accompany or follow it; because most often theories are mere explanations that are given to oneself in order to have more or less the illusion of knowledge. Man clothes the ideal or the absolute he seeks to attain with different names according to the environment in which he is born and the education he has received. The experience is essentially the same, if it is sincere: it is only the words and phrases in which it is formulated that differ according to the belief and the mental education of the person who experiences. All formulation is only an approximation that should be progressive and grow in precision as the experience itself becomes more and more precise and co-ordinated. Still, if we are to give a general outline of psychic education, we must have an idea, however relative it may be, of what we mean by the psychic being. Thus one can say, for example, that the creation of an individual being is the result of the projection, in time and space, of one of the countless possibilities latent in the Supreme Origin of all manifestation which, through the one and universal consciousness, is concretised in the law or the truth of an individual and so becomes by a progressive growth its soul or psychic being.

I stress the point that what I have said here in brief does not profess to be a complete exposition of the reality and does not exhaust the subject—far from it. It is just a summary explanation for a practical purpose so that it can serve as a basis for the education with which we are concerned.

It is through the psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him and the circumstances of his life. In most cases this presence acts, so to say, from behind the veil, unrecognised and unknown; but in some, it is perceptible and its action recognisable; in a few among these, again, the presence becomes tangible and its action quite effective. These go forward in their life with an assurance and a certitude all their own, they are masters of their destiny. It is precisely with a view to obtain this mastery and become conscious of the psychic presence that psychic education has to be pursued. But for that there is a need of a special factor, the personal will. For till now, the discovery of the psychic being, the identification with it, has not been among the recognised subjects of education. It is true one can find in special treatises useful and practical hints on the subject, and also there are persons fortunate enough to meet someone capable of showing the path and giving the necessary help to follow it. More often, however, the at-

tempt is left to one's own personal initiative: the discovery is a personal matter and a great resolution, a strong will and an untiring perseverance are indispensable to reach the goal. Each one must, so to say, chalk out his own path through his own difficulties. The goal is known to some extent; for, most of those who have reached it, have described it more or less clearly. But the supreme value of the discovery lies in its spontaneity, its genuineness : that escapes all ordinary mental laws. And this is why anyone wanting to take up the adventure, usually seeks at first some person who has gone through it successfully and is able to sustain him and show him the way. Yet there are some solitary travellers and for them a few general indications may be useful.

The starting-point is to seek in oneself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity. Then you decentralise, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, you feel in their feelings, you live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated with a marvellous consciousness without time and limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation. There are many others. All combine in pulling you out of the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.

But, as I have already said, the path to come to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with traps and problems and to face them demands a determination that must be equal to all test and trial. It is like the explorer's journey through virgin forest, in quest of an unknown land, towards a great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery to be made requiring as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few words of advice may be useful to one resolved to undertake it :

The first and most important point which must never be forgotten is that with the mind it is impossible to judge spiritual things. All who

have written on yogic discipline have said so, but very few are those who put it into practice and yet, in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental judgment, mental opinion and reaction.

Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as a help for progress and make at once the progress required.

Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure. Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain perfectly quiet in the face of anything and everything. And yet be always awake to find out the progress you have still to make and lose no time in making it.

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes your superficial understanding.

Never complain of the behaviour of anyone, unless you have the power to change in his nature what makes him so behave; and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining.

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing small or big in this enterprise of a great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus before you eat, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you will take brings to your body the substance necessary to serve as a solid basis for your effort towards the great discovery, and give it the energy of persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to bed, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring to your brain calmness and quietness that on waking up you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help, at least not hinder in any way, your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth, concentrate awhile just long enough to check your words and allow those alone that are absolutely necessary and are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

In brief, never forget the purpose and the goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there soaring over you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will open suddenly and you will come out into a dazzling splendour that will bring to you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have lived always and always shall live, that the external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect freed from all chains and instead of advancing with difficulty under the load of circumstances imposed upon you by nature, borne and suffered by you, you can, if you do not want to be crushed under them, walk on straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.

And yet this release from all slavery to the flesh, this liberation from all personal attachment is not the supreme fulfilment. There are other steps to take before you reach the summit. And even these steps can and should be followed by others which will open the gates of the future. It is these later steps that will be the subject-matter of what I call spiritual education.

But before we enter this new stage and deal with the question in detail, an explanation is useful. Why is it necessary to make a distinction between the psychic education of which we have just now spoken and the spiritual education of which we are going to speak presently? It is necessary because the two are usually mixed up under the generic name "yogic discipline", although the goal they aim at is very different in each case: for one, it is a higher realisation upon earth, for the other, an escape from all earthly manifestation, even away from the whole universe, a return to the unmanifest.

So one can say that the psychic life is the life immortal, endless time, limitless space, ever progressive change, unbroken continuity in the world of forms. The spiritual consciousness, on the other hand, means to live the infinite and eternal, to throw oneself outside all creation, beyond time and space. To become fully aware of your psychic being and to live a psychic life you must abolish in you all selfishness; but to live a spiritual life you must be selfless.

Here also in spiritual education, the goal you set before you will assume, in the mind's formulation of it, different names according to the environment in which you have grown, the path you have followed and the affinities of your temperament. If you have a religious tendency you will call it God and your spiritual effort will be towards identification with the transcendent God beyond all form, in opposition to the Immanent God dwelling in each form. Others will call it the Absolute, the Supreme

Origin, others again, Nirvana; yet others who view the world as an unreal illusion will name it the Only Reality and to those who regard all manifestation as falsehood it will be the Sole Truth. And everyone of these definitions contains an element of truth, but all are incomplete, expressing only one aspect of what is. Here also the mental formulation has no great importance and once you go beyond the intermediate steps, it is always the same experience. In any case, the most effective starting-point, the swiftest method is total self-surrender. Besides, no joy is more perfect than that of a total self-surrender to the highest point your conception can reach : for some it is the notion of God, for others that of Perfection. If this surrender is made with persistence and ardour, a moment comes when you go beyond the concept and arrive at an experience that escapes all description, but which is almost always identical in its effect on the being. As your surrender becomes more and more perfect and integral, it will carry with it the aspiration for identification, a total fusion with That to which you have given yourself, and little by little this aspiration will overcome all differences and all resistances, especially if the aspiration has, added to it, an intense and spontaneous love; then nothing can stand in the way of its victorious onset.

There is an essential difference between this identification and the one with the psychic being. The latter can be made more and more durable and, in certain cases, it becomes permanent and never leaves the person who has realised it, whatever may be his outer activities. In other words, the identification is no more realised only in meditation and concentration, but its effect can be felt at every moment of one's life, in sleep as well as in waking.

On the contrary, liberation from all form and identification with that which is beyond form cannot last in an absolute manner; for it would automatically bring about the dissolution of the material form. Certain traditions say that this dissolution happens inevitably within twenty days of the total identification. Yet it is not necessarily so; and even if the experience is momentary, it produces in the consciousness results that are never obliterated and have repercussions on all the levels of the being, both internal and external. Moreover, once the identification has been made, it can be renewed at will, provided you know how to put yourself in the same conditions.

This merging into the formless is the supreme liberation sought by those who want to escape from existence which has no attraction for them any more. It is nothing surprising that they are not satisfied with the world

in its present form. But a liberation that leaves the world as it is and does in no way affect the conditions of life from which others suffer, cannot satisfy those who refuse to live in a felicity which they alone enjoy, and who dream of a world more worthy of the splendours that hide behind its apparent disorder and general misery. They dream that others should profit by the wonders they have discovered in their inner explorations. And the means to do so is within their reach, now that they have arrived at the summit of their ascent.

From beyond the frontiers of form, a new force can be evoked, a power of consciousness which has not yet manifested and which, by its emergence, will be able to change the course of things and bring to birth a new world. For the true solution of the problem of suffering, ignorance and death is not the individual escape by self-annihilation from earthly miseries into the non-manifest, nor a problematical collective escape from universal suffering by an integral and final return of the creation to its creator, thus curing the universe by abolishing it, but a transformation, a total transfiguration of matter brought about by the logical continuation of Nature's ascending march in her progress towards perfection, by the creation of a new species that will be in relation to man what man is in relation to the animal and that will manifest upon earth a new force, a new consciousness and a new power. Then will begin also a new education which can be called the supramental education; it will, by its all-powerful action, work not only upon the consciousness of individual beings, but upon the very substance of which they are built and upon the environment in which they live.

Contrary to the type of education we have spoken of hitherto that progresses from below upward through an ascending movement of the different parts of the being, the supramental education will progress from above downward, its influence spreading from one state of being to another till the final state, the physical, is reached. This last transformation will happen in a visible manner only when the inner states of being have already been considerably transformed. It would be therefore quite unreasonable to try to judge the presence of the supramental by physical appearances. The physical is the last to change and the supramental force can be at work in a being long before something of it becomes perceptible in the life of the body.

In brief, one can say that the supramental education will result not merely in a progressively developing formation of the human nature, an increasing growth of its latent faculties, but a transformation of the

nature itself, a transformation of the being in its entirety, a new ascent of the species above and beyond man towards superman, leading in the end to the appearance of the divine race upon earth.¹

¹ The Mother, *On Education* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1952), pp 47-62 First published serially in *Bulletin of Physical Education* from Nov. 1950 to Feb. 1952.

Diverse Educational Insights

(I)

An aimless life is always a miserable life.

*
**

Indeed, if the education is to have its maximum result, it must begin even before birth....

*
**

The part of education which the mother has to go through is to see that her thoughts are always beautiful and pure, her feelings always noble and fine, her material surroundings as harmonious as possible and full of a great simplicity.

*
**

Education to be complete must have five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being : the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual.

*
**

...the first thing to do, in order to be able to educate the child, is to educate oneself....

*
**

To say good words, give wise advice to a child has very little effect, if one does not show by one's living example the truth of what one teaches.

*
**

If you wish to be respected by your child, have respect for yourself and be at every moment worthy of respect. Never be arbitrary, despotic, impatient, ill-tempered.

*
**

Do not scold your child except with a definite purpose and only when quite indispensable.

*
**

Particularly, take care not to rebuke him for a fault which you yourself commit.

*
**

Fear is the worst incentive for education and the surest way of attracting what is feared.

*
**

...everyone possesses in a large measure, and the exceptional individual in an increasing degree of precision, two opposite tendencies in the character, almost in equal proportion, which are like the light and the shadow of the same thing.

(2)

Heroism is to be able to stand for the Truth in all circumstances.

*
**

We are always surrounded by the things of which we think.

*
**

Change yourself and the circumstances will change.

*
**

When you are truly changed, everything around you will also be changed.

*
**

A persevering will surmounts all obstacles.

*
**

To anticipate difficulties is to help them happen.

*
**

...each crisis can be changed into a new progress...

*
**

All who are truly strong and powerful are always very calm. It is only the weak who are restless.

*
**

The body must not rule, it has to obey.

*
**

One must be able to control oneself before one can hope to govern others.

*
**

When one does not progress, one feels bored.

*
**

To conquer a desire brings more joy than to satisfy it.

*
**

If you have greed for food you are no more the master of food, it is the food that masters you.

*
**

A noblest courage is to recognise one's faults.

*
**

In true courage there is no impatience and no rashness.

*
**

It is in a calm and patient confidence that lies the certitude of victory.

*
**

There is a joy in seeking, a joy in waiting, a joy in aspiring, at least as great as in possession.

*
**

Insincerity leads to ruin.

*
**

All depends, not on what one does but on the attitude behind the action.

*
**

It is not so much the details of organisation but the attitude that must change.

*
**

It is only egoism that is shocked to find egoism in others.

(3)

Let your life be a constant search for the Truth and it will be worth living.

*
**

Nobility of thought, feeling and action is true aristocracy.

*
**

The more a mind is ignorant the more easily it judges everything it does not know or is incapable of understanding.

*
**

You have no right to judge a man unless you are capable of doing what he does better than himself.

*
**

The knowledge that seems to come to you from outside is only an occasion for bringing out the knowledge that is within you.

*
**

Never believe that you know. Always try to know better.

*
**

Let all circumstances, all happenings in life be occasions, constantly renewed, for learning more and ever more.

*
**

Concentration and will can be developed as well as muscles. They grow by regular training and exercise.

*
**

The mind has to be made silent and attentive in order to receive knowledge from above and manifest it.

*
**

To know is good,
to live is better,
to be, that is perfect.

*
**

Truth is supreme harmony and supreme delight. All disorder, all suffering is a falsehood.

*
**

Sooner or later the Truth is bound to prevail.

(4)

If nothing in all the universe is so frail as man, nothing likewise is so divine as he.

*
**

It is human beings alone that have at their centre a divine Presence in the psychic being.

*
**

It is through the psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him and the circumstances of his life.

*
**

Those [who have the psychic presence in them] go forward in their life with an assurance and a certitude all their own, they are masters of their destiny.

*
**

It is hope which builds happy futures.

*
**

The nobility of a being is measured by its capacity of gratitude.

*
**

Indeed, the good-will hidden in things reveals itself everywhere to that one who carries good-will in his consciousness.

*
**

In the psychic is the source of constant happiness.

*
**

Love is at the origin of the world and Love is its Goal.

*
**

The Grace is something that pushes you towards the goal to be attained.

*
**

Above all the complications of the so-called human wisdom there is the luminous simplicity of the Divine Grace ready to act if we allow it to act.

*
**

The Grace is infinite for him who sincerely trusts the Grace.

*
**

Art is a living harmony and beauty that must be expressed in all the movements of existence.

All life is a constant miracle.

*
**

The earth will enjoy a lasting and living peace only when men understand that they must be truthful and sincere even in their international dealings.

*
**

India must rise to the height of her mission and proclaim the Truth to the world.

*
**

The time of Religions is over.

We have entered the age of universal spirituality, of spiritual experience in its initial purity.¹

¹ Compiled from various writings and messages of the Mother.

Section III
TEACHERS OF THE CENTRE

Two Cardinal Points of Education

*A Collective Memorandum presented to the Education Commission,
Government of India, by P. B. Saint-Hilaire (Pavitra), Director,
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION,
Pondicherry,
on behalf of the Teachers of this Institution.*

I

In the right view of things the true purpose of education is not only to bring out of the child the best and the noblest that he is capable of but also to endow him with an understanding of the true aim and significance of human life so as to provide him with a lasting source of inspiration when he enters and faces the world at the end of his academic training.

This second point needs all the more attention nowadays because of the uncertainty that surrounds even the most immediate future. We have reached a phase of accelerated scientific and technological progress that may lead to the liberation of man from want and to a considerable amount of well-being and security—what has been called an affluent society; but it may lead also to self-annihilation. What is then coming next? Is mankind to be led blindly to wanton destruction or to a still worse soulless fate? Are there no truer and more deeply inspiring words of guidance for our young people than subtleties on the absurdity of life? How shall we counteract the effect of such lack of genuine guidance and help them to surmount the confusion in which so many flounder?

In this connection two points are of cardinal importance. The first springs from a true insight into human nature and constitution, and this will determine the attitude that the teacher should take towards the growing child. The second concerns the future of man, of man the individual and humanity the collective man.

Modern education, on the whole, takes the child as an undeveloped body endowed with a young life, untrained sensibilities, acute but often unrestrained emotions, an immature mind and, as he grows, a nascent and groping reason. Reason is the highest recognized faculty, and to make of the full-grown child a being governed by reason and capable of discrimination

and rational thinking, with a healthy and strong body, a sensitive but chastened emotional and aesthetic being, well trained in the conventional morality and customs of the present day social life, will appear to many educationists an ideal achievement so far as the individual child is concerned. But society has its word to say; it requires a regular supply of young men and women, immediately serviceable for its complicated economic, administrative and industrial machinery and therefore demands that they should be classified according to ability and capacity. In the process of training, the child is submitted to the powerful (for his delicate and impressionable nature) influence of parents, teachers and school-mates. Moreover the requirements of society to some extent run counter to the innate urge of the child. Thus the best of which the child would have been capable does not realise itself fully—far from it.

The defects of modern education are well known. They have often been described and analysed. But the remedies that have been proposed are mere palliatives. They counter the effects and not the cause. If we want to find a genuine solution to the present difficulties, we have to discover the cause of the evil and for that to re-examine the whole foundation on which education rests.

As early as 1909, when he was a political leader in Bengal, Sri Aurobindo propounded certain principles of education. At that time they were truly revolutionary as they broke away deliberately from the conventional notions on education that were then prevalent under the foreign domination. These principles of which I quote herebelow the first one, most important and sufficient for my present purpose, did not seem to have attracted the attention they deserve and they remain even today practically unknown to the educational world.

“The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil’s mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine. Child or man, boy or girl, there is only one sound principle of good teaching. Difference of age only serves to diminish or

increase the amount of help and guidance necessary; it does not change its nature.”¹

Since the beginning of the century the educationists have been devoting themselves especially in the West to initiating and carrying out a considerable amount of theoretical and experimental research work in the field of education and child psychology and have come to conclusions similar to those expressed so forcefully by Sri Aurobindo. For them the child is foremost a developing being who has its own needs, different from an adult’s and for that reason easily misunderstood by the adult. The first task of the educator is to make sure that the child’s needs are satisfied and that the child is happy.

“New education...is really a new attitude towards the child. An attitude of understanding and love, and above all an attitude of respect. An attitude of expectation, of patience; the restraint of a delicate hand that dare not open a flower-bud nor disturb a baby in the midst of his first experiments, a student in the course of his early work...

“The child has within himself everything that is necessary for a true education, and particularly a ceaseless activity, incessantly revived, in which he is totally engrossed, the activity of a growing being who is continuously developing and to whom for that very reason, our help may be useful, but our direction is not necessary.”²

Speaking of this new trend in western education, Sri Aurobindo says that it is a healthy step. It shows the beginning of “the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as ‘the leader of the march set in our front,’ *will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands* and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of which our present

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education*, first published in the *Karmayogin* in 1910; reprinted in book form in 1921 and included in *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education*, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 2nd edition, 1960, p. 15. See also Section I of this Brochure, p. 7, foot-note 1.

² Roger Cousinet, *L’Education nouvelle*, Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchatel & Paris, 1950, pp. 20-21

mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that *the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life* if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being."¹

How this is to be brought about is mainly a matter of tactful dealing with the child. Of course, there must be a great freedom in the choice of the subjects, in the time allotted to each subject, so that the child can progress at his own pace. This last result calls for individual handling and a sufficient knowledge of the language by the child so as to be able to read and comprehend. Text-books are usually too condensed, therefore work on files or work-sheets is preferable, but their preparation imposes a heavy burden on the teacher. Anyhow a real FREE PROGRESS CLASS—as these classes may be called—can only begin when the child is able to read and write fairly well, i.e. in Class IV or V.

Before that level, the teacher has to use his own discretion. But the right attitude towards the child must be adopted from the very beginning, in the Kindergarten. A child's soul is usually very close to the surface and, if a proper environment is maintained, it will continue to be so for several years.

Ordinary education and the influence of adult society usually act to muffle and distort this happy and healthy spontaneity, and replace it by an automatism based on the more or less arbitrary conventions of family and society and no less arbitrary rules of moral or religious education.

In order to awaken the child to the understanding of the relations existing between the two worlds which he discovers almost simultaneously—the inner and the outer—he should be told how to observe carefully what happens in himself. He has to be shown that he is the playground, sometimes the battle-field of different forces and inner movements: sensations, impulses, emotions, ideas. And he must be taught how to distinguish between them practically and find out their nature and origin. For this discovery intellectual explanations are insufficient, it is no use lecturing

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, 1949, p. 37 (italics are mine).

and moralizing. It is with concrete instances, from the day to day school life, taking advantage of apparently insignificant incidents, that the discrimination can be slowly developed.

The child will then be shown that it is possible to rise above the fleeting inner movements that he has now learnt to discriminate and not to be frightened by the inner silence in which he may enter—this silence that will later reveal itself as a plenitude.

As an illustration, I shall give the case when a tense situation has somehow arisen and a decision has to be taken, or when an obstacle hampers all progress. At a suitable time, the teacher may call the child when alone, present to him impartially, in a few kind and simple words, the consequences of the possible alternatives, then ask him to consider quietly the whole matter and, after a moment of silence, aspire for light and truth. Not by the mind and the reason, because truth does not depend on arguments, nor by the emotions, although restrained and purified emotions will greatly contribute to reaching a solution by their quietness, but in the freedom, impartiality and equality of the spirit, the teacher may succeed in imparting the little touch which, by its repetition, will awaken the still receptive young being to the presence of the inner divinity. What the child then decides must not be questioned, he should be allowed to proceed; he knows the consequences and will remember them. Thus only will the child acquire the sense of responsibility which is aimed at.

The justification of this attitude is given by Sri Aurobindo in these terms : “All experience shows that man must be given a certain freedom to stumble in action as well as to err in knowledge so long as he does not get from within himself his freedom from wrong movement and error; otherwise he cannot grow.”¹

Thus the child will be shown by experience that there is in him, above the movements of the ordinary nature—likings and dislikings, impulses and fancies, ideas, etc.—a region of deep peace and silence. If he listens carefully he will discover that in this silence, there is also the feeling of a Presence, a conscious Presence. And after some time, when he turns back to his problems, he will be found one day to say : “Oh ! I know now what to do !” The quality of such decisions is very different from the ordinary movements. The child will recognise gradually that this inner guidance is the only valid and most satisfying one, it alone gives a peace and joy

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, 1949, p. 285.

that surpass pleasures and enjoyments, but it is difficult to discover and listen to, because emotions and thoughts are too active and noisy—an inner silence has to be established first. If the teacher succeeds in establishing with his pupil a soul to soul contact, a kind of helpful link is created.

The Mother has shown how a proper relation between teacher and pupil can be established and maintained.

“When a child has made a mistake, see that he confesses it to you spontaneously and frankly; and when he has confessed, make him understand with kindness and affection what was wrong in his movement and that he should not repeat it. In any case, never scold him; a fault confessed must be forgiven. You should not allow any fear to slip in between you and your child; fear is a disastrous way to education: invariably it gives birth to dissimulation and falsehood. An affection that sees clear, that is firm yet gentle and a sufficiently practical knowledge will create bonds of trust that are indispensable for you to make the education of your child effective.”¹

Threat and punishment should be completely avoided. An untimely outburst from the teacher is all that is needed to wipe out all the confidence that the child has in him; the way will be blocked for a long time and often irreparably. Love and sympathy, desire to help, devotion to an ideal, the satisfaction of being at peace with oneself, are in the end more potent constructive forces than fear of punishment, whether by the headmaster, the police or a god. “Coercion”, says Sri Aurobindo, “only chains up the devil and alters at best his form of action into more mitigated and civilised movements; it does not and cannot eliminate him.”²

But this should not lead one to believe that we advocate a freedom which allows the child to indulge indiscriminately his desires and caprices. The freedom we vindicate for the child is the freedom to establish the conditions of his own progress—hence the name FREE PROGRESS CLASSES, as we like to call the classes of our method. Being, so to say, his own master, the child is obliged to refer constantly to the inner guidance, if he wants to avoid pitfalls, because experience will have taught him the price he has to pay in the shape of loss of inner harmony and peace, clouding of the mind and dissipation of his time and energy. This necessity of perpetual choice is the creative element in this education; its aim is to inculcate in the student a spirit of self-reliance and responsibility. Nothing can be a better gift to a growing child. And we allow

¹ The Mother, *On Education*, 1952, p. 15.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 285.

him the freedom to err or stumble, because we know that by his errors and stumblings he will be able to walk straight.

Regarding the inner guidance, Sri Aurobindo writes : "If one keeps the true will and the 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."¹

On the other hand we do not expect the child to be at once the master of the inner movements; it requires many years of patient work, even a whole lifetime. But he can observe them in a calm and detached manner, study and identify them. This is an indispensable first step, preliminary to mastery. The gaining of mastery is an important subject, which we cannot even touch here.

Well, it is certainly good that the old coercive methods of education have gone or are going, but on the condition that something higher replaces them; otherwise the results will be disastrous. And if we judge from the direction taken by some of the most advanced nations in matter of education, they are rapidly reaching a state in which the child will give a free rein to his impulses and caprices, without any higher guidance, inner or outer, to help him towards self-knowledge and self-mastery. This is indeed a dismal prospect, of which we can see a few forebodings in the growing lawlessness among the students and in the ever-increasing number of juvenile delinquents.

Such a mistake could not have been committed if there had been a full grasp of the meaning and function assigned to education by Sri Aurobindo. The Western educationists, and after them the entire world, have seized only half the truth, and this deficiency may be the source of the ominous trend in education evinced the world over.

No human collective life is possible without discipline, but it ought to be a discipline taking into account as much the *diversity* of human nature as the *unity* of the soul, the deeper consciousness in man. Only a discipline of this kind is freely acceptable as it does not interfere with the subtle action of the soul. Once such a discipline is freely accepted—and under these conditions—it should be carefully observed, without consideration for passing caprices. *Unity* does not entail *uniformity*; the latter is nothing but a deformation and a caricature of the former. It is the confusion between unity and uniformity which is so harmful in political ideologies.

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, Book II, Tome 2, p. 27.

It may be argued that the guidance of the soul we preconize is nothing more than the “voice of conscience”, the moral sense of right and wrong that every human being has more or less developed within himself; and the action, usefulness and limitations of the conscience have been well studied by moralists and psychologists. It is perfectly true that the soul—the psychic entity which enshrines the divine spark in man—is the origin of the conscience. In some cases the conscience may be so developed that it will fit the description we have given. But in most cases the action of the soul is covered up and smothered by desires, ambitions and passions, hardened by the bare facts of life and mixed up hopelessly with family, national, social and religious conventions and prejudices, so as to have lost almost all of its purity and reliability. What we present is precisely a method aiming at disengaging it from these distorting influences by an action undertaken at an early age, when the “small voice” is not yet completely muffled, restoring it to its pristine purity and making it available as an impartial and trustworthy witness and guide.

In his search for a reliable way of discriminating among the various inner movements, and still more in his quest for his soul, the child can receive a genuine help only from someone who has undergone the same patient efforts at inner discrimination, who has gone through the same persistent search. Now in India this is effectively a part of the training in Yoga. It is in this sense that the Mother, speaking to teachers, has said :

“One must be a great Yogi to be a good teacher.

One must have the perfect attitude to be able to exact from one’s pupils a perfect attitude.”¹

And a little further :

“Those who are successful as teachers here,...i.e. who become truly good teachers, that would signify that they are capable of making an inner progress of impersonalisation, of eliminating their egoism, and mastering their movements and that they have a clear sight, an understanding of others and a patience that never fails.”²

To be a teacher in a FREE PROGRESS CLASS is certainly a heavy onus, but it offers also an ample reward by watching and helping the blossoming of young souls, fully engaged in their effort of self-discovery and self-mastery.

Thus the main task of the secondary education (inclusive of higher

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, August 1961, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

secondary) is to make the child soul-conscious, in the sense we have explained, and bring him to the correlative freedom and sense of responsibility. The adolescent will have by now understood how his soul guides his destiny. In the meanwhile, he will have learnt—at least to some extent—how to work and how to learn.

Now, during the three college years, some time is given regularly to the study of human evolution, social and political, but mainly spiritual, with a special reference to the present day world situation, so that the young people may understand the nature of the world in which they are going to enter and work, its significance and its promises. To explain what we mean, we have to outline Sri Aurobindo's conception of man's future upon earth. This we shall do by following up the birth and development of the notion of Progress.

II

It can be shown¹ that the advent of progress has cut the course of history in two parts :

1) A period when society was almost static in its vision of things. There was little change from one generation to another. Civilizations and empires grew, bloomed and decayed, without affecting the ways of living and the outlook of the masses. Surprisingly little attention was given to alleviating the conditions of life and work of the common labourer and the tiller of the soil; consequently the productivity of labour remained almost constant for hundreds and even thousands of years and, as the main source of wealth was human labour, a general enrichment could hardly be envisaged. What men perceived in the contemporary events was their intensity, their violence, not their evolutionary trend, which was invisible to them.

2) And a period when the human mind turned to the mastery of physical nature and applied its discoveries and inventions in a deliberate and concerted effort to the economic and social betterment of the whole society. This possibility dawned upon man with the seventeenth century and within two centuries Europe had become the scene of a great intellectual activity in the cause of general education and culture, in an effort at emancipation from tradition, convention and prejudice and with a keen interest in the theoretical and applied sciences.

¹ R. L. Heilbroner, *The Future as History*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1960. See also P. B. Saint-Hilaire, *Education and the Aim of Human Life*, pp. 8 *et seq.*

We need not follow in detail the birth of the great hopes that marked the "Age of Enlightenment" and the successive disillusionments that followed. At the beginning of the 20th century, many thinkers were led to the conclusion that, while a marked advance in the economic sphere and an improvement in the conditions of life and labour were noticeable, leading no doubt to an amelioration in the social relations, still human nature had not changed to any appreciable extent. Egoism and greed have always tried to divert any new discovery or improvement for the benefit of a few individuals or for a group—class or nation. Even the goodwill of men and their spirit of sacrifice have been exploited in this way. It is this apparent obduracy of human nature which is the radical obstacle to a wholesome and harmonious progress. The notion of an all-embracing progress of society was therefore questioned. There was no sign that people were really "happier" than in the past. The prospect appeared gloomy.

With the passing years and the tremendous impetus given to scientific and technological progress by the two world wars, the situation has now changed to some extent. The material and social amelioration in the industrially developed nations can no longer be denied. The disparity between labour and management has considerably diminished and a classless society is near at hand—although achieved differently in the capitalist U.S.A. and the socialist U.S.S.R.

A new conception of wealth has emerged. As it has by now gained an implicit and general acceptance, it is difficult to realize its truly revolutionary character. It would certainly have startled the ancient philosophers and historians. As Bertrand de Jouvenel puts it:

"The great modern idea is that it is possible to enrich collectively and individually all members of a society through continuous progress in the organization of work, in its processes and instruments, that this enrichment provides by itself the means of its further development, and that this development can be rapid and indefinite."¹

But new questions arise. Technological progress seems to create more problems than it can solve. It has also many social and political implications, both pleasant and unpleasant. Great dangers are looming in the future and doubts are rising whether mankind will have the foresight, the wisdom and the strength to avert them.

The accelerated pace of scientific and technological achievements has led economists and industrialists to scrutinize more attentively the

¹ *Le Mieux-vivre dans la société riche*, in *Diogène*, No. 33, Jan.-Mar. 1961.

growth of all private and public undertakings. This concern with the future has caused planning to be resorted to, even in the most liberal economy, on a yet unknown scale. But the rapidity of change in the economic, social and even political spheres is so great that the common man himself begins to look at the future as if hidden by a big question mark.

Looking around us we see that the most developed nations have already achieved a very high standard of material well-being—what really forms the beginning of a civilization of plenty or affluent society—with an abundance of amenities of all description, food, houses, motor cars and aeroplanes, gadgets of all kinds. But there are ominous signs also and the social order does not follow the same forward movement. Crime is rather on the increase, especially juvenile delinquency; the same is true of mental diseases and the use of narcotics is spreading. Again happiness escapes the grasp of man.

The ideal of a welfare society, which had taken possession of the mind and heart of man, was indeed a great historic force in shaping the modern world. But, as it is drawing close to its realisation, it is losing much of its inspiring power. It is no longer generating the same enthusiasm, as is evidenced by the decline of the socialist parties in Western Europe. Moreover the capitalist society comes in the end to adopt much of what was originally purely socialist, so that both social orders are moving towards each other and seem likely to meet half way.

In former times, man turned to religion to satisfy aspirations which seemed to be denied to him by his surroundings. But religion is gradually losing its hold and the young especially are turning away from it.

The main reason is "that religions have always laid emphasis on a world beyond, giving to this one only a passing importance. For some religions this world is an illusion from which we have to awaken. For some it is a cosmic snare from which man has painfully to disentangle himself. For others it is a place of trial, in which a divine decree has placed us so that we may gain immortal life elsewhere when our term is finished. All religions have more or less shunned the world and life, and declared them impure, debased and incapable of regeneration. What our young men and women are truly looking for, is to know the aims of their life—of human life in general, of their own life in particular—to find an ideal that can give a meaning to their daily work, to their joys and sorrows, to life in the society in which they are going to enter, and at the same time help them in growing towards the mastery and perfection which vaguely

but intimately, they feel waiting in the depths of themselves.”¹

Another reason is that all religions take their inspiration from the past. Their founders, prophets or heroes were rightly figures who lived centuries ago in a world far different from the one we live in. The problems they had to solve have little in common with the situations that confront us nowadays. We may admire their fortitude, their unflinching devotion, their sovereign detachment, but it becomes increasingly difficult for our young people to believe that their example is applicable to present-day life.

From all this we see that the advent of progress has really cut the course of history in two : one epoch in which men were looking at the Past, another in which they turn their look to the Future.

“Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, the past Asiatic civilizations, even the Renaissance, did not look ahead for the ideals and inspirations of their existence, but sought them in their origins, in their ancient glories, their fabled heroes, their pristine virtues real or fancied. Unlike modern man, who dreams of the world he will make, pre-modern man dreamed of the world he had left.”²

We are therefore led to two conclusions :

1) Man has definitely turned his face towards the future. Man knows that he can change his lot. He knows that he already has the power to influence his destiny. An elimination of poverty and disease, a life of abundance and leisure are almost within the reach of the most advanced nations and are held forth as a bait to the still suffering, toiling and starving underdeveloped masses. The latest discoveries of science have put in our hands an immense, almost limitless power which can be turned for the ultimate material liberation of man from the curse of toil or for his own destruction.

2) But we know also—and it becomes evident as soon as the immediate wants are satisfied—that all the material achievements, however much necessary today, will not satisfy us in the end, if they come alone. They will leave us weary, empty and disillusioned. What then is missing ?

Sri Aurobindo supplies an answer and gives us at the same time the key to the future evolution of man. He shows that the theory of evolution of which modern science is justly proud and which holds that life evolved out of matter and mind out of life, is susceptible of being extended one step further. May not mind be a veil of a still hidden higher power, which awaits the time of its emergence ?

¹ P. B. Saint-Hilaire, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

² R. L. Heilbroner, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

“The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God ?”¹

This next step would not be a mere amelioration, even a perfecting of man’s present faculties, but a radical change of consciousness. This would mean the emergence in him of a new power of consciousness, as different from mind as mind is different from life and life from matter. Sri Aurobindo spent the last forty years of his life—his retirement period in Pondicherry—to the study and realization of this new power of consciousness which he calls simply the *Supermind*, of the conditions of its emergence and of the consequences of this emergence.²

In Sri Aurobindo’s view the present world crisis is nothing but the preparation or the manifestation of an evolutionary mutation which is pressed upon man by the gigantic development of his outer life, out of proportion with his present-day limited faculties—mental, ethical and spiritual. The shaking mankind is undergoing in every domain, scientific, social, political, philosophical, ethical and religious is nothing but the break-up of the past, indispensable to the forward movement.

The word “progress” assumes a new significance. It is not simply an increase in the technological development and material well-being. It is the opening of a new world, the dawning of a new Age, the beginning of a new life. And the faith of man’s unlimited perfectibility, the fundamental optimism of man’s heart and mind are completely justified.

Biological evolution up to man has proceeded under the pressure of nature, without the conscious participation of the creatures drawn along this evolution. But man marks the passage from unconscious to conscious evolution. He has attained a position of full spiritual responsibility and is well aware that he has the power to influence, for good or for evil, his destiny, both individual and collective. The next step of evolution can only be conscious and deliberate.

In this Sri Aurobindo sees an indication that the new being next to man in the evolutionary scale will be evolved *in* man, rather than *out of* man. And this is confirmed by the fact that, among all earthly

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, I, Ch. I.

² The reader is referred to a small anthology under the title Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Evolution of Man*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry; and George Allen & Unwin, London, 1963. See also Satprem, *Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness*, India Library Society, New York, 1964.

creatures, man is the only dissatisfied one. There is in him some divine urge to aim higher, to transcend himself.

The recognition is spreading that the old remedies are of no avail, that the lights that have so far guided man, are now failing him. A change in the form of Government or even of social system will not help. The change that is needed is of a deeper kind, it is an upheaval. There must grow in a few individuals at first, then in an increasing number, the urge to overpass the old limitations, to find in themselves or above themselves a new light, a *New Consciousness*, a new guiding principle of knowledge and action, and a decision to abide by it, to let this new consciousness transform their nature and life.

This is possible, says Sri Aurobindo, because by Yoga man has shown that he is able to raise himself or to open himself to a higher consciousness. There is then nothing irrational or even fundamentally new in the process. The innovation lies in the direction given to the spiritual effort, *tapasyā*: a liberation from nature, life and world, not to get away from them and leave them unchanged behind, but to turn back to them and transform them. This point is of extreme importance because it explains what is meant by a conscious collaboration with the evolutionary process.

The Western countries and especially France are now under the sway of the scientific works—posthumously published—of the Jesuit Father and palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin, who has argued very aptly that modern biology supports the theory of an evolutionary future for man. It would be, after a more or less prolonged period of adjustment, a perfecting of the human faculties, especially the moral and spiritual, leading to an extension of consciousness and ultimately—for those who have chosen the right path—to the union with God.

There is thus a resemblance with Sri Aurobindo's views, but points of difference also exist. One of them is that the conscious collaboration of man, especially such as Yoga implies, with the evolutionary process has not been fully seized by Father Teilhard, or at least has not been expressed with the same all round emphasis. Another point of divergence is that the Father does not conceive as possible that a complete union with God can be accomplished here upon earth in a material body. There is therefore no alternative at a certain stage but to leave the earth-life. But in India there is no difficulty in that respect, the conceptions of both the *jīvanmukta* (liberated while living) and *videhamukta* (liberated without a body) exist in the spiritual tradition.

Sri Aurobindo has outlined his conception of the future evolution of man in the philosophical magazine *Arya*, published in Pondicherry, during the years 1914-1921. At the same time, he has made a synthesis of the traditional systems of Indian Yoga and welded them into his all-embracing "Integral Yoga". Both are thus complementary : Yoga is the individual, evolution the collective, aspect.¹

In the last chapter of Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle* we find a description of a transitional period—what he calls a "spiritualised society". It is a stage when mankind, having accepted the ideal, will be engaged in the process of giving it a shape in all its activities and institutions.

"It will reveal to man the divinity in himself as the Light, Strength, Beauty, Good, Delight, Immortality that dwells within and build up in his outer life also the Kingdom of God which is first discovered within us. It will show man the way to seek for the Divine in every way of his being, *sarvabhāvena*², and so find it and live in it, that however—even in all kinds of ways—he lives and acts, he shall live and act in that³, in the Divine, in the Spirit, in the eternal Reality of his being."⁴

And in the last six chapters of *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo has outlined the main stages of the complete supramental transformation of the individual man. This transformation, once generalized will establish upon earth what "might fitly be characterized as a divine life; for it would be a life in the Divine, a life of the beginnings of a spiritual divine light and peace and joy manifested in material nature."⁵

"This at least is the highest hope, the possible destiny that opens out before the human view, and it is a possibility which the progress of the human mind seems on the way to redevelop. If the light that is being born increases, if the number of individuals who seek to realise the possibility in themselves and in the world grows large and they get nearer the right way, then the Spirit who is here in man, now a concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully as the Avatar of a yet unseen and unguessed Godhead from above into the soul of mankind and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest.

¹ Sri Aurobindo's major works thus serially published include *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle* (The Psychology of Social Development) and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. They were later partly revised by the author and published in book form by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

² *Gītā*.

³ *Gītā*: *sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogi mayi vartate*.

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, Ch. XXI, p. 287.

⁵ *The Life Divine*, II, Ch. XXVIII.

There will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from its present limits into those larger and purer horizons; the earthly evolution will have taken its great impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise.”¹

The unveiling of this evolutionary future before an adolescent at the end of his academic formation is indeed a seal, a kind of consecration to the highest possible ideal. Not only does he understand now the meaning of the long succession of hopes, failures and achievements of human history, but he will perceive all throughout his life the meaning of his own individual existence. He will know that, in whatever walk of life he is placed, whatever struggles, anguishes and failures he has to go through, any effort on his part towards light, truth, beauty and good will be also an effort to lift up humanity towards its goal; in this knowledge he finds the strength to endure. And if he knows how to offer up his struggles, disillusionments and failures to his inmost soul, the Divine in him, he will really share in the Great Endeavour.

He will understand that the visions of the seers and prophets of all religions, the words of the sages of all nations, the dreams of the idealists of all times were not mere chimeras; they were promises. And he can see now that the Future will realize all the promises of the Past.

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Such is the basis that we—the Teachers of SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION—would wish should be given to education in this country. India is in a unique position in this respect and we believe she has a great future before her, a Future which is also a promise of her Past.

P. B. SAINT-HILAIRE (PAVITRA)

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, Ch. XXIV, p., 334.

The Search for a National System of Education for India

The Experience of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and its Centre of Education

A country, whose historical growth has built up a characteristic cultural aspiration, is bound to ask for an education, which affords a satisfaction and further enrichment of its national predilection. Thereby it not only enjoys more self-satisfaction but is able to make a more distinctive contribution to the enrichment of human culture as a whole.

Life basically, in the individual as well as the race, is complex as determined by the varied elements of human nature. The body, the normal biological impulses, the mental curiosity and seeking and the spiritual peace and harmony and unity are the four major spheres of experience and interest and within each again there can be much variation and specialisation. Just as individuals strike a line or a few lines of interest and growth and develop distinctive personalities, so do peoples and nations in their collective cultural pursuit. Peoples and nations with continuity of life and interest develop distinctive personalities, which are specialised enrichments of the total culture of man. And an integrated life of mankind, involving many such specialised cultures which by the essential make-up of human nature are complementary i.e. mutually fulfilling and enriching, would be a more strongly unified life than one which represents one or a couple of cultural strands specialised or adjusted to an average sort of pattern. A specialisation, which does not forget the aim of the totality, is always a source of strength.

It is, therefore, natural and good for the general human culture that India should insistently seek a true national education for herself. But when we have been for long under other influences, the discovery of the national selfhood and its seeking is not easy. It requires a strenuous action of self-discovery and that of detachment from the other influences which have swamped our life. There is another complicating factor too. A country with a long history is bound to present a great variety of cultural forms. And in the midst of these to discover the basic aspiration or aspirations can be pretty difficult. Here too a detachment from the apparent forms

and an attempt to see the urges and the attitudes behind the forms is necessary.

If that could sincerely be done, then perhaps we could know with fair amount of clarity as to what is India's characteristic predilection in her adventure of life and culture. We usually get lost in the complexity and perplexity of forms, but is it not true that Indian culture has persistently, by innumerable variety of cultural practices, discouraged the egoistic selfhood in the individual as well as the community and the self-assertive attitudes that go with it and encouraged a selfhood of peace and harmony, of acceptance and synthesis, of toleration and forbearance and of unity and oneness on the whole? Of course, this discouragement of the one and encouragement of the other is a universal element of human culture and we find it in all cultures and religions. And yet the Indian emphasis has been very distinctive, persistent in the midst of cultural ups and downs stretched over a very long period of time. Islamic culture has a pattern of its own, but surrender to the will of God is its basic inspiration and that it seeks to realise with emphasis on action. The same has also under Indian impact developed a quality recognisable and distinctive.

The beliefs and their divergences often mislead us. They are intellectual formations of spiritual experiences. These experiences by themselves are, even when diverse, very sympathetic to one another, since unity and oneness are the breath of the life of the Spirit. But the intellectual formulations involve egoisms of various kinds and they tend to become dogmatic and exclusive.

We must, therefore, clearly recognise that it is the attitudes and the inner core of feeling towards life and existence that are the determining elements of life and culture. And if that is done, then we can have no difficulty in recognising that India primarily and largely stresses not the ego-selfhood, but the soul-selfhood in man, and this holds good of all communities of India, more or less.

With this stress goes the seeking for intrinsic values, for the ultimate, the essential and the true. Also the relative discouragement of the external values, which has been a weakness of Indian cultural pursuit since it was done with a reaction. Islam contributed an emphasis on these and the modern West does it in a preponderant manner.

In this connection, it is important to bear in mind that we seek not to remain what we have been but to grow into a richer and a more competent form of life. The past gives us previous effort, but it must enlarge itself to meet the demands of the present and, above all, we must remember

what the future expects of us and mankind as a whole. A growing and an increasing synthesis of life and experience must be our constant inspiration. Then we will always find ourselves equal to the evolving tasks of an evolving humanity.

This is just a preamble, an introduction to our subject of a national education for India. A national system of education for India is thus justifiable, but not in an exclusive sort of way, rather as a complementary contribution to world life and culture. Further, that system should build upon and further promote the essential attitudes of our long historical effort in pursuit of culture. These attitudes, however, should be enlarged to cover the wider setting of our life today. These attitudes, where necessary, can and should also be consciously modified. But continuity is the essential thread of growth and that must be respectfully maintained.

Macaulay initiated our present educational life and that brought us a system of values, largely external, of earning and social success, and this also involved an abrupt sort of break with the past. But this education and these values are today dominant in the world as a whole and, therefore, it becomes particularly difficult to detach ourselves from them even mentally and think of a national education for the country. And yet it has to be done.

The leaders of Renaissance, one after the other, have had to deal with this problem. Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Swami Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda, Tagore, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan and others devoted much time and attention to this basic issue. It was in the first decade of this century, during the Swadeshi movement, that a national college was started in Calcutta and a systematic attempt made as to what the character of Indian national education could or should be. Sri Aurobindo as Principal of the first national college and as leader of the nationalist movement at that time sought to formulate and give concrete shape to India's national education. He then wrote his 'A System of National Education', 'The Brain of India', 'The National Value of Art' etc. But that attempt was interrupted by the political circumstances of the country.

However education continued to be a serious interest with him and later in Pondicherry in 1943, it was taken up again for a systematic and sustained experimentation. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education came into being and began to grow from year to year. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram had been started much earlier in 1926 and it too was

conceived as a laboratory for trying out new values and incorporating them into the general life of the society. The Ashram and the Centre of Education have evolved during the last few decades a complex pattern of life, involving yoga, sadhana, normal services of community life, science, technology, industry, agriculture, publications, care and growth of children, teaching, sports, etc. And in all this the cultivation of the right attitudes to life and existence is the essential matter.

Such a centre of life would be expected to and it would on its own also wish to make its experience available to the country, particularly at a time when an earnest attempt is being made to formulate a national system of education.

There is no doubt that one needs to acquire a feeling for the quality of life which we would expect our national education to create. For that much effort is needed. One has to observe widely and very carefully to discover and formulate the broad pattern of personality, which would meet and fulfil Indian aspiration. But here an attempt can be made to represent the experience of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and its Centre of Education for such help as it may render in our efforts in search of a national education. We will now consider a few salient aspects of this experience.

(1) The first thing to mention is the power of the atmosphere as a basic and pervasive educational influence. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have relied on this factor as one of primary importance. It consists of essentially the presence of a Higher Consciousness as also of the collective aspiration of the community. And what is more important is that it admits of a positive and a systematic cultivation. An individual too in his living room can nurse and cultivate his own proper air, through conscious aspiration and the invocation of the Higher, and that becomes for him a constant silent influence of all his time and which constitutes his ever-inviting sense of at-home-ness and its sweetness.

Normally too an individual as well as a community create an air of their own. But it lacks character and higher presence. Its educational influence is then little.

In connection with educational reconstruction a suitable atmosphere is of the first importance and the ways and means have to be explored in each case to seek, cultivate and maintain a proper atmosphere, in fact an atmosphere of increasing higher content.

(2) It is apparent from the above that a sense and feeling for the Higher in life and existence, in fact for the Highest, the most Good and the most Beautiful, the Supreme, the Infinite, the Divine, in whatever form it

easily comes, is needed as the true and proper incentive and help for constant progress and growth. This is the real source of inspiration and uplifting movement in life and it must be provided in our educational atmosphere through opportunities for adoration, admiration, reverence, worship of the Higher, in history, in nature, in contemporary life and otherwise. Without it education loses its inspiration and tends to become dull and a necessity of sheer physical living.

(3) The Higher acquires a force and reality when there is aspiration for the same in the human heart. If this aspiration, longing and perception is lacking the most elevating situations of life can appear as prosaic. A will to rise, progress, and learn as an unceasing aspiration is therefore basic. Our atmosphere must be charged with it and it must reverberate in each individual who breathes and lives in it and each individual's aspiration must be an added force to the power of the atmosphere.

(4) Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, having provided for the above, undertook, as it were, to develop the teachers' personality first, during the period when the Ashram existed, but the Centre of Education had yet not been started. That was the period when individuals cultivated intensively their aspiration and will for growth and a sense for the Supreme. That induces an upliftment, an enlargement and a harmoniousness and a progressive liberation from the small, the narrow and the competitive. The egoistic and possessive personality gets a little reduced and the pursuit of Truth becomes real and dynamic. An increasing discovery of truth carries with itself the joy of sharing and communicating it to others. Thus a teacher tends to take shape.

However, when the Centre of Education was started the teacher's personality acquired a stronger and direct emphasis. And yet later when our own students reached the stage of becoming teachers, the teacher's personality began to emerge with greater clarity. And yet it is a pursuit that must be constantly maintained. The teacher has to be cultivated along with the student continually.

In Integral Education the teacher's aim is integral truth and integral personality and as he advances in his personal pursuits so does he advance in his capacities as a teacher of Integral Education.

(5) A cardinal principle of the growth of personality is the opportunity and encouragement of sincere initiative as best as possible. This is needed for all, young and grown-up, but the teacher, who is to be a seeking and continually growing individual and whose experience has value for very many others needs it in a special measure. He must have much

discretion and freedom in his dealings with the students and the management of the processes of learning and growth.

(6) The student's personality, growing up in an overall atmosphere as discussed above, imbued with the sense of the Higher and a general aspiration of the community with teachers as living examples of the same, whose contact is freely available, will tend to take the right direction. But in view of the child's personality and its varied elements and their changing demands, one has to provide for the proper environment and varied opportunities and avenues for the exercise and development of the healthy propensities of life. Obviously, many factors are involved here.

(i) The first is an attitude of love and interest in the child. There should be a felt joy in the life and activity of the child. This is the magic contact which facilitates communication of experience and evokes movements of real growth.

(ii) The child is not merely a bundle of impulsive reactions, which we seek to train, but a sweet and a harmonious soul, which because of the absence of social inhibitions and prohibitions is yet more palpably active and visible. To recognise it and to evoke it and encourage it is to allow the inner harmony to organise the outer impulsive reactions of the child. There can be nothing easier than this for the teacher to achieve his great task of transforming the child, if he has learned to appreciate the soul sweetness in the behaviour of the child. And the child too in that case has the simplest and the most spontaneous transition from the animal restlessness to a poise of integration and unity.

This is the process of evoking and touching off the best in the child and this is good and useful by itself as also for handling the realistic elements of human nature. Under a general scientific attitude we have today developed a strong tendency to deal with the child and his problems analytically and in a realistic manner. We, in fact, regard moral idealism as the cause of conflicts. That is true also. But spiritual idealism is different. It is not suppressive. It seeks to evoke the higher realism of nature to harmonise the self-assertions of the instinctive elements. In fact, morality and social demands if illumined by a spiritual insight are able to exercise their influence more harmoniously.

(iii) Freedom and exercise of initiative are further factors which

promote the growth of the child's and the student's personality. It is a truism to say that only what the child or the student voluntarily accepts becomes a part of him. What is imposed remains external, even when it forms a habit. It does not give him a feeling and an attitude. So the whole educational life has to afford much freedom and initiative in the pursuit of interests, academic, practical and sportive.

Fear as an incentive in education is really not helpful. The learner has to grow on the basis of his experience of the consequences of his action.

- (iv) The child is yet unformed and a personal differentiation has to come about in him. This involves the formation of an "I" centre, distinctive and separate, i.e. an ego personality. Thus he has to be encouraged to think for himself and do things as he wishes to do, though they must be done in a sustained and orderly manner. There is thus a stage of growth for the ego, but it is a transitional stage and when one is in it he needs to have a feeling for the larger state of unity and collaboration with others. But while the ego is in ascendance, competitiveness will have a justification. However, ego can never be accepted as final nor adjustment of interests as the only solution of social life. The vision of a real inner unity and brotherhood, through contemplation of the great exemplars of it, must be kept as clear as possible in our minds.
- (v) Play is a great need of the child and the young boy and plenty of interesting avenues for physical exertion are indispensable. A most valuable and widely recognised experience of our Centre of Education is its work of physical education. It has shown its worth even as an instrument of intellectual and moral development.
- (vi) We are today much oppressed by the need to teach many subjects, which the growing individual is to require later in life. But this really involves a misplacement of educational interest. We must aim at the cultivation of the personality and its capacities and not at teaching subjects needed in life. And it is so interesting that the capacities can be developed in a vast variety of ways, even without any formal subjects. And when observation, discrimination, judgment, thinking, expression etc. have been cultivated, the individual has

capacities to acquire facility and handle any field of experience and life by applying himself to it.

We have noticed students giving up studies and achieving remarkable growth in literary arts too through their interest in sports and the literature on sports, periodical and otherwise.

- (vii) In the intellectual building up of the students' personality, we seek today to reconcile humanities with science, admitting thereby that they promote different sets of values, which, however, should be brought together. But phenomena of nature, which science seeks to study by empirical methods of sense-observation and rational inference are not the ultimate fact and need not be taken as such to be investigated by science. If a universal consciousness is the ultimate fact, then the study of nature becomes a quest for the same through this field of existence. Humanities are concerned with the cultivation of what is essentially the best human element in man, a sense for an ideal, the true, the good, and the beautiful. Good literature serves this purpose eminently. This field more directly refers to the highest, the best and the noblest. But what is as nature, the given and the present, is also a phase and expression of the same reality which is ultimately the true and the good and the beautiful. Thus the separation and divergence between the two will appear to be unnecessary and, therefore, the reconciliation also a superfluous attempt.

The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education pursues knowledge, Humanities and Sciences together, as a single unified field of knowledge. And as such sciences too become a field for the exercise of intuitive faculties besides the rational, which is obviously a new instrumentation added to scientific methodology.

The aim, however, is not the multiplication of the subjects of study whether of humanities or of science, but a cultivation of personality in its dimensions of external observation and inference and inner deeper sensibility and the higher awareness. The integral personality must become cultivated in all these three dimensions of consciousness and be capable of a free exercise of the faculties of the same. That would mean a high enjoyment of human existence.

- (viii) The growing individual passes through certain critical stages and states, general as well as individual, which always need a special attention and handling. One needs to feel sympathetically the problem and the difficulty and patiently bear with the individual concerned.
- (ix) Restlessness of the body and the mind is the normal condition of the human individual and more so of the child. Physical exertion for the growing individual is an outlet for his energy, which brings in periods of restfulness of normal activity and sleep. But real strength comes through an inner quietude in body and mind. Such quietude and its practice are, therefore, of the highest educational value and the growing individual will achieve enormously in its personality by practising it from as early a stage as possible. The bodily restlessness, in its relatively gross form, is overcome soon. An effective quietude in body needs, however, much practice. But a quietude in mind is the real problem, which brings a great mastery of the thinking activity when it is achieved. A sense of quietude of mind has, therefore, to be aimed at and practised from an early stage.

(7) We have considered above a few important aspects and factors pertaining to the growth of the child's and the student's personality. The Centre of Education rose to its full stature of higher education of the level of first degree in the year 1955 and since then many batches of students have come out and we have had a chance of seeing them in action in life for a few years. We have been ourselves anxious to see the quality they display in their personality as a result of the upbringing and training they have had here.

They seem to command a confidence involving an awareness and a reliance more or less on a higher guidance in life. With that goes a sense of capacity to deal with the varied situations of life whatever they be. A wideness seems to be an essential trait with them, a wideness to include life generally with its different thought-systems and cultures and religions. They do not appear to be much subject to anxiety which a keen egoistic struggling personality usually is. They seem to be more at ease with themselves and with their world. They are also strongly future-oriented, looking forward to changes in humanity and the world, even preparing themselves for them in some degree.

Their overall personality is, of course, ego-bound, but with some

awareness of the soul within, which gives them great plasticity, self-confidence and a sense of security.

An interesting and gratifying experience in this connection is that the majority of graduates have preferred to devote themselves, as a decision of their life, to the pursuit of integral personality for themselves and for integral education for the community. This is the best reward of success that any educational institution could expect. Such a large number of graduates offering to devote themselves for life to the ideals of their Alma Mater is a most heartening fact.

(8) The educational reconstruction, which we have been considering above, in fact involves a reconstruction or at least a reconsideration of the Indian life as a whole.

The West cherishes in its educational and cultural pursuit essentially the ego-personality and its mental functions of thought, feeling and volition in search of the true, the good and the beautiful as the highest aim in life. Christ had clearly held out the prospect of a higher self for which the lower was to be given up. There the ego was decisively rejected and the soul was put up as the high ideal. But the rationalism of modern age has achieved another pattern of life. This entire pattern, educational, political, economic and cultural involves basically a cultivation of the ego-personality into as refined a form as possible.

Indian life as a whole too is tending to follow the same pattern. An educational system aiming at the essential quality of personality as cherished by its best traditions needs for its success, at least a reconsideration of the values which we tend to promote, consciously or unconsciously, in our general life. Our democracy, for example, while creating respect for the individual and an appreciation for his good, is also encouraging vain self-assertion and a sense for power in sheer numbers. Evidently, Indian democracy needs to stress, equally if not more, while emphasising the rights of the individuals and communities, the unifying element of the highest truth. Our national motto is wonderful, but it needs to be cherished in every situation of life afresh. Democracy, if divorced from an abiding sense and feeling and respect for the unifying truth, tends to encourage egoistic formations of various kinds. Indian democracy could be and should be an original quality and not a mechanical repetition of other models. And that would, indeed, be a further growth in the evolution of democratic government.

The political factor is evidently the widest influence and we have to check up the kind of personality-values it is promoting. Socialism,

which we have accepted, also needs to be reoriented, which to some extent already is. But a vision of the highest common good is necessary, mere equitable distribution of the material goods in hand is not enough. Giving up of a good ceases to be painful, when it involves the receiving of a higher good.

If our democracy and socialism can be given this additional content of thought and spirit, it will be a wonderful help to our educational reconstruction.

In the same way our industrialisation and big business need a similar incentive of a larger good and the joy of promoting the same. Normally it is the egoistic greed, individual or national which moves and governs this activity.

All these are big issues, but very worthy ones, which deserve to be contemplated and attempted by bold and courageous spirits. Education is a yet more difficult task, but it needs a proper feeder atmosphere in the country in which it can thrive and prosper.

Sri Aurobindo visualised a recreation of life as a whole in India and the world and education was a means to do it. This recreation has become a necessity of human living and the contemporary expansion of knowledge and life and persistent effort at new syntheses and solutions is a proof of the direction of our growth.

Education is usually the initiating movement and Indian education is at the moment making a great attempt to initiate a great movement of life.

INDRA SEN

A National Education for India in the Contemporary World

Representing the writer's aspirations and views regarding what Indian Education should be, when India is free to live her own life and fulfil her destiny in the world of today and tomorrow.

The Aim

Education is the abiding pursuit of human life and culture, concerned with its essential fulfilment besides the utilitarian purposes of material existence and socio-political contingencies. The aim should, therefore, be set comprehensively enough including the intrinsic and the extrinsic values of life. Different values can, however, be specially emphasized in view of the need of a particular period of historical growth. But the abiding intrinsic values should be always retained centrally to give to it the absoluteness of its worth. Education can never be allowed to become merely a utilitarian activity as it has largely tended to become in the modern system of life.

As an example the following definition may be ventured :

Education is the highest cultural activity of life aiming at the fullest and harmonious growth, exercise and enjoyment of the varied capabilities of human personality, viz., the physical, the vital (the general biological impulses), the mental, the moral, aesthetic, the socio-political and the spiritual, leading to an increasing satisfaction and success in individual living as also collective living, socially, nationally and internationally.

The Human Personality

Education is concerned with the growth of human personality. We must then know exactly what human personality is. The areas of personality, in fact, are manifold. We talk of mind and body and of the conscious and the subconscious as also of the subliminal and the superconscious inspirations and intuitions. It is easy to limit ourselves to 'mind and body' formula, but as civilization becomes more complex, we feel called upon

to develop newer and more powerful faculties. The future clearly seems to demand the exploration and development of the larger possibilities of human personality. Our education, looking ahead into the future and aware of the larger possibilities of life, will naturally proceed on the basis of a comprehensive view of personality.

Such a view must take cognisance of the body (the material basis), the general biological 'life' part, the mind and the spirit. The spiritual we find today difficult to recognise as a concrete fact. But that is just the prejudice created by the post-Renaissance European science and education. Otherwise, the best traditions of human life, the world over, affirm a central spiritual element in personality. So far as Indian tradition is concerned, amidst all the divergences the one agreement that strikes a student of life and culture is the distinctness of the spirit from the mind. The mind is environment conditioned, the spirit is the seat of intrinsic worth and values and the principle of unity.

We have now awakened to the need of the integration of the varied forces of personality. An integrated personality bids fair to become the dynamic ideal of education and culture. But an integrated personality is not merely a co-ordinated and summated personality. It is a unified personality and that needs an essential unity comprehensive enough to give a close cohesiveness to the myriad movements of personality.

Our knowledge today presents a serious problem. Its expansion has been enormous, but a unity is hard to find and realise. Man does not seem to command effectively enough, in the service of a vision of total good, all that he has laboured to create and achieve. Is it not true to say that man in his outward gaze has primarily sought a horizontal extension of knowledge and awareness? But our awareness has a depth and a height too. And occasionally men of depth and height are able to create new possibilities of life. If we have to explore these other dimensions of knowledge, we must recognise at first these dimensions in human personality and seek to develop them through education.

Our Present Indian Education

Our present education is a transplantation from Europe with small modifications. Virtually the world over the same education prevails, the differences observed in different countries are differences of minor trends and practices. The general aim in terms of the capabilities of personality considered and the results achieved are almost identical. It is so because

the general premises of it are the same and they are essentially those of European Enlightenment of the 18th century. An intellectualism and a liberalism constitute the essential nature of all education today. European countries and U.S.A. have considerably improved upon their education in recent times, more than other countries have done, but the basic assumptions remain intact all over. And it is in the assumptions that the real problem of our world education lies. Is an intellectualist view of personality and human culture enough? The problem of conflict, division and fragmentation in personality and culture is directly connected with it. And if an integration has to be achieved in personality and unity found in knowledge, then a new basis for education is needed. Already we are saying that education must develop the whole personality. But we have yet no concrete feeling for the whole personality and the unity to be found in it. We merely try to add education of the emotions and the will to that of the intellect.

Right here the Indian tradition can give some guidance. The quality of life as a whole must improve, not merely the capacity to think and write and speak. How to do it is the real problem. A new goal and a new departure in practice have to be considered and courageously undertaken and persistently pursued.

Under a new orientation the European science and knowledge will need to be accepted in their essential content of truth and embedded in Indian education in the Indian premises and attitudes of life. To elaborate, Western science grew up in Europe in a particular historical relationship with religion. That association seems to stick to it as though it is essential to scientific knowledge. In India science and religion have had different relations. Can Western science be not pursued, even more successfully, under Indian attitudes? And will that not be a new enrichment useful for the contemporary West too?

Similarly, relations between science and humanities should be cordial under Indian attitudes. And that is what is wanted today.

Striking Deficiencies of Contemporary Indian Education

We live in a rapidly changing world, a world of great progress or the one persistently asking for the new and the unknown. It is not content to live by past standards. There is otherwise a lack as to the meaning of life, which generates a general sense of dissatisfaction.

In a world like this, India as a whole is under a great pressure, in-

ternal and external, to discover herself, her genius, her essential seeking and be master of her situation. In an India like this and in a world full of change, the Indian education is an object of special dissatisfaction.

1. It does not evoke spontaneous joy and acceptance. There is a lack of identity in the national aspiration and contemporary national education. It is felt as a foreign graft and yet felt as necessary.

2. The Indian temperament feels secure when it is geared to the intrinsic values of life. Utilitarianism does not inwardly satisfy it. Our present education is primarily a utilitarian education or rather it is carried on in a utilitarian spirit. The same, however, can be pursued in the spirit of intrinsic values and that is the task to achieve.

3. Education does not command the respect of being the highest and the abiding cultural activity of life. That place of valuation has to be accorded to it. But this the society must do. When teachers demand it, then it tends to defeat itself.

4. Response to Science has not been as enthusiastic as it could or should have been. This is partly because Science has not been disengaged from its original premises of historical circumstances and properly set in the framework of Indian cultural values. If that is done, it should evoke a deep passion of search for truth in the field of nature. Of course, our attitude of regarding the world and phenomenon as unreal also needs a conscious reorientation.

5. The Indian spirit has been traditionally interested in unity and synthesis. Western knowledge since the days of Aristotle has persistently pursued analysis, separation, division, fragmentation. Analysis is indeed a great power of intellect, but we are today landed in a situation, where unity of knowledge and life have become a strong motivation. But to have imposed on the Indian mind a knowledge breathing the spirit of analysis in disregard of the synthetic approach of the Indian mind was educationally a doubtful thing. This is a fundamental issue and a very difficult one, but the force of it cannot be ignored.

6. With the idea of unity goes the idea of continuity. Education in the Indian way is an unending process stretching across incarnations. Educationally this idea has great value. Our present arrangement tends to emphasise that education is finished when an examination is passed. We might consider how the idea of continuity can be more fully ingrained in the process of education.

7. Our emphasis is far too much on the content of education rather than on the growth of personality and the cultivation of its faculties.

Many of our problems arise out of lack of recognition that formal education can never give all that an individual needs to know for life. The general atmosphere imparts a great deal and this can be positively cultivated, too, to serve its purpose more fully. Otherwise the individual needs to be given the faculties and the interest and he will learn in life what he needs to learn. Our problem of languages needs specially to be considered in this light. Given a helpful atmosphere, the learning of languages could be made a great deal spontaneous.

8. We are much worried by the fissiparous tendencies we notice in our social and political life and education has its share of responsibility in the matter. At any rate, education is sought to provide the integrative forces. We seek, in this connection, to rely on external uniformities. But what is more important is that we may have amongst us an increasing number of individuals of deep inner all-India dedication, goodwill, love and identification. This given, the differences will tend to become elements of enrichment and variety. Without it they become separative forces. But to create men of such identification is a matter of the education of the selected and gifted children. And that means long personal contact and interest in promising individuals on the part of the teachers and the leaders of the present generation.

In this connection, it may be asked, what is it that unites? Uniformities of habit and sentiment do unite, but far more powerful are the ideals which we actively seek to realise. The sense of national goals and the nation's destiny need to be kept alive as best as possible. When we come down to the level of the normal goods of life, then rivalries and jealousies tend to become dominant.

9. Lack of due recognition of educational value of sports and other extra-mural activities also needs to be mentioned. Character is moulded and trained essentially by these. Class contacts can impart an idealism, if that is intended. When class-room teaching is geared to passing the examination, then even idealistic pieces of literature can tend to become utilitarian and uninspiring.

The Ideals of Integrated Personality, Unity of Knowledge and Integral Experience

These three can be said to be the educational ideals in the offing. In the integrated personality knowing, feeling and willing should have the best chance of a harmonious working. And that can come with the culti-

vation of the feelings and attitudes of a depth and a height. At the surface level there is disparity and plurality. Rising above the conflicting forces is a great secret of life. So is to stand back from them in detachment and looking at them in a spirit of non-involvement a great secret. Such a poise of personality creates its external unity. Unity of knowledge is bound up with the detachment and freedom of inner experience. And in integral experience, we seek to inter-relate knowing, feeling and willing in a proper interdependence, counteracting the tendency to regard the intellectual attainment as the essential aim of education. In fact, the degree of cultivation and refinement of will and feeling are surer signs and evidence of education.

Philosophy and Psychology

Philosophy as 'Darshan' and Psychology as 'Yoga' have given to Indian life their highest and persistent ideals and these constitute the central aspirations of our cultural life. Other motivations have received their sustenance from these. They have gone with religion or religions, but they have themselves too created religions.

But under the Western system of education, they have tended to become sterile. Philosophy under the academic spirit tended to become essentially an intellectual discipline having little effect on life, and psychology primarily a study of the external reactions of personality with practically no sure knowledge of personality as such. India traditionally possesses a confident knowledge of the essentials of personality and she did not deserve to inherit this infant science of psychology as a substitute for yogic knowledge of personality. Philosophy too needed a career of its own here. To rehabilitate them in our pursuit of knowledge is an important problem for our education. Of course, our 'Darshan' and 'Yoga' should be widened and enlarged to include Western philosophical thought and psychological knowledge.

The Problem of Religion in a Secular State

Can man do without religion in life? The answer is a 'yes' and a 'no'. 'Yes', if religion means a creed, a ritual, a social order. 'No', if it means an attitude, a relation with the Ultimate, the Absolute, the Highest, the Supreme, the total Truth and Existence, whatever be the intellectual conception of these. Man as a finite needs a faith in the Infinite, its correlative as it were, for an unfailling solace and support of life.

If this attitude and relation is the essential truth of Religion and man needs it necessarily for the guidance of life, then education cannot afford to ignore it. And perhaps it is easy enough to provide for it. An awareness of the whole truth of existence and the practice of the same and its appreciation and enjoyment can be given through all the disciplines of knowledge, even material science. The traditional forms of religions, particularly those which have been involved in antagonisms, could be left alone and even new forms of adoration created.

A secularism, which is not anti-religious, but honours all religions, would deeply cherish the essential truth of Religion and provide for this deepest aspiration and need of the human heart through its educational process and thereby achieve for entire education and culture a dynamism difficult to replace by anything else.

These are some of the ideas I venture to present to the Education Commission for what they may be worth. I wish the Commission the best possible success in the great task they have undertaken.

A CONTRIBUTOR

Our Approach to Knowledge and Life

It is a most interesting paradox of our times that there is, on the one hand, a great unprecedented advance in knowledge and, on the other hand, there is perhaps an equally unprecedented sense of diffidence and lack of certitude to guide life whether individually, nationally or internationally.

Why is it so ? There is, obviously enough, in our present situation a lack of integration in knowledge and a lack of integration in personality too. Division and conflict are the hall-marks of our life today.

But how is integration in knowledge to be achieved ? And how is personality to become wholesome and harmonious ?

Right here, a fundamental question regarding knowledge has to be raised. Is knowledge a matter of horizontal extension alone at the level of the senses and the intellect ? Are there no heights of knowledge and depths of knowledge ? Even ordinary experience bears out that in our projected poise of mind our awareness is normally one of discreteness and separation of things. In the deeper and self-collected poise, on the other hand, there is relatively a sense of oneness and unity. And again it is in the poise of a higher status that we acquire the power to command a whole plane of experience.

If this is so, then are not, besides the horizontal, two more dimensions to knowledge, those of depth and height ?

Sri Aurobindo became keenly aware of the crisis of our times quite early in his career and felt called to find out a solution of it. His explorations in the realms of experience led him to the discovery of these other dimensions, which he has sought to characterise and delineate in great detail.

Now the educational project here is exactly an attempt to pursue knowledge integrally. The horizontal knowledge must be reintegrated in the perspectives of the other two dimensions. But that involves the recreation of personality itself. And that means that it must be permitted and most lovingly helped to discover its true unity amidst the discrete sensations and impulses. The new personality should duly command its depth as well as its height. The entire set up of our education, so far evolved, is a fresh and laborious creation, which the Mother has progressively achieved in the course of two decades. And it is yet the barest

beginning of things. But the results which are noticeable in the quality of the personality that is coming up and the general orientation of knowledge and life that it seems to command are entirely encouraging. Those of us, who have been directly associated with the experiment, clearly see the indispensable necessity of the ideals of an integrated personality and a unified integral knowledge as also the methods and the practice needed for the same. Science, humanities, fine arts, technology are all in a process of reshaping and it is a joy to witness the reorientations as they emerge bit by bit.

This is the approach to knowledge and life that inspires us and the same we seek to pursue to the best of our capacity under the lead and guidance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

A TEACHER

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This Brochure

The Education Commission, appointed by the Government of India in July 1964 to consider education as a whole, in all its stages and aspects, and recommend a system of national education for the country, which would duly synthesize India's traditional genius with the modern values of science and technology, interested the teachers and the students of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education very much. And they made a sustained collective effort to study the Questionnaire issued by the Commission and other problems involved in the concept of 'national education'. They had a delightful discussion when Dr. K. G. Saiyidain, member of the Commission, came to the Centre for observation and exchange of ideas.

This brochure is an offering to the Commission and the country as an expression of the Centre's deepest aspirations for success in discovering and formulating a true national education for the country.

Sections I and II give a few selected passages bearing on the subject from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Section III is a contribution of the teachers of the Centre.

We wish the Education Commission all success.